

THE BS RAC SCIENCE WORKSHOP 6th –7th May Gdynia

Organized by Gothenburg Center for Public Learning and Understanding of Science (gcPLUS) at Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden

Evening session 6th May 2009

Reine Johansson, BSRAC chair, welcomed everyone to the workshop. The idea of having such a science workshop had been raised two years ago.

Ilan Chabay welcomed the participants and gave a brief background to the process towards reaching consensus. From 18 months of working with the BSRAC, he had seen a lot of development and progress in the way the RAC organised its work and the building of trust.

Christian Stöhr gave a power point presentation on Facilitating Governance and explained the background to the project that has been running with the BSRAC and set the framework to the workshop. The focus was to be on combining *science advisory and stakeholder participation*. However, there are difficulties with both: science carries uncertainty and is often one-dimensional, and stakeholder participation has multiple sources of knowledge and interests. The aim of the workshop was to look at the pitfalls. Besides issues of trust and credibility of science, the most significant issue was how to translate the scientific data into policy advice. There are two lines of argument:

1. ICES recommendations are based on best available data
2. ICES recommendations are a point of discussion, but there is a need to take onboard other considerations.

With this in mind, there are different perceptions, and one should be aware of the political dimension in connection with the use of scientific advice.

There was a remark from **Michael Sissenwine** who pointed out the need to be aware of the difference between science advice and science advocacy: the process coming from ICES is presented as “science” itself or as science advice, and is assumed to be neutral. There was agreement on the importance of this distinction.

Peter Adler gave an introduction to *Consensus Building* and the experience gained in this at the Keystone Center, USA. He gave a few examples from Keystone to explain the work done with conflict resolution: working together, problem solving, honest dialogue and negotiations in good faith. There is an alchemy in consensus building, and he listed the essential ingredients in this process. Essentially, negotiation leads to trustworthy agreements, and in order to reach agreement there are some essentials:

1. Diversity of opinion – each person comes with some sort of private information
2. People must have independence
3. People need different sorts of knowledge
4. People must “aggregate” – i.e., work together

There was a short discussion after the presentations. The discussion looked at the notion of consensus and whether reaching consensus on values presupposes agreement on the technical issues. The role of science in this process was discussed: it is crucial that value decisions are made on an informed basis. The role of scientists was to make the information available, but not to make the decisions. Science is a methodology, and the kind of science that is being discussed here is a helpful tool in the negotiations, but it is not the answer itself.

The evening session ended with a short discussion of the role and structure of the RACs and whether in a dialogue with scientists, it was possible to negotiate with them and frame questions. Given the review of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), it was suggested that a joint fact-finding (JFF) mission in connection with the consultation process could be interesting as a way of questioning whether opinions in the RAC are adhered to by the European Commission (EC).

Morning session 6th May 2009

The day started with a panel discussion with 5 members: **Ryszard Malik, Poul Degnbol, Michael Sissenwine, Michael Andersen** and **Ottilia Thoreson**. The representatives were asked to reply in a private capacity to the question: **How do we use science and put it into policy in fisheries governance?**

Michael Sissenwine presented the power point he used in connection with the lead up to TAC/quota discussions in 2008. He talked about the role of the advice and pointed out a number of reasons why scientific advice is controversial.

Michael Andersen argued that it is important to distinguish between the assessment itself as a scientific discipline and the advice, which is political. The industry should be involved in the translation of the assessments into political advice, and the RACs should play an ultimate role in this.

Ryszard Malik said that the industry can bring unique knowledge into the decision-making process and that it can be a reliable partner. He felt that the industry is not sufficiently heard and that it should get equal treatment.

Ottilia Thoreson pointed out that while the stakeholders might agree on the long-term goals, there might be diverging opinions about the time frame and acceptable risks. She argued that the current system is focussed too much on single species and that socio-economic advice, in addition to the biological advice, is lacking.

