



Fishing cultures: marine fisheries and sense of place in coastal communities

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Outline

- Background to CHARM
- Rationale
- Methods
- Initial Results



Background & Aim



- CHARM III
- Aim: To explore the social and cultural impacts of marine fisheries on coastal communities.
- Looking at the contribution and importance of marine fishing to: place identity, cultural heritage, sense of place and social capital.
- To inform the development of fisheries policy.



Rationale

- Most fisheries policy and research has centred around biological and economic objectives
- There is a lack of understanding of the socio-cultural impacts of fishing reforms and policies

“Rather than serving as an active influence in shaping fisheries policy, social issues are seen rather more as the irritating consequences of policy. At best they are considered late in the policy process and usually dealt with in an ad hoc manner”

Symes & Phillipson 2009

Sense of place

- Williams and Stewart (1998) suggest that sense of place encompasses not just attitudes, values and beliefs, but “the social and historical *processes* by which place meanings are constructed, negotiated and politically contested.”
- Social processes define how places are created and given meaning, just as ecological processes determine the fabric of ecosystems. The meanings that people attach to places can be representative of a range of social, historic and cultural structures.

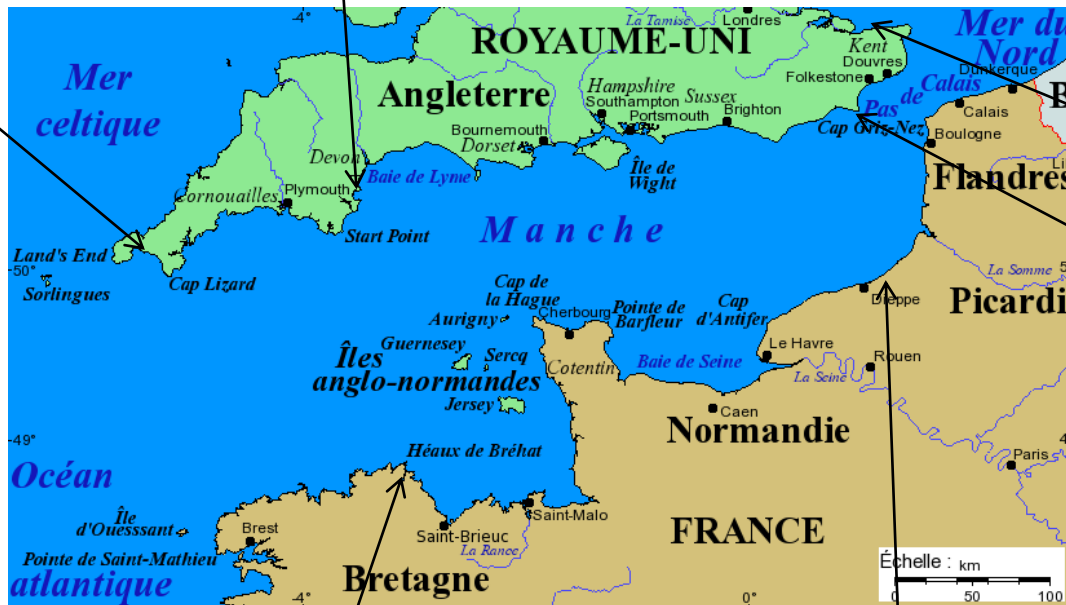
Intangible values

- **Fishing is part of a network of activities - not just product, but culture, family ties, community cohesion, place-based identity**
- “Their relation to fishing is expressive and existential ... Therefore, fishers often persist in working in a failed fishery” (van Ginkel 2001 p. 189)
- “For fisheries-dependent communities, fishing is the glue that holds the community together” (Brookfield et al. 2005, p. 56)
- “Fisheries dependent communities become vulnerable when their social cohesion is undermined and their cultural identity challenged – and when direction, leadership, organisation and sense of self-determination are missing” (Symes & Phillipson 2009, p. 4)

Study Areas

Devon – Brixham
(Oct/Nov 2010)

Cornwall – Cadgwith,
Helford River, Mullion
Cove, Newlyn,
Pemberth, Porthleven,
The Lizard, Mevagissey,
Sennen Cove (August
2010)



Kent – Whitstable
(Oct/Nov 2010)

