

Strategic use of uncertainty: Regional comparison of fisheries cooperation in the North Pacific and Northeast Atlantic

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Sustainable and equitable management of shared, straddling and highly migratory fish stocks depends on cooperation among participating states. Yet scientific uncertainty associated with the ecological parameters of such stocks and proposed models is frequently used strategically to further national management objectives. We introduce initial findings of a comparative study of fisheries cooperation in the North Pacific and Northeast Atlantic, and how respective states in the two regions have dealt with uncertainty when concluding cooperative management agreements. The regional comparison is interesting due to the high level of variation between the two regions in terms of (1) heterogeneity of cultures and types of national governments; (2) level of transparency in sharing catch and distribution data; (3) recent/ongoing shifts in the regional balance of power; (4) history of regional scientific cooperation; (5) respective national dependency on fisheries as a source of food security and economic development.

We intend to investigate the impact of these five factors on the ability to reach scientific consensus amongst the states (consensus that ultimately is necessary to agree on a management plan for the shared stock in question). We will gather data on the five factors through a combination of literature review and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (consisting of industry representatives, government officials, regional governing body officials, and leading stock scientists). To estimate the probability of reaching scientific consensus and the effect of the four factors on that probability, we will consider using different tools, such as Exponential Random Graph Models (ERGM).