Poul Degnbol outlined that it is important to distinguish two kinds of advice: first to provide different options to reach a certain objective (by ICES) and second which of those options should be chosen (by e.g. the RACs). He pointed out that the decision making process is cumbersome and there is a need for bringing micro-management decisions closer to the regional level.

Peter Adler asked the panel then:

How should one close the gap between what the science tells us and the consensus that we search for?

Poul Degnbol answered that there is a need for more transparency and inclusion of social and economic information – this can be done in the RAC process.

Michael Andersen answered that there is a need for a broad discussion of objectives. He criticized the automaticity and asked for more pragmatic and adaptive scientific advice.

Ryszard Malik answered that it is important to rely on one's own experience and to maintain common sense, since the quality of the science is sometimes low.

Poul Degnbol outlined that the key is communication to get all relevant information on the table. Then one might have to re-evaluate a situation, but one also has to make sure that this goes in both directions and not just to the advantage of the fishing industry.

Michael Sissenwine pointed out that there are many disagreements, which can be reduced by:

1. More transparency and inclusiveness in the process.
2. Specific problems can often (but not always) be solved by a cooperative research approach.
3. If one cannot reach agreement, go to a higher court (court of last resort). This does not resolve the conflict between fishermen and scientist, but it helps decision makers.

Henrik Svenberg remarked that the decision-making process, especially in the Council, has to be part of the discussion. He welcomed the Commission's Green paper in this regard.

Ottilia Thoreson stressed that thinking of fish as a natural resource is a starting point and then consider the economic and social advantage from that. She felt it is very hard sometimes to gain a long-term perspective with the science and the annual process we have.

Peter Adler then asked the question: **What is the additional systematic information that would help everyone to think more effectively about these important issues?**

Several participants saw socio-economic information about the consequences of the advice as most relevant. **Michael Andersen** suggested listening to the fishermen, while **Michael Sissenwine** asked for objective social and economic analysis that might or might not be consistent with the fishermen's knowledge. Together with **Poul Degnbol**, he also pointed to the issue of trade off decisions between different species, as well as short- and long-term impacts. Complete accurate and accessible logbooks from the fishermen, as well as data on discards and from sport-fishermen, were mentioned as further additional information. Concerns were raised that scientists reject a lot of fishermen's information, as it is hard to fit this information into the existing process.

The importance of transparency was stressed, since the industry relies on trust by the consumers. It was also argued that stability is the key issue for fishermen to plan for the future, especially for stocks that are not in danger. **Michael Sissenwine** responded that this is a question of control and we need the societal discussion about the objectives like precaution and stability. **Michael Andersen** noted that the frustration is that the dialogue on what to do with the fish stocks is only between

politicians and scientists and that the system doesn't allow for a wider dialogue. **Doug Beveridge** outlined that one first has to decide whether one wants to be involved in participatory science or participatory management, which are quite different and often become blurred.

A short discussion followed on *micro-management*: Several people stressed the need to bring micro-management decisions to a regional level with a greater responsibility given to the fishing industry. **Poul Degnbol** suggested shifting the burden of proof to the industry. The RAC could play a major role in this.

Yvonne Walther draw the focus back to *the way scientists work with fishermen*. She talked about her experiences from her work and stressed that trust building and transparency are very important. In response, some people agreed that the input process from fishermen to science works well – at least in Sweden and Denmark. **Henrik Svenberg** nevertheless cautioned against scientists becoming politicians. **Michael Sissenwine** agreed that creating a very interactive process while retaining clearly defined roles is challenging.

It was further outlined that one has to distinguish between the ICES process to assemble advice and the discussion about how to get fisheries information, which has to be local. **Doug Beveridge** felt that there is quite some confusion within the sector about who provides the advice, who makes the decisions, and where the best point in the chain is for people to be able to contribute.

Ryszard Malik pointed out that he expects that the value of the fishermen's knowledge and the science to be the same. Furthermore, concerns were expressed that the scientists don't want the fishermen's data and that there is a lack of trust in the scientific results. In order to accept the science, fishermen need explanations that consider the different (disciplinary) languages. In response, **Yvonne Walther** stressed that it is not a matter of value in data, but of data of a different kind. **Michael Sissenwine** felt that both sides have the right to be frustrated because a lot of useful information is not used due to problems in design and proper technological implementation into the system. It was concluded that the communication and clarification channels exist on an institutional, European level, but they still have to be improved at grass root level.

