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INTRODUCTION

How is the european regulation on eel (R(CE) n° 1100/2007 , 18 september of 2007) applied at different levels, national, basin, and local (on which people are in contact with the eels) ? We have conducted a sociological analysis, based on investigations using the principle of subsidiarity, defined as a distribution principle of tasks (Borraz, 1997).

We suggest two models of ideal-type of governance (Muller, 1992), and to compare them to the management of the fisheries and the free circulation in the frame of the management plan for eels in France. "Ideal types" are idea-constructs formed from certain characteristics of a given social item. They don't exist anywhere in reality, rather they are «measures » that we can use in comparing social organisations¹.

Knowledge plays a key role in the management. How is it distributed at each level ? Those investigations take care of the different representations of the eels that appear.

The sectorial model

- * At the national level
- * Concentrated
- * Management by regulation
- * Negotiation between professional fishermen, the ministry and the european commission
- * Authority principle

The model of governance

- * A « deconcentrated » and decentralised method
- * Local stakeholders are implied
- * Governance at the local level
- * Responsibility principle

Which identity for eels ?

Eels as an economic ressource



Eels as a common responsibility



Materials

Qualitative methods, observation of stakeholders, interviews, and reading meeting notes.

30 interviews were conducted at the national, basin and local level (governing bodies, technicians, fishermen, scientists, collectives...).

Observations (meetings at the basin level, studies conducted on fishes...)

Reports of meetings, texts of the european regulation, and the management plan...

1 – from http://sociology.socialsciencedictionary.com/Sociology-Dictionary/IDEAL_TYPE



THE MANAGEMENT OF EELS AT DIFFERENT SCALES

Fishing



Management must be decided at the European level, due to the characteristic of the fish : a unique population.
The regulation was written by the General Direction (Mare) of the Commission.



Free circulation



Redaction of an Eels Management Plan (EMP)

Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture
« ministry of the fishermen »
France have decided on a national regulation.



Sectorial management.
Ministry are close to European Commission and professional fishermen.

Ministry of Ecology
« ministry of the fish ».
Sectorial issues as hydro-electricity are treated at the national level.

« it is one of the best EMP given to the European Commission, because it takes care of other factors than fisheries » (fisherman).

Prioritized action zone defined at the basin level.

Local level have few decisions to take, except to regulate the date of the opening of fishing. But many exceptions, and specificity of some situations are preserved.

To preserve the eels, it is important to have a willingness of a collective dynamic in the basin.

Willingness to accommodate the regulation defined at the national level.



Many local actors don't agree with the management plan and the decision made to regulate fisheries. They regret to have not been included. They ask to themselves why preserve if the predation on eels continues.

« it is not a regulation to save eels, but to preserve an economic activity » (collective)

Eels thrive in many different habitats, so need to cooperation of many different stakeholders.

« We want to promote collective démarches » (water agency)

Actions not necessarily done in the frame of the EMP, but, related to other aspects (preserve ecosystems, other species..).

For some collectivities, eels : an indicator of the quality of the habitat.



THE KNOWLEDGE FOR THE MANAGEMENT. AN ISSUE FOR SUBSIDIARITY ?

Fishing



Free circulation



Scientific, especially biological, arguments play a key role in the management of eels. But scientific argument is only a factor among others in the discussion. Uncertainty : about the objective, lack of data.



At each level, use of scientific models to complemente the lack of data. Production of models with data produced at the local level.



Lack of data on all fisheries, and particularly anglers. Hard to homogeneize data from one area to the other.



Fishermen participate to the research on eels (mark-recapture method)

Professionnel fisheries play an important rôle in the production of data. Close relations but often conflictual between fishermen and scientists.

Are fishermen predators or guardians of the river ? They feel they should be given recognition for their knowledge and their social role.

Little data on the free circulation and role played by the turbine during downstream migration. In the frame of the EMP, a programme of research with hydro-electricity on downstream migration has been initiated.



Collecting data on eels (electric fishery on a dam)

Experimentation at the local level on the free circulation could be an opportunity to collect data and information ? Conflict between two models : the pragmatic one (stakeholders try, test and learn at the same moment), a « technico-scientific », (specialists first study problems, and only after realise works for free circulation).

In conclusion

Management of eels depends also of the identity of eels and different actors implied, fishermen, stakeholders...

As an ubiquitous animal, why not seeing eels as a mediator ? They permit to make more links between different administrations, different stakeholders concerned, between the different spaces of the territories: upstream / downstream; the fresh water / salted one, the marshes / estuaries.

But how to combine the preservation of eels as an economic resource and take care of eels as a common responsibility ?

Bibliography

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