

CHAPTER 13

THE PARTICIPATORY ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN FISHERIES GOVERNANCE

TIM OLIVER

Editor, Fishing News, T&F Informa, Telephone House, 3rd Floor, 69-77 Paul Street, London ECA 4LQ

Abstract

This chapter considers the role of the British media in European and UK national fisheries governance politics. It is divided into three parts. First, I shall argue that the national print and television media has influenced, and continues to influence, fisheries policy, but that this is largely in the direction of environmentalism and marine conservation, at the expense of fishing. Second, I shall argue that, by contrast, regional newspapers sometimes influence fisheries policy in favour of fishermen. Third, I shall argue that the direct influence exerted by the specialist fishing trade press over fisheries policy is negligible, but that it plays an important role in speaking up for the fishing industry and fisheries-dependent communities.

13.1 Introduction

One of the most notable features of European Union (EU) fisheries policy in recent years has been a marked shift away from concern primarily with the interests and well-being of fishermen, and towards an overwhelming concern with conservation and marine eco-system preservation. This shift in priorities has been driven by the environmental movement, helped by a friendly media. It reflects the growth in political power of the environmental movement and a corresponding decline in the political influence of the fishing industry.

One of the most significant results of this shift has been a gradual change in the public perception of fishermen. Until recent times, the public, in general, regarded fishermen with a mixture of respect and admiration. They were almost heroic figures, who braved the elements and did a physically arduous and dangerous job under difficult conditions to put high protein food on people's tables. A visit to the harbour to see fishing vessels landing their catches, and to take in the general atmosphere of fishing, was a central feature of seaside holidays. But in a relatively short time, this perception has changed dramatically. Many people, and especially young people, now see fishermen as greedy, self interested pirates who plunder the oceans with powerful and technically sophisticated vessels and equipment, without a thought for the marine environment or for future generations of fishermen. This perception is particularly prevalent in urban regions where people have little knowledge of the sea and do not identify with rural or coastal communities and ways of life.

This change has occurred largely because of the environmental movement's relentless portrayal of the world's oceans as barren deserts due to over-fishing. This message has

been relayed via a print and TV media that is hugely receptive to such a portrayal. This has, in turn, led to public support for the environmental cause, and persuaded politicians to take its side in pushing for curbs on fishing to protect fish stocks and the marine environment. There are many votes in being seen to be 'green', but few votes for backing the fishing industry. Even in Scotland, fishing represents only about 2.5 per cent of the total economy, and in the UK as a whole it is only 0.03 per cent of GDP. The number of fishermen in the UK is only 12,000, with another 22,000 employed in the fish processing industry (PMSU 2004:27). This compares with a figure of well over 2 million members of environmental NGOs (Rawcliffe 1998:74).

In the next section (section 2) of this chapter, I show how the national media has presented this environmentalist agenda, at the expense of fishing interests. In section 3, I explain how the picture is rather different at the regional level, where news media are more sympathetic to the fishermen's cause, and sometimes succeed in their campaigns for policy shifts in their direction. In section 4, I focus on the specialist fishing trade press, which, while having little effect on fisheries policies, nevertheless serves a valuable function as the voice of the beleaguered industry facing bankruptcy, and the champion of fisheries-dependent communities facing decline.

13.2 National media

The national print and television media, in relaying the concerns of the public and the environmental movement over the marine environment, has significantly influenced fisheries governance. Journalism is nowadays very much the province of young people, who tend, rightly, to be idealistic and to want to change the world. Many young journalists are environmentally inclined, and thus are susceptible to accept sympathetically, although often uncritically, the stance of the environmental movement in general, not just the marine environmentalists. They tend to be 'eco-left' politically, and their instincts lean towards the environmental cause and against the commercial fishing industry.

An example from my own experience graphically illustrates this tendency. Some time ago, when the current 'cod crisis' was beginning to build up, I received a call from a journalist putting together an item on fishing and fish stocks for a TV news slot. She asked me if I would comment on the 'fish stocks crisis'. I pointed out to her that not all stocks were in crisis and that some were very healthy such as pelagic stocks (herring and mackerel), prawns and haddock, among others. I also pointed out that not all cod stocks were in trouble and that cod was in good shape in waters around Iceland, Norway and the Faeroes. She then became very hesitant and said that that was 'not really the line I was looking for', and that she would call me back. Needless to say, she did not.