Presentation:

Indicator-based assessment of the status of Baltic fish stocks: contribution from the EU FP6 project IMAGE

Margit Eero (DTU Aqua) and **Henn Ojaveer** (Estonian Marine Institute, University Tartu) gave a power point presentation of the latest results of the use of indicators in the Baltic Sea. There is a need for tools for decision support. They have made a compilation of data series to describe the pressures on the system to track progress towards management. The approach is based on “fuzzy-logic” approach.

In the discussion **Michael Andersen** argued that indicators have a serious risk of missing the point. A thing is only indicative of what it actually shows. They cannot, with any level of confidence, be used for a derived effect. Several people responded that indicators will be necessary when one moves further with the ecosystem approach. An indicator system tries to bring a value discussion about the importance of different elements of an ecosystem down to numerical values and some kind of conclusion. **Michael Sissenwine** and **Hans Lassen** remarked that such a system will therefore have objective and subjective elements.

Ilan Chabay then asked the group for candidate issues where JFF could be useful. Among the suggestions were the driftnet issue, the cormorants, the by-catch in the cod fishery and the ecosystem management approach. **Michael Andersen** suggested having a bigger discussion even on the management plan for the pelagic species. **Nikki Sporrong** agreed that there would have to be a more focussed event that offers some immediate results in order for the NGOs to participate.

Several participants expressed their feeling that the data delivery question might not be the main issue. It was proposed that what the fishermen like to debate is not necessarily the outcome of the assessments, but the *interpretation of the results of the assessments* (the advice). A significant part of the afternoon session was dedicated to this issue.

Michael Andersen argued that sometimes there are wrong assumptions in the advice, where the fishing industry can contribute additional knowledge, e.g. about fishing patterns. **Henrik Svenberg** supported this position referring to the example of the uncertain advice on sprat from 2008. He stressed that stability is essential to the industry. He criticized taking the ICES advice as the absolute truth. **Steve Karnicki** and **Poul Degnbol** remarked that the deviations from the advice based on additional fisheries information have to go in both directions. For the discussions in the BS RAC **Inger Näslund** felt that there are difficulties in finding the same interpretation of the information. She suggested inviting scientists to the working groups – someone who is considered trustworthy by all stakeholders.

Poul Degnbol pointed out that ICES is presenting multiple options in the advice. The RAC will and should come in and say what their preferences in this are. **Michael Andersen** responded that the problem is that fishermen often feel excluded from being able to discuss with ICES, whether we can achieve the overall objective in a different way. **Hans Lassen** stressed that ICES does not have objectives, but they come from the Commission. He strongly disagreed that ICES should be debating with the RAC about objectives. **Steve Karnicki** agreed the RAC has the possibility of choosing the option most suitable for it. With increasing regionalisation, this will become even more important.

Gunnar Asplund outlined that fishermen can contribute at several stages. Initiating the final part of the discussion he asked: *When it is appropriate in the ICES process for the BS RAC to come in?*

Michael Sissenwine and **Hans Lassen** answered that the RACs cannot attend the closed working groups meetings at ICES. But the ICES system has a benchmark system, which open to stakeholders. The review process, the advice drafting, and the advisory committee all welcome the RAC as observers. Once more it was stressed that a lot of the exchange has to be on national and regional level, since the data collection is done by the national marine research institutes.

Peter Adler wound up the discussions by saying that what people see as the same set of words is actually used differently. There's a lot of room where things could be made sharper. If the RAC is to be effective in representing ideas, then the distinctions have to be made to work. There is confusion over roles and functions and while some members would like to see more work on technical questions (to improve the scientific assessments, for example), others see the technical information as sufficient and want to discuss more value-related questions. There is a need to improve further communication between the stakeholders.