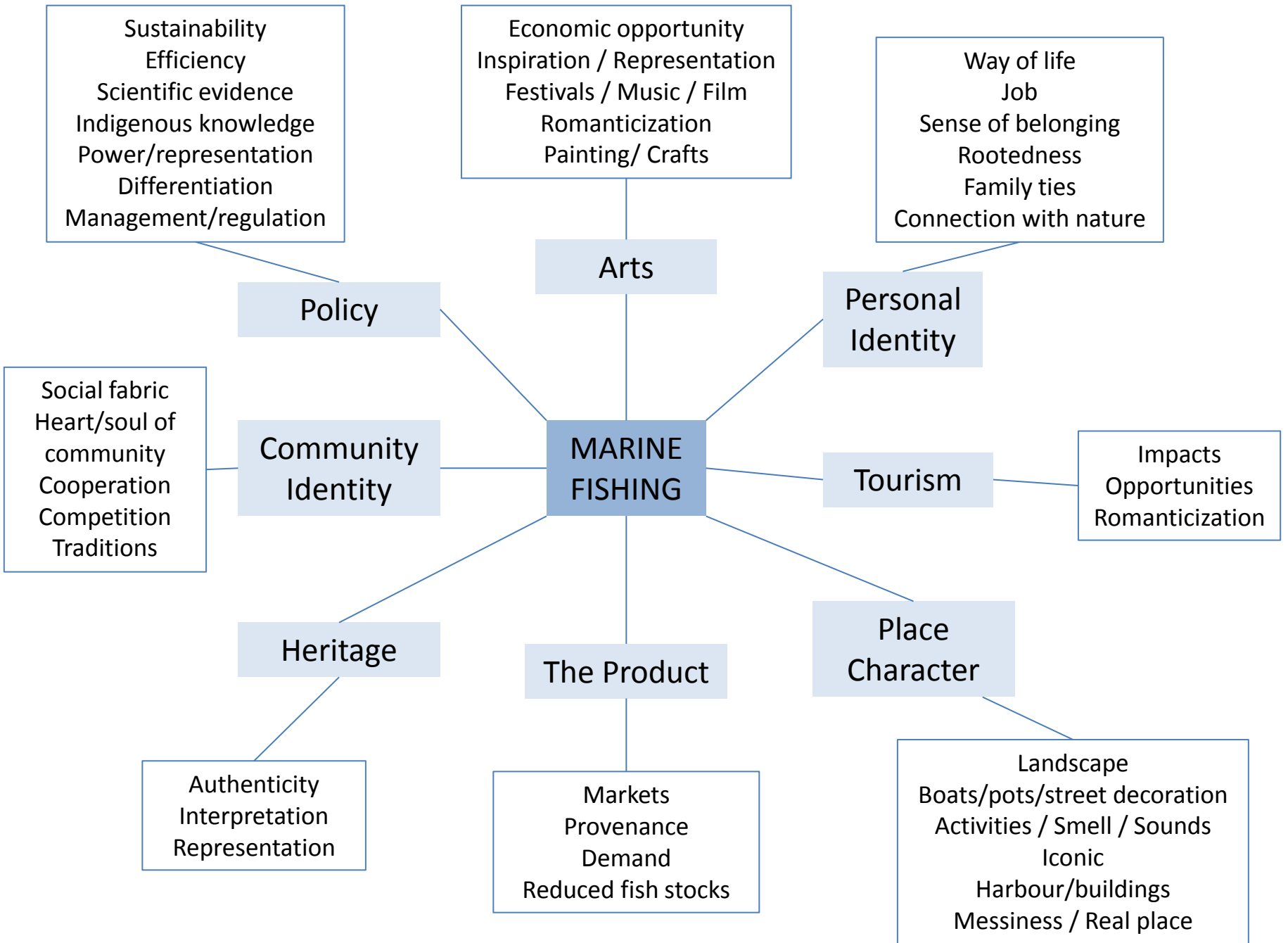
East Sussex – Hastings
(June/July 2010)

Brittany – TBC (Spring
2011)

Normandy – TBC
(Spring 2011)

