

Copenhagen FRESH meeting June 24th 2010

Proposal

What is so interesting about the development in Dutch cod fishing in the 1800s is that it evolved in reverse order to the evolution of today. Now, the old perspective is the perspective focusing on (maximizing) catch rates, whereas in the 1800s this was the new perspective. Today, the new perspective is focusing on (coherent) ecosystems and human systems, while in the 1800s this was rejected as old-fashioned by the judicial reforms.¹ The wish for sustainability calls for the fishers as for the institutions and the administration of fishing and throws light on the difference between cod and herring fishing, as herring fishing was strictly regulated, while cod fishing practised under comparably few rules. Most of the time, captains and fishers fished for cod as well as for herring, so how could they trust each other when fishing for cod, but not when fishing for herring?² The reason given is usually that the Dutch must secure their branded herring to compete on the market, but they exported their salted cod without similar monopolistic protection. It seems the Dutch ship owners decided on this heterogeneity in their managing their access to the common-pool resources themselves.³ This resembles what today is known as co-management, so is it possible to use the historical material as a source of inspiration for future “aspirations for a balance of resource conservation and human concerns”?⁴ I would like to place cod fishing, at sea or near the coast, in an institutional analysis development framework with the objective of seeking inspiration for future sustainability.

¹ Charles Anthony; Sustainable Fishery Systems; Blackwell 2000

² Ostrom Elinor, Gardner Roy, Walker James; Rules, Games and Common-Pool Resources; The University of Michigan Press 1994 and Ostrom Elinor, Walker James ed.; Trust and Reciprocity, Interdisciplinary Lessons from Experimental Research; Russell Sage Foundation 2002

³ Keohane Robert O and Ostrom Elinor; Local Commons and Global Interdependence, Heterogeneity and Cooperation in Two Domains; Sage Publications 1995

⁴ Charles Anthony; Sustainable Fishery Systems; p.186