

Donegal Islands Survival Plan

2012-2015

A Case for Combining Social and Environmental
Sustainability
in Irish Island Communities*



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Proposal for the Donegal Islands Communities in 2012 Arannmore Island, Inis Boffine, Tory Island

With the support of Alyne Delaney (Alyne E. Delaney, Innovative Fisheries Management (IFM), Aalborg University, Denmark, Brian O' Riordan (ICSF), the Gaia Foundation, the European small Islands Federation (ESIN), Iain MacKinnon of the Scottish Crofting Federation.

We call for the fair treatment of small island communities, respect for fishermen as providers of sustainable seafood and as custodians of our fisheries and the sea. We ask for the responsibility and right to practice traditional livelihoods that are ecologically sustainable, socially just and culturally diverse and pass down our traditions, knowledge and skills to future generations.

A 3-year plan to save and maintain the communities on the islands. 2012 – 2015

For Árainn Mhór, Inis Boffine and Tory Island, we call the Irish Government to look at creating opportunities within the following management measures:

- Easing the 2006 ban on salmon fishing

Today, scientists agree there is a surplus of 250 000/300 000 wild salmon in the Atlantic. The salmon are going up Irish rivers 365 days a year. A small fraction of these days and catch of this wild salmon stock will provide a livelihood while still maintaining the stock. It is proposed that:

- 1) Islands fishermen have access to 10% of the days,
- 2) Islands fishermen should have access to 10 % of the surplus stock, 25 000 salmon.
- 3) Two days at sea (DAS) scenarios
 - a) Daylight hours only: 36 days seasons
 - b) 4 days per week for the summer season: 7 weeks period in June, July, August.
- 4) Islands fishermen catches will be monitored and controlled by an independent third party
- 5) Official reports will be submitted for the Irish government, County Council and scientific interest.

- Easing the regulations that restrict fishing in area V1 A

- 1) Islands communities should be allowed to fish other species around the islands within the 12 miles limit using their traditional, (sustainable, and small-scale?) methods
- 2) Strengthening the derogation to principle of open and equal access to a common resource by restricting the 12-mile zone only to local island small-scale inshore fishermen, and managing the fishery on a days at sea (DAS) basis.
- 3) Providing a special derogation to the council regulations for fixing fishing opportunities (TACs and quotas), by making special provisions for island communities, and ring fencing island quotas.

New governance and stakeholder actions

In addition to the above changes in management measures, the Islands fishermen shall make the following positive changes in their own management and work life:

- 1) The island fishermen will create an independent organisation to represent them at state and public level
- 2) The island fishermen will work with an Irish Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAGs) and the FARNET support unit of the European Commission to create bottom-up projects for designing and implementing local strategies for the sustainable development of fisheries areas. This could include, for example, creating a trade-mark (e.g., “organically caught”) to brand and sell their catches in European markets.
- 3) The island fishermen will work to create new jobs to maintain families on the islands.

**The Donegal Islands:
A Case for Combining Social and Environmental
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in Irish Island Communities**

Introduction

We have to think first of what the sea is able to produce and then fish according to that – and not the other way round. The sooner we start doing this the better – because this is the highway to social and economic wellbeing of our fishing industry and our coastal communities.

Commissioner Maria Damanaki

Policies and Directives in the European Union mandate that management sustain communities and society in addition to protecting natural resources and the environment. This is called for, for example, in the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Under the current reform of the CFP, discussions at the EU level include the importance of considering small-scale fisheries, small communities, and small islands communities. The European Commission and the EU Parliament are also talking about regionalization, giving more power to the regions to manage fishing locally, thus the Parliament has an interest in Member States (MS), including Ireland, managing their communities and environment in a sustainable way.

Commissioner Damanaki, for example, has shown an interest in European small scale fishers and fishing communities, including with Co. Donegal Irish fishers in Brussels in meeting in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

European policies and directives, such as the IMP and CFP, have three supporting pillars: the environment, economics, and society. These also tie in with international conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), as well, which call for the protection of island communities. Thus, considering island communities in the management process does not give special treatment to communities at the expense of natural resources, but actually follows the mandates of EU policies and international agreements.

It is time that community and environment not be viewed as “either - or” but are rather seen together as an integrated one, as fitting in today’s climate of broad, ecosystem-based management. The Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) was seen to be needed as an “all-embracing policy aimed at developing a thriving maritime economy and the full potential of sea-based activity in an environmentally sustainable manner” (CEC “Strategic Objectives 2005-09,” supra note 99, p9). The goal then is thriving communities and eco-friendly sectors in addition to sustainable environmental goods and services.