Methods

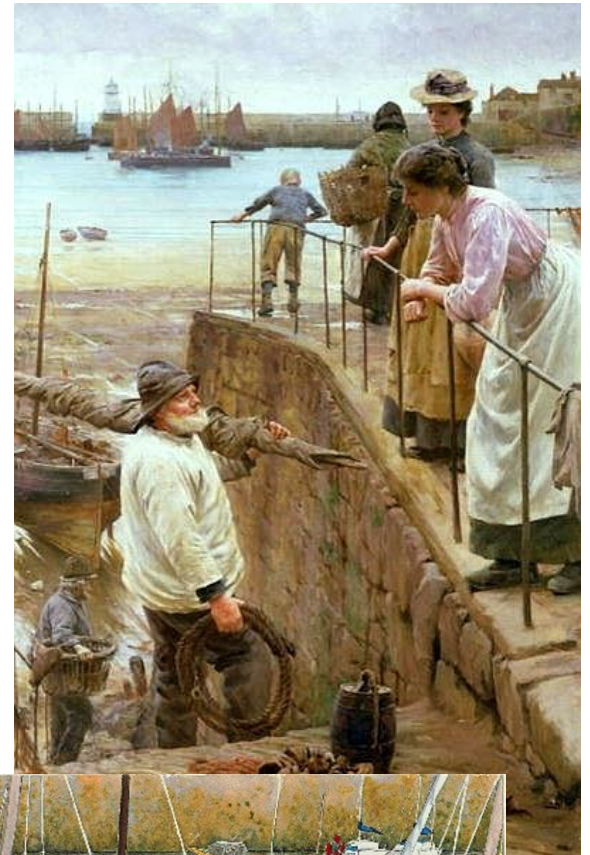
- Qualitative semi-structured interviews (to date: Hastings 19; Cornwall 39)
 - Fishermen
 - Fishing associations/industry
 - Tourism providers
 - Museums/heritage
 - Artists/galleries
- Material culture study
- Tourism representation study



Arts

- Painting/ Crafts
- Festivals / Music / Film
- Economic opportunity
- Inspiration / Representation
- Romanticization

“It’s saturated, absolutely saturated and when I was away from here... it was like a physical ache to get back”
(Artist, Cadgwith)



Personal Identity

- Way of life / Job
- Sense of belonging
- Rootedness
- Family ties
- Connection with nature



Personal identity



“It’s the most important thing in my life, all my life revolves around it, always has done. Every single thing I’ve ever done revolves around the fishing”
(Fisherman, Hastings)

“I’ve been fishing ever since I was 15 years old, I’ve never had a job interview. My dad was a fisherman, his dad was a fisherman and I think his dad was a fisherman”
(Fisherman, Mevagissey)

“A big motivation for me out at sea is the fact that it’s been in my family for near 100 years now and ... the first time I ever went out on my dad’s boat I was 8 months old ... but I’ve been going out with him on proper fishing trips since I’ve been about 7 years old ... and it becomes part of the fabric of your life. You see it and you’re around it and you become accustomed to it” (Young fisherman, Mullion Cove)

“It’s in my blood, when you speak with a lot of fisherman they will always say the same, once a fisherman always a fisherman” (Fisherman, Mullion Cove)

Tourism

- **Negative impacts:**
 - Increased house prices (second homes, holiday homes)
 - Impacts on local community & services
 - Conversion of fish-related building to holiday homes can lead to loss of cultural heritage (as well as change of use)
- **Opportunities:**
 - Direct selling of fish
 - Boat/fishing trips
 - Jobs (souvenirs, accommodation etc)

“Around £5 million is contributed into the local economy by the tourism effect of the fishing heritage, the fishing boats ... It’s actually worth more than the value of the fish, which is quite phenomenal”
(Hastings Borough Council Marketing Manager)



Tourism

- Romanticization
- Expectations of visitors



“It’s the one thing that we do it’s still hunting so it’s back to nature in a way really” (VisitCornwall tourism manager)

“It’s all part of the image of Cornwall as well isn’t it, you know you see... in tourism books and there’s always little ports” (Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee)

“Being in a place where there are real live people that you can talk to in the pub or on the harbourside does bring things to life, I think again it adds another dimension to people’s holiday the fact that they’re not living in some museum” (VisitCornwall tourism manager)

“There is a certain romantic appeal of somebody getting out of bed at 4 o’clock in the morning, getting in a little boat on their own and going and earning their living” (Fisherman, Sennen)

Place character

- Landscape
- Boats/pots/street decoration
- Activities / Smell / Sounds
- Iconic
- Harbour/buildings
- Messiness / Real place