It has become noticeable in recent years that articles in the national broadsheets on marine environmental issues have failed to include even a perspective from the fishing industry. Articles often appear following press releases from environmental organisations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), English Nature, the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), Greenpeace, the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and several

others. The topics of these articles are issues such as seals, cetacean by-catches, damage to the marine environment, sustainable fishing and eco-system fisheries management. While the spokespersons for these organisations are quoted and their point of view recorded, there is often no view from the fishing industry. Let us look at the unbalanced coverage of five of these issues in the national media.

13.2.1 SEALS

First, the case of seals is a very good example of the influence of the environmental movement and the prominence accorded to its views in the media, illustrating well the government's sensitivity to environmental issues and the extent to which it responds to public concern, but ignores fishing industry concerns.

Fishermen have for some years been expressing great alarm at the explosion of seal stocks (seals consume a large amount of fish), and have called for seal populations to be managed. Such concern has been expressed by fishermen in Norway and Canada as well as in the UK and EU. The response from the UK government has been nil. But in 2001, a virus began to kill common seals, beginning in the Baltic and spreading to Scotland and the North Sea. It was widely reported in the media, and the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) – which is also responsible for fisheries, although this is not evident from its title – perceived that there was public concern over the seal deaths. It called a press conference and announced a £30,000 fund to finance a vaccination programme for seals. This showed starkly where the government's priorities lay – protecting the welfare of seals, but ignoring the fishermen's concerns about the expanding seal population's impact on fish stocks.

13.2.2 DOLPHINS

The second example of the environmental bias of the national media is the case of dolphins. The issue here, which is given great prominence by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA – again no mention of fishing in the department responsible for fisheries in England and Wales), is that of by-catches of dolphins by big trawlers that tow one net between two boats, primarily fishing for bass in the Channel and Western Approaches. Environmentalists have argued for some time, rightly, for action to be taken to stop this cetacean by-catch from occurring.

DEFRA has been carrying out trials with certain types of grids that theoretically allow the dolphins to escape before the net is hauled and the dolphins drowned. It recently made an announcement on the progress of these trials, and the story was widely reported in the national print media. As editor of the leading weekly trade newspaper, *Fishing News*, I received a call from a senior press officer in DEFRA to check that I had received the release – something that I do not recall ever happening in relation to fisheries press releases. (Significantly, even more recently, I had a similar call to check that I had received a notice about a press call involving new fisheries minister Ben Bradshaw and moves to ban 'shark finning' – a practice that does not even occur in UK fisheries, as the Shark Trust that is campaigning against the practice has acknowledged).

Yet at the end of 2002, when the Council of Ministers met in December to finalise no less an issue than the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) that would set the scene for fisheries in EU waters for the foreseeable future, there were no phone calls and no press conferences from either DEFRA or SEERAD.

13.2.3 DARWIN MOUNDS

The third illustration of the environmental movement's media influence is the Darwin Mounds. DEFRA triumphantly announced in 2003 that it had persuaded the European Commission to impose emergency measures to close to commercial fishing the area of the so-called Darwin Mounds in deep water off the west coast of Scotland. This is an area of rare, slow-growing cold-water reefs that were discovered only comparatively recently. The government and the Commission were responding to an intensive campaign by the environmental movement to protect these reefs. It is, of course, right that the Darwin Mounds should be preserved, but the comparative speed with which the ban was put in place – with no consultation with the fishing industry and using emergency powers – is another telling example of the high priority afforded to marine environmental concerns and the low priority to the opinions and interests of the fishing industry.

13.2.4 COD CRISIS

The fourth example of environmental dominance in the national media is the so-called 'cod crisis'. The media reporting of the cod crisis has reflected an unquestioning acceptance of the position of the scientific and fisheries management establishment that North Sea and other cod stocks are on the verge of collapse through over-fishing. Although concerns are expressed in the media over the effects of pollution and, occasionally, of industrial fishing (the capture with very fine mesh nets of species such as sandeels and pout specifically for fish meal and oil), the media reports overfishing as the primary cause of the cod crisis.

However, many fishermen believe that the decline in cod stocks is due to environmental changes, and, in particular, to higher sea temperatures that are strongly correlated with poor spawning and recruitment of cod. This, they believe, has pushed the cod further north, so that there are now few cod in the southern and central North Sea but plenty in the Faroe Islands waters. The fishermen, therefore, argue that EU fisheries policy is fundamentally wrong, because it is based on an obsession with trying to achieve an unachievable goal. Cod in EU waters cannot be 'saved' by any amount of restriction on cod fishing, because its decline is due to environmental changes that are outside man's control. Yet the entire whitefish sector is being sacrificed in pursuit of this one unattainable objective.

