



First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea

27–30 November 2013, St. Julian's, Malta

Background paper – Thematic session III Integration of small-scale fisheries in marine protected areas (MPAs)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the general framework of the First Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea and of its main objectives, this study settled its principles and orientations for the optimal and sustainable integration of small scale fisheries into Mediterranean MPAs (Marine Protected Areas). Three strong lines of thoughts have surfaced – synoptic overview:

Towards a win-win strategy between MPAs and small scale fisheries

The management objectives of MPAs and of small-scale fisheries intersect on many aspects due to the spatial character of related issues. The positive effects of MPAs on exploited marine resources are largely known and communicated, not only with respect to the biological and ecological dimensions but also to social and economic aspects. The establishment of spatial rules determines the thresholds for restrictions through the patterns of access rights/exploitation. This must warranty the optimal conservation of ecosystems and their sustainable use. Reaching a win-win strategy must enable to achieve an ideal integration, an equitable sharing of space (between fisheries activities and conservation) while strengthening synergies between small-scale fisheries and MPAs, as stated in the strategic objectives 2 and 3 of the 2012 Antalya Declaration (2012 Forum of MPAs in the Mediterranean).

What are the expectations of small-scale fishermen?

Historically, the management of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean is grounded on models of decentralised community-based regulations attached to clearly defined fishing grounds that are recognised and warranted by the State authorities. Today, the economic crisis affects the general state of small scale fisheries in the Mediterranean leading to the weakened of fishermen's groups and of their capacity to organise the sector on the local scale. Beyond the difficulties affecting the resources (depletion, variations), problems encountered are also internal to the profession (weak renewal, aging, demographic loss, community divide and erosion of the representativity of the profession) and amplified by various external factors, namely the increase of coastal human activities and uses (the cause of spatial conflicts) and environmental degradation (pollution, contaminants, etc.). For all these reasons, MPAs must be able to contribute significantly to the sustainable and spatial management of small-scale fisheries. The multiplication of uses and regulations within the marine environment makes the sharing of space and resources more difficult. These parameters require that the different actors engage in a negotiation approach. Although they share common responsibility the issues differ, in particular with regards to small scale fisheries which fully depends on the state of resources and access/exploitation rights.

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The main expectations of small scale fisheries towards MPAs can therefore be summarised as follows:

- Avoid increasing regulatory and spatial constraints which tend to multiply and which make access to the exploitation of living resources more complex;
- Improve the quality/resilience of natural environments by acting in a similar and complementary way towards other factors of marine degradation (pollution among various pressures) and of mortality of living resources;
- Develop tools allowing the improvement of marine natural productivity;
- Warranty the safekeeping of the diversity of fishing units, an essential feature of this professional sector in the Mediterranean;
- Support the diversification of small-scale fisheries activities;
- Flagship the sustainability of small-scale fisheries practices and the quality of its products;
- Encourage the protection of the coastal zone (3 to 5 n.m.) as a key and priority activity area for small-scale fisheries;
- Implement measures and sufficient capacity to limit and monitor the growing fishing effort which is not undertaken by the professional sector;
- Improve the planning and decision mechanisms aimed at fisheries and MPAs;
- Secure the systematic representation of small-scale fisheries professional within governance processes of MPAs.

What strategies for MPA managers?

Various forms of MPA management exist, depending on their status, their objectives and local constraints the managers encounter. No MPAs presents identical circumstances with regards to small scale fisheries occurring inside or outside a protected site. Broadly speaking, the following orientations can be taken into account when looking at the daily relations between MPAs and small scale fisheries:

- Refine communication and the dynamic relations between fishermen, MPA managers and scientists. Artisanal fishermen foster links of varying degrees with managers and scientists. These links can be improved as they are more or less strong and fruitful while sometimes also suffering from mutual misreading (on objectives, contents, methods, consequences, risks, and so on).
- Identify or set up groups of stakeholders. The very concept of governance places the participation of interested parties/actors at the heart of concerns. This worthy intent implies that actors of the small-scale fisheries sector are identified, structured and institutionalised, if at all possible, in order to guaranty their operative implication in the various processes. This prerequisite is further necessary to groups and communities of fishermen so they can get organised and ultimately endorse the “MPA tool” to secure their effective and dynamic involvement within the “conservation of resources” dimension.