Place character



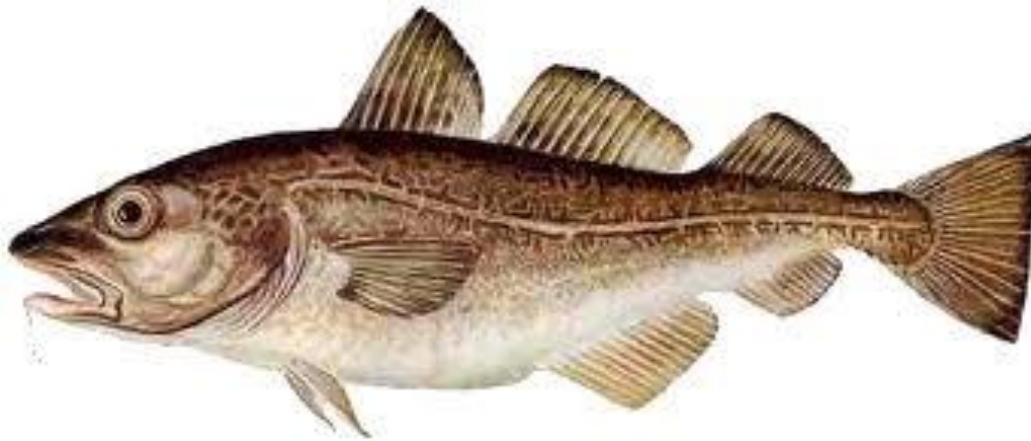
“I think the harbour looks far better with the different coloured fishing boats in the harbour etc, if it was just filled up with white plastic yachts for instance... It’s the changing nature of it I suppose, the colour, the fact that you see nets being mended, you know they’ll be a trawl being pulled off, you know different things just going on around.” (Harbour Master, Mevagissey)

“You don’t want places to feel like a museum” (Tourism provider, Mevagissey)



The Product

- Markets
- Provenance
- Demand
- Reduced fish stocks



The Product

“That sense of place is really important on all levels. You know whether it’s for the local community or for the tourists. You know the fact that you’re coming here and you’re eating something that was caught by that man there, just out there is special. That authenticity of experience as well as keeping it real.”

(Museum & Art Gallery Director, Penzance)



“There’s a much greater appetite for information in terms of provenance now, ... some of the websites that we’ve got that you get a lot of feedback from consumers all over, but particularly restauranteers ... they’re interested in sort of sustainability stuff and looking at who caught the fish, was it a Cornish line caught bass.” (Seafood Cornwall, Newlyn)



Heritage

- Authenticity
- Interpretation
- Representation

Poltesco, Cornwall



Pemberth, Cornwall

“I think it’s important to know where you’ve come from because if you don’t know where you’ve come from you can’t really work out where you’re going.” (Heritage representative, Cornwall)

Community Identity

- Social fabric
- Heart/soul of community
- Cooperation
- Competition
- Traditions



“It’s quite hard to put into words how it influences people and influences everyone’s sort of life here. I mean it would be great to be able to describe what that is but I am just not articulate enough to do it.” (Artist, Cadgwith)

Policy

- Sustainability
- Scientific evidence
- Indigenous knowledge
- Efficiency/differentiation
- Power/representation
- Management/regulation



Policy

“It’s been fished for over 100 years and it’s still there. And if you were doing something wrong you’d know ... I’m just sick to death of being criminalised by marine conservation societies who always have the moral high ground, but have no nouse at all.” (Fisherman, Mullion Cove)



“They don’t take into consideration anything at all to do with community. To do with the social aspects of what their plans and what their intentions are going to mean at the end of the day for everybody that’s got to get on with it ...and it’s absolutely tearing us to pieces. The fishing industry is not on it’s knees ... it’s in its coffin. ...At the moment we’re just getting trodden on and just rammed into the ground by civil servants, scientists, scientific evidence that we don’t say it’s wrong, but we don’t understand a lot of it.” (Fisherman, Hastings)

Next steps

- Full analysis of data & integration of both physical & subjective dimensions.
- Communication strategies to make outcomes visible in highly contested policy arena.
- Comparative study with Northern France.

“The most endangered species on the water is fishermen”
(Hastings fisherman)