It is noticeable, however, that in reports on this issue in the broadsheet papers, there is an increasing tendency for the views of environmental groups to be reported at length, with reporters not even bothering to ask for a statement from the fishermen or their organisations. There seems now to be an almost unconscious assumption of 'conservation good, fishermen bad' among journalists. For instance, tabloid headlines such as 'Has cod had its chips?' suggest to an uninformed public that cod everywhere is in crisis, whereas the reality is that cod stocks in the Faeoese and Icelandic waters are particularly healthy, and in Norwegian waters they are well within safe limits.

The picture painted by the media of cod stocks being at risk throughout the entire North Atlantic, only helps to reinforce the Commission's determination to stick to its policies in pursuit of the Holy Grail of 'saving the cod'. The ruinous effects of this policy on the fishing industry can safely be ignored because the industry is economically and politically weak and can do little to retaliate, and because the public – heavily influenced by the media – is behind the Commission and against the fishermen.

13.2.5 DEEP-WATER SPECIES

This knee jerk reaction by the Commission to a perceived environmental imperative is also evident in the fifth example – that of deep-water species. In this case, the charge is that, in its haste to respond to the environmental lobby's doom-laden predictions of the over-fishing of slow growing species such as orange roughy and grenadier, the Commission overnight imposed total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas on the deepwater fisheries west of Scotland and Ireland that had previously been unregulated. This action resulted in the virtual loss of this entire fishery to UK fishermen, and in its handing over to the French and, to a lesser extent, Spain.

This decision was taken on the very day after Commissioner Franz Fischler had assured UK fishermen's leaders in London that the Commission would not impose a TAC regime on the fishery. The decision was also in direct contradiction to the Commission's statements, repeated with ever increasing frequency over the last two or three years, that TACs and quotas do not work as conservation tools. This acknowledgement is, in fact, the central reason why the Commission is now fighting with all the means at its command to move towards effort control as its main fisheries management tool.

These examples illustrate starkly that the interests of the commercial fishing industry are very far down the list of priorities of the government departments responsible for fishing, but that politicians are extremely sensitive to marine environmental concerns, and they court the media assiduously on such issues.

13.3 Regional media

Let us now turn to the regional media, where a rather different picture emerges. As the fishing industry has become smaller, there is less interest shown in its affairs by the national media. There may be a flurry of reporting at the end of each year when the European Commission and Council of Ministers set the TACs for the following year, but then the industry is forgotten again. This relative indifference to the industry's well-being is not, however, manifested in regional newspapers that have fishing ports in their catchment areas. Such papers, which have a fishing industry readership, tend to be more supportive of the fishing industry, and to blame foreign fishermen, particularly the Spanish, for the fishing industry's problems. They take a 'jingoistic' approach, and portray foreign fishermen as rapacious invaders of what should be UK fishing grounds. 'They have killed their own stocks and now they want ours' is a general theme that runs through much of the coverage by regional papers.

Such newspapers are also very critical of the CFP, as the instrument by which foreign fishermen have gained access to UK grounds. The CFP is portrayed as an instrument of oppression against UK fishermen that simultaneously supports foreign fishermen with

generous grants to build new vessels. This is a criticism that is not wholly without foundation. However, it is not the CFP alone that has caused problems for British fishermen; it is also the lack of support by successive British governments for the UK fishing industry, and the extent to which they have taken up, or, more accurately, failed to take up, the support that is available via the CFP.

13.3.1 SCOTTISH TRAWLERMEN'S COMPENSATION

There are two outstanding examples in the UK of regional newspapers exerting influence on behalf of fishermen – in Scotland and the southwest of England. In Scotland, fishing has a much higher political importance than elsewhere in the UK. Scottish MPs, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Euro MPs have much more to say on fishing issues than have those south of the border, even in fishing port constituencies, with the possible exception of those in the south west of England. Naturally, therefore, press releases and statements from Scottish politicians in response to industry issues, and as part of the general debate about the future of the industry, flow much more prolifically from them, than from their counterparts south of the border. In Scotland, the national papers such as the *Scotsman* and the *Herald*, and the northeast of Scotland-based *Press and Journal*, give significant coverage to fishing industry issues, reflecting the much higher profile the industry has there. This reflects the fact that there are many more votes in fishing in Scotland than elsewhere, although even in Scotland, fishing is still very much more of an issue in the ports and coastal regions than in the Glasgow/Edinburgh 'middle belt' where the mass of the Scottish population lives.