It has been seen that, in general, in the optimization of these aforementioned EU directives and policies, the ecological pillar has often had priority, at the expense of the others, particularly of society. Yet, depending on the political and ecological climate, this does not have to always be the case. There are cases which provide a unique opportunity to have all three pillars supported equally: it is possible to take all three into account, working for sustainable resources, as well as sustainable (and economically sound) communities.

The bonus of considering both community and environment is that you save both for present and future generations. The Donegal Islands, such as Árainn Mhór, provide a wonderful opportunity to show how management can succeed in meeting the goals and requirements of, for example, the IMP and the CFP; doing so also helps meet EU obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) whereby island communities also merit protection. Protecting both the community and the environment will show Ireland as a progressive State and one whose lead other EU nations will follow.

The Donegal Islands

Árainn Mhór

Árainn Mhór is a small island in a peripheral area of Ireland with a declining population. In 1988 there were 768 residents on the island; today there are only 487. One of the key reasons for the population decline is the limited number of employment opportunities; many former residents would return if they could earn a livelihood.

In the past, fisheries were particularly important to community members for their livelihood and identity and they have always, as small-scale fishers, harvested using eco-friendly methods. For example, island fishers have never had discards as they fish seasonally, use local grounds they know well, and more importantly, all remaining fish are sold, eaten or used as bait. Thus there was no waste in the local fisheries.

Under current rules, however, fishermen must drive for several hours to the mainland to buy expensive, high quality fish to use as bait since they are no longer allowed to fish and use the non-quota species they previously used for bait. Having to go to Killybegs is not only expensive for the fishermen's economy, but it is also polluting with unnecessary carbon emissions from driving and increases wear-and-tear on local infrastructure.

Today, the ability to fish and harvest maritime resources is vital if the island communities are to survive. The population is reaching a make-or-break point; if it declines any further, social services will be cut and the schools will close. Árainn Mhór, for example, is a vibrant and active community, but once schools are lost, the last families with young children-- those of the future generation- will be forced to move to the mainland. Irish island life has

intrinsic value and should be allowed to continue as one facet of Europe's diverse coastal culture and economy.

Donegal Island communities do not have to die, however. The implementation of a few simple management measures, ones which consider their unique Irish-speaking society and economy equally with the environment, can ensure the survival of these Irish island communities. And in doing so, the obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the mandates of the CFP and IMP will be met.

Fisheries Management

Management measures should consider the environment and natural resources, as well as local island society and culture.

There are numerous cases around the world where local island communities and populations are provided access to local resources, particularly in cases of marine protected areas. This is done to save both the environment and the local societies, often living a peripheral existence to the rest of society with limited employment opportunities and working individually on a small scale.

In the European Union, the MSFP, the IMP, and the CFP shall be integrated to sustain society and the environment. As we know, "the CFP seeks to integrate conservation of fish stocks with sustainable exploitation of the resource, and the mainstay of the MP is the search for integration of economic wealth and social well being in a sustainable way" (van Hoof and Tatenhove 2009).

One way to check whether social and environmental sustainability goals are being met would be to follow the principles behind impact assessment. In the case of social impacts in fisheries, we refer to "changes effecting individuals and communities due to some management action that alters the day-to-day way in which people live, work, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs and generally cope as members of a fisheries society" (Delaney 2007: 18). It must be highlighted that societies are formed by multiple and various subgroupings, for example, recreational anglers, small-scale fishers and trawlers, and these would be not always impacted in the same way.

Thus, the principles of impact assessments can help policy makers avoid unintentionally creating inequities among subgroups as well as provide an opportunity for diverse community values to be integrated into the decision-making process (Edwards 2000); they can also help ensure marginal groups receive an equitable distribution of the benefits (Wakefield 2007).

The European Commission understands the importance of such impact assessments as they committed in 2001 to undertake assessments of all legislative based proposals (Delaney 2007).

When looking to understand the social, cultural and economic impacts of management measures, it is extremely important to consider cumulative impacts on the community under consideration. It is the cumulative nature of impacts which often most erode resilience and may prevent communities from bouncing back. In the case of Árainn Mhór, in 2006, Irish legislation made the traditional practice of fishing for wild salmon in Ireland illegal. Given that salmon was an important resource for Árainn Mhór fishers, this was a difficult decision for local livelihoods.

What has made it worse, however, is the increasing number of measures impacting the local fishers and community. Following the 2006 legislation came the subsequent closing of area VIa (2008). These two closures meant that locals could only fish for lobster and brown crab. The consequence, of course, is that fishing effort then is displaced onto these few stocks, increasing the pressure and potentially leading to overfishing. Resilience in a ecosystem comes from a wide diversity of species. The same can be said for society as well; diversity in choices leads to resilient, and therefore healthy, livelihoods, communities, and stocks. Lack of diversity can underline vulnerability and highlight a key lack of adaptability, issues long found and researched in the United States (see, e.g, McCay and Cieri 2000 and Hall-Arber et. al. 2001) in fisheries management.

