

SUBSISTENCE FISHERIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A PREFACE

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Guest Editor

The South African fisheries policy was revised in 1998, culminating in the Marine Living Resources Act No. 18 (1998). This was founded on a policy that advocated sustainable development, equitable access to resources and stability of the industry. Innovatively, the Act prescribed that attention be given to the needs of subsistence fishers, a group that previously had been marginalized and overlooked. The intention was to protect the needs of poor people who rely on marine resources for food or as a modest source of income, and to ensure sustainable use of these resources.

To give substance to the Act, the Chief Director of Marine & Coastal Management (MCM), the national agency managing marine resources, appointed a Subsistence Fisheries Task Group (SFTG) to advise on the management of subsistence fishers. The abbreviated terms of reference were to (1) define subsistence fishers; (2) identify coastal zones appropriate for their use; (3) ensure mechanisms to produce recommendations on the proportions of individual stocks that should be allocated to subsistence fishers, and how these should be allocated; (4) identify protocols to involve local communities and relevant authorities in the procedures; (5) recommend models for the implementation for management, monitoring, compliance, training and research; (6) develop guidelines and mechanisms for the formation of small-scale commercial fishing groups as an alternative to subsistence harvesting for food.

The SFTG report was submitted to MCM early in 2000, investigated for feasibility by MCM, and accepted as a practical means of applying the Act in respect of subsistence fishers. This suite of seven papers is a distillation of that report and the supporting investigations commissioned to aid the SFTG. The papers cover (1) the procedures adopted; (2) the identification of subsistence fishing communities; (3) analyses of the socio-economic profiles of select communities; (4) a record of the perceptions and concerns of the fishers; (5) the development of a new definition and criteria to distinguish subsistence fishers; (6) consideration of which resources are suitable for subsistence fishers or small-scale commercial fishers; (7) a synopsis of the recommendations. Three of the papers present original findings. Others are syntheses of the process and the recommendations that flowed from it. All papers were peer-reviewed. They represent the views of the authors

and should not be construed as the opinions of MCM or as government policy. During their research, the SFTG found remarkably little formal published literature on subsistence fisheries, and this series of papers is published in the hopes of stimulating further theoretical and practical considerations of the topic. Figure 1 places the series of papers in the context of the steps that Berkes *et al.* (2001) argue are necessary for the development of any new co-management programme, such as for the subsistence fishery considered in this suite of papers.

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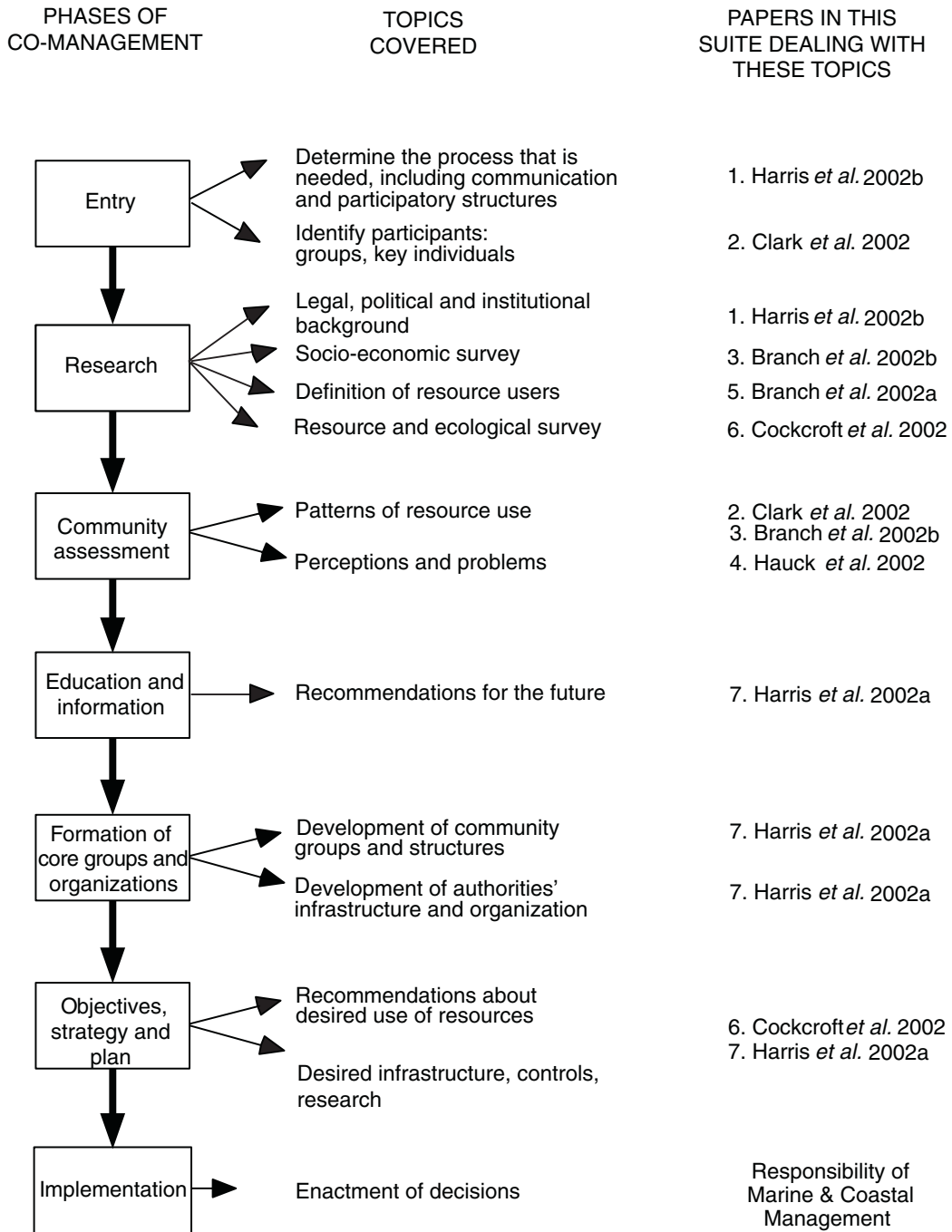


Fig. 1: Summary of the phases advocated by Berkes *et al.* (2001) during the development of a new co-management programme, the topics that fall into these steps, and the papers in this suite that deal with these. The numbers of the papers refer to the sequence outlined in the preface