The clearest evidence of the influence of the Scottish press in championing the cause of fishermen relates not to current regulation of fishing opportunities, but rather to the issue of compensation for lost fishing opportunities in the past. This is the campaign mounted by the *Press and Journal* in Scotland, based in Aberdeen and with a wide readership in northeast Scotland, for compensation for redundant trawlermen who lost their jobs as a result of the extension of fishing limits to 200 miles during the 1970s, and specifically the 200-mile limit imposed by Iceland in 1976.

After some 20 years of campaigning by an organisation called the British Fishermen's Association (BFA), the Labour government, after it came to power in 1997, eventually set up the 'Icelandic Trawlermen's Compensation Scheme'. The BFA had branches in Hull, Grimsby and Fleetwood, where almost all of the now vanished British distant water trawler fleet had been based. It had no branch in Aberdeen, although there were a few trawlers there that occasionally made trips to Iceland, and many Aberdeen fishermen sailed on distant water trawlers from Hull, Grimsby and Fleetwood. But former fishermen in Aberdeen felt that they were not getting their share of the compensation, and the *Press and Journal* launched a major campaign on their behalf. This newspaper campaign, which won an award from the *Media Week* magazine, resulted in the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) - the government body that was administering the compensation scheme - deciding to look again at its eligibility requirements, and DTI officials travelled to Aberdeen to talk to the ex-fishermen and their supporters. A lot of hitherto unknown evidence and information about, for instance, which Aberdeen vessels had made trips to Iceland, and when they had made them, became available as a result of the *Press and Journal's* campaign. The outcome was that

Aberdeen-based trawlermen obtained compensation on the same terms as their counterparts elsewhere in the UK.

13.3.2 THE AREA VII MONKFISH TAC

It is in the southwest of England, however, that we find the clearest example of a regional newspaper contributing to a change in government policy in favour of fishermen rather than environmentalists. This occurred in 2003 over the EU's regulations governing the catching of monkfish (often known as anglerfish). Fishermen in the southwest found a huge imbalance between the amounts of cod and monkfish they were catching, and the quotas they had for these species. Because EU regulations forbid the **landing** of over-quota fish – fishermen cannot avoid **catching** them if they are on the grounds – the fishermen were forced to discard large amounts of valuable over-quota fish to stay within their quota limits. This fish is, however, effectively dead once it has been caught. Therefore, while dumping this over-quota monkfish did nothing for conservation, it robbed fishermen of many thousands of pounds of income and consumers of a first class food, simply to 'balance the quota books'. Fishermen have repeatedly pointed out the waste of a quota system for individual species in mixed fisheries, where they cannot avoid catching fish for which they have little or no quota when they fish for other species for which they do have quota.

The southwestern fishermen set about publicising this waste and the imbalance between the realities of the stocks they were catching and the quotas they had, to embarrass the Commission and the politicians, with the aid of the *Western Morning News*. They made a video of perfectly good fish being discarded, which was sent to EU Fisheries Commissioner Franz Fischler, Prime Minister Tony Blair and UK Fisheries minister Ben Bradshaw. The *Western Morning News* gave this video maximum coverage, and it was picked up to some extent by the national TV media, in particular, the Sunday morning *Country File* programme.

The outcome of this coverage was that the UK government sent fisheries scientists down to the southwest to make trips to sea in order to verify the fishermen's catches. A formal approach was then made to the Commission, backed up with catch data, for an increase in the TAC of monkfish. Some time later, the Commission did, in fact, increase the TAC of monkfish in ICES Area VII by 30 per cent.

Although the fishermen were lobbying hard for an increase in their own right, it is doubtful if they would have swayed the Commission without the sustained press campaign in their support, which embarrassed the fishery managers. It was, of course, covered in the trade press, but again this alone would not have influenced policy. Significantly, there was no increase in the monkfish quota in ICES Area VI, the west coast of Scotland, where a similar problem exists with monkfish, despite intensive lobbying by the Scottish fishing industry, but for which there was no similar media campaign. It may also be a significant factor in this differential treatment that the UK fisheries minister, Ben Bradshaw, is MP for a southwest constituency, Exeter. The minister tends to concern himself primarily with the industry in England and Wales, leaving Scottish issues to his Scottish counterpart, Ross Finnie. Fishing is a devolved issue under Scottish devolution, but the UK minister remains the lead minister in negotiations with Brussels.