Recommendations for Árainn Mhór's and Donegal Islands' Future.

During the reform process of the CFP in 2011 and 2012, the Árainn Mhór Island Fishing Committee made management recommendations which consider both the environment and natural resources, as well as their own island society and culture. Among these recommendations were the following points:

- Regulations restricting fishing in area VIa should be eased
- The 2006 salmon fishing ban should be eased
- A 12-mile MPA zone should be made, restricting access to small-scale inshore fishermen only, with Days a Sea (DAS) the main management measure.
- Provisions should be made through special derogations to Council regulations (TACs and quotas)

Such recommendations, will not have a significant detrimental effect on the environmental stocks at risk, but it will have significant positive effects on the community.

Impacts on Árainn Mhór

In many ways, Árainn Mhór is unique. Such uniqueness in part stems from it being an island community, and in part from its Irish Gaelic roots. Through their location in County Donegal, the Árainn Mhór community, is seen as an important holder of Irish culture with its inhabitants serving as examples of living traditions, in language, culture, skills, and crafts. The community is also unique in that many young people would actually choose to remain, if the employment opportunities allowed.

The direct impacts of the 2006 and 2008 closures has been significant on the community with families and businesses declining:

- The population declined from 768 to 487
- 5 businesses closed their doors on the island (one hotel, one pub, and three shops), which is a significant percentage of businesses
- The Burtonport fishing cooperative closed
- One school is threatened with closure; with one more student taken out, it will close.
- €1,000,000 were lost from its annual economy

There are significant indirect impacts, as well. With a decline in population, island safety is compromised with the loss of a quarter 25% of the Árainn Mhór lifeboat crew. This same loss of manpower negatively impacts tourism, with experienced seamen no longer able to assist in the running of regattas and sailing races. At the same time, the loss of manpower and skills, means many traditional, unique skills will not be passed on to the next generation of islanders.

Árainn Mhór, though special, is not alone. Árainn Mhór is one of 33 inhabited islands in Ireland. The islands support a population of approximately 2900 with 75% of these living on Gaeltacht islands— islands where the predominant culture and language are Gaelic (Carleton 2009: 1), such as Árainn Mhór. These islands embody the very core of Irish tradition and heritage with local community members' way of life, language and traditions (Carleton 2009).

Ireland has made national politic and economic commitments to support and strengthen such island communities (Carleton 2009). As with many nation states, however, there is sometimes a dis-connect in the delivery of such commitments, particularly when there are diverse ministries and managements bodies which impact the area in question.

Policy impacts with suggested remedies

Carleton (2009) outlines the main areas of fisheries policies and funding which impact Árainn Mhór islanders; a few key points are highlighted here.

- 1) Good stewardship. Árainn Mhór islanders exploit marine resources only in the immediate environs of the islands, yet they do not have exclusive access to these fisheries. A co-management system which provides them with exclusive rights would enable them to sustainably manage the resources. Such a system can fit within other fisheries management systems, such as marine protected areas, for example.
- 2) Irish fleet policy, driven by EU requirements to control and reduce fleet capacity, prevents locals from adapting to new situations such as mixing commercial fishing with angling and other forms of marine tourism.
 - a) The potting license under which most islanders operate has a sunset clause which is designed to achieve national fleet capacity limits- but this has an unintended consequence of undermining the medium and long-term viability of island fisheries; under the current system island fishing is constrained and penalized for the excesses of other components of the Irish fleet.
 - b) Public funds policies. Prevents locals from upgrading their fleet and adapting to new opportunities. They could be given a derogation which also provided for a *modest* reallocation of the national fleet capacity to allow for future development; modest public funding could also be used to assist this process.

- 3) Investment needs. There is a need for increased clarity in the application of public funds in support of funding/management of investment vehicles used to support improvement of the fleet. Árainn Mhór and surrounding island communities are fragile communities and community ownership of assets could be one way to aid individual fisheries, if constraints on the use of public funds were re-defined.
- 4) EU funds-The European Commission has avenues available for some funds and opportunities, particularly through FARNET- Fisheries Area Network. Through this group, many Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) around EU MSs have managed to work as drivers of green growth in fisheries areas as well as fund local initiatives for projects such as on cultural heritage and value added activities.

It is important for the reader to understand that FARNET is the European network for fisheries areas under priority axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund. This priority axis is being implemented through a "bottom-up" approach. A partnership of local actors called 'groups' are responsible for designing and implementing local strategies for the sustainable development of fisheries areas. It is expected that at least 200 groups will be created across the EU in at least 20 Member States. In Ireland, six are planned and one should be active and available to serve the Island communities.