However, the above two examples are noteworthy not only for their relative success, but also because of their rarity. Campaigns on behalf of any group of fishermen – as opposed to simply reporting events and complaints – are very rare even in regional newspapers that have a fishing ‘constituency’. It is significant that even this level of publicity and embarrassment over the Area VII monkfish TAC did not cause the UK government to put the case for an increase in the cod TAC, as it is now received wisdom that all cod stocks are in trouble, despite compelling evidence to the contrary, in the southwest at any rate.

13.4 Specialist fishing trade press

Turning to the specialist press such as my own paper, *Fishing News*, I would say that in so far as having any direct effect on policy is concerned, its impact is zero. It is the voice of a weak and politically powerless industry and, like the industry itself, can safely be ignored by policy makers. Through its pages, for year after year after year, fishermen and their representatives have railed against the iniquities of the CFP, against the waste and ineffectiveness of the quota system, against flag ships, against industrial fishing, against the politicisation of fisheries management, against bureaucracy, and against flawed science. Their voice has been variously angry, proud, defiant, despairing, fearful, and contemptuous – all to no avail. The system under which they have to work, grinds on relentlessly, the bureaucrats loftily indifferent to their pleas.

In the columns of the paper and in other fora, fishermen have asked repeatedly to be given a genuine role in managing the fisheries upon which they depend for their livelihoods. Yet, despite their intimate knowledge of the condition of the stocks and what management techniques will and will not work, until recently, they have been totally excluded from any meaningful role in fisheries management. It is true, however, that this situation is now beginning to change. The EU has recently begun to conduct formal annual surveys of fishermen in each Member State, asking for their opinions on the state of certain key stocks such as cod, haddock, plaice and hake. This information is passed on to the scientists who advise the Commission on TACs (total allowable catches) each year, for incorporation into the scientific advice on which the fisheries management regime is based. But to what extent the scientists actually use this information in making their stock assessments and formulating their advice, is open to question.

Another development that fishermen hope will give them a genuine voice and role in fisheries management is the establishment in 2004 of Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). These are being set up as part of the reform of the CFP, agreed at the end of 2002. Five RACS will advise the Commission on management in distinct regions such as the North Sea, Irish Sea, West of Scotland, plus a sixth separate RAC for pelagic (for example, mackerel, herring and sprats) fisheries, pelagic fish being migratory and pursued by specialised vessels. The RACs will comprise representatives of the ‘stakeholders’ in the fisheries of that region, including fishermen, fish processors, sea anglers, and NGOs, plus scientists and officials.

Fishermen hope that the RACs will give them a genuine management role, but there are

also fears that they will become only 'talking shops', with the clash of conflicts of interest preventing a unified view from being formulated. The hope is that they will lead to effective 'decentralisation' of the CFP, but the fear is that they may just create five 'mini CFPs'. It remains to be seen which view will be proved correct.

In the meantime, fishermen and their leaders can only lobby the scientists, officials and politicians as best they can, to get across the industry's views, and can only sit around helplessly in hotel lobbies and Brussels corridors as the bureaucrats and politicians take the decisions that can make or break fishermen and their communities. A spectacular example of this helplessness occurred at the 2003 December Fisheries Council in Brussels. The Commission and EU ministers agreed on a set of complex and highly restrictive measures in the North Sea involving restrictions on fishing time, a 'cod recovery area' and a special 'permit area' where haddock could be fished in reasonable quantities. These measures applied only to the UK, and they so outraged the UK industry, that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation sought advice on mounting a legal challenge to the regulations.

Following an intensive lobbying campaign by the Scottish whitefish sector, involving expensive weekly visits to Brussels, some of these restrictions were, unusually, modified during 2004. The iniquity and folly of these regulations was extensively reported in *Fishing News*. However, the modest changes that were eventually made to the regulations, were due entirely to the huge pressure exerted by the industry leadership during 2004, belatedly supported by the Scottish Executive as it gradually realised the extent of the blunder to which the UK fisheries ministers had agreed.

This event illustrates the fact that the specialist press can only be influential in affecting policy-making in direct proportion to the weight and influence of the industry it represents. As has already been noted, the fishing industry has little weight or leverage in the UK, so therefore neither does its press. The fishing press may be more influential in countries such as Spain or Norway, where there are powerful fishing lobbies. Even in those countries, however, it is probably the fishing lobbies themselves that bring influence to bear, rather than the press itself.

In so far as the fishing press does have a role at all in fisheries governance, it is rather one of expressing industry opinion, or, more accurately, opinions, than of exerting direct influence on the policy makers. It is a forum for dialogue and debate, not just between fishermen themselves, but also between their leaders, scientists, environmental groups and even, on occasions, ministers. This role should not be underestimated. While it is common to refer to 'the industry', as if it is a homogenous whole, the reality is that the fishing industry is composed of scores of individual 'industries' all around the coast, in hundreds of separate ports, harbours, coves and beaches. Each location, indeed, each boat almost, is an industry in itself. There is also a strong element of competition and rivalry between many boats, ports, regions and methods of fishing. The fishing industry is, by its very nature, diverse and scattered and hugely varied, ranging from the £15m pelagic super trawlers in Shetland to 16ft cove boats in Cornwall; from distant water freezers - two - on the Humber to cockle dredgers in the Thames and the Wash. Fishing methods include trawling, beam trawling, pelagic trawling, pair trawling, seine netting, gill netting, tangle netting, potting, long lining, suction dredging and one or two more minor methods such as fyke netting for eels and drift netting for salmon and herring.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that *Fishing News* is the only single unifying thread that draws together this enormous range of diversity and interests, and creates the illusion of 'an industry'. It is also the case that the trade press is a 'stakeholder' in the industry, just as much as any other business that exists to provide a service to the industry, and relies on the industry for its profitability. The fortunes of the trade press rise and fall with those of the industry, just as much as do the fortunes of all its other associated industries. Advertising revenue is the lifeblood of most trade newspapers, both display and classified. When times are good, fishermen invest in new boats and equipment; companies undertake research and develop new products and services; the second-hand boat market is buoyant and, as a result, advertising revenues are healthy. But when the industry is depressed and confidence ebbs, investment in new boats and equipment dries up, supply companies divert their resources to developing new markets and outlets, and advertising revenues are squeezed.

The trade press, therefore, cannot be insulated from the economic fortunes of the fishing industry. Accordingly, as well as being 'the voice of the fishermen', and promoting the industry's cause at a purely editorial level, the fishing press has a vested interest in the well-being of the industry and doing everything it can to promote that cause. This is perhaps another reason why the trade press has so little influence on fisheries governance; it is perceived as simply just another part of the industry, echoing the views the fishery managers hear repeatedly from the industry itself.

It could even be argued that the fishing press contributes to the problem for fisheries managers of ever increasing technical efficiency. So-called 'technical creep' has been calculated to account for an average increase in efficiency of about 3 per cent a year, meaning that fishing effort should be cut by this amount each year just to stand still, as it were. As a primary medium for the dissemination of new technical information that leads to ever greater efficiency and thus pressure on stocks, the fishing press perhaps helps to make the difficult task of fisheries governance even more challenging. This process is inevitable, because the fishing press survives on the advertising of companies that are marketing these new products and services, and which rely on the trade press as the primary medium by which they can reach their target market.

13.5 Conclusion

To sum up, I believe that in evaluating the influence of the media in fisheries governance, we can distinguish between three kinds of media. First, the national media, which tends to be sympathetic to the politically powerful and internationally well-organised environmental movement and exerts influence on fisheries governance, by highlighting the adverse environmental effects of commercial fishing, to the detriment of the fishing industry. Second, the regional media, which tends to favour the interests of its regional fishing industries and has enjoyed some success in obtaining relief for local fishermen in a few policy areas. Third, the specialist fishing trade press, which strongly supports the fishing industry as a whole and has little or no influence on the formulation of fisheries policy. Fisheries policy is made and implemented largely at EU level, while the specialist fishing press is national and therefore fragmented on a European scale. Nevertheless, the trade press serves an important social function as the mouthpiece of small and politically weak industries.

References

- PMSU [Prime Minister's Strategy Unit] (2004) *Net Benefits – a Sustainable and Profitable Future for UK Fishing*, London, Cabinet Office
- Rawcliffe, Peter (1998) *Environmental Pressure Groups in Transition*, Manchester, Manchester University Press