Conclusion

It is within the power of the Irish government to sustain both Ireland's natural marine resources and socio-cultural resources, such as seen with the case of the island fishing community of Árainn Mhór. Part of the misperception behind the view of difficulty in moving in this direction in not only Ireland, but throughout the EU, stems from the lack of precedent of including social sustainability with environmental sustainability at the management, rather than political, stage of the process. It also comes about from varying interpretations of EU policies at the national level. Yet, there is support from the European Parliament and Commissioner Damanaki; there are also funds available through the European Fisheries Fund and support through the FARNET support group of the European Commission.

As Commissioner Damanaki has pointed out in public statements on fishermen and coastal communities:

- The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) focuses on people, especially small-scale fishermen and on coastal areas depending on fishing.
- In addition to the EMFF, the new CFP will maintain the current access limitations in the 12 nautical miles waters and allow for derogations derogation to existing provisions of control.
- In terms of coastal communities, the EMFF has increased funding options for sustainable development of fisheries areas.

- Integrated local development strategies should become a tool for coastal areas to promote new employment opportunities, within and beyond the fisheries sector. This includes job creation in the dynamically expanding new maritime sectors, such as pesca-tourism and valorisation of fisheries cultural heritage.
- Member States can also take additional measures under EMFF, by directing more towards Axis 4 as a way to speed up the process of job creation in many coastal areas.
- Finally, closer co-ordination of EU funding – through Common Strategic Framework, Partnerships Contracts and Community-led Local Development – opens up new possibilities for creation of jobs in fisheries dependent areas. For example, European Social Fund can be used for re-training and getting new skills for fishermen.

Small, offshore island communities have are special cases through their circumstances (Carleton 2009). These facts are acknowledged and understood by the European Commission itself through its CFP Reform Green Paper where the possibility of small-scale fisheries needing adaptive approaches for their unique situation is explored. Thus, there is acknowledgement and steps being taken in the EU for the case of the small-scale fisheries and small island communities in management issues.

Small communities such as the ones on the Donegal Islands are taking positive, proactive steps for saving their way of life for the future. The fishermen, for example, have formed their own group, Donegal Islands Fishermen. They have also searched for information and outside aid from organisations such as the International Collective for the Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the Gaia Foundation, and the European small Islands Federation (ESIN). And they are participating in research projects such as the “Connecting Coastal Communities¹” which explores the connections between the fishing traditions of Gaelic speaking island fishing communities in Ireland and Scotland.

These steps are simply strides in the right direction, however, and do not yet take them to their destination. For a community like Árainn Mhór, waiting for the CFP Reform will be too late. The Irish government has the opportunity to make a bold and groundbreaking move for sustainability on all levels. And with such a step, it will show the EU and the world it is a progressive nation, with a rare ability to protect all of its resources, human and natural, alike.

¹ See Annex 1 for a summary of the project. Further information can be found at: <http://www.smi.ac.uk/ruth-brennan/connecting-coastal-communities-stage-1>

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Annex 1

A CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL STUDY

This socio-economic report will be followed in May by an independent cultural-ecological study being carried out by Iain MacKinnon of the Scottish Crofting Federation, Ruth Brennan of the Scottish Association for Marine Science, and independent visual artist Stephen Hurrell examines connections between the fishing traditions of Gaelic speaking island fishing communities in Ireland and Scotland.

Connecting Coastal Communities

On the islands of Arranmore (Donegal, Ireland) and Barra (Outer Hebrides, Scotland) the fishermen believe that their livelihood and way of living is being threatened by powerful governmental forces who are not listening to them. In

Barra, the dispute centres around two proposed marine Special Area of Conservation designations while in the islands off Donegal (including Arranmore) the dispute is around the Irish moratorium on drift-net fishing for salmon. In both these disputes there appear to be two different sources of authority. One is external, legislatively based and has a clearly defined process and aim based on the need to conserve biodiversity. The other is internal, rooted in tradition and custom and comes from a way of knowing that is different to the prevalent system of 'book' learning and formal education processes. It is based on respect for, and ensuring the endurance of, an older and more particular way of understanding the sea.

The Connecting Coastal Communities project engages with the island fishermen's way of knowing the marine environment with the aim of creating a dynamic and multi-layered map which reflects this way of knowing and which could complement the more static and one-dimensional maps often used by government agencies. This map is being created through collaboration with Glasgow-based visual artist Stephen Hurrell and with members of the communities themselves.

<http://www.smi.ac.uk/ruth-brennan/connecting-coastal-communities-stage-1>