



Integration or separation? The future of the English small-scale coastal fishery

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Abstract

The decline of inshore or small-scale coastal fisheries (SSCF) in many countries across the world has been well-documented in major studies published during the last 10 years. Researchers report decreasing stocks of marketable fish, inadequate fish quota allocations, and virtual exclusion from fisheries management decision-making bodies. The situation in England is a case in point, where many SSCF are subject to these pressures to the point that their livelihoods are threatened. A recent initiative sponsored by an industry agency to safeguard the position of the inshore sector aims to protect SSCF in England from decline and possible extinction by integrating it into the mainstream fishing industry and ensuring its representation on a proposed co-management body which would share decision-making between industry and government. However, drawing on the literature, archival documents, newspaper articles, and personal communications, we conclude that integrating all parts of the fleet together and setting up shared co-management arrangements is not a guarantee of SSCF survival because integration would tie SSCF down to the agenda of the large-scale fisheries (LSF) sector with no certainty that the special needs of SSCF would be met if they conflicted with the interests of LSF. Instead, our findings lead us to recommend forging a separatist path for SSCF, recognising its distinctive identity as an inshore fishery closely connected with coastal communities. We propose, therefore, two independent fisheries each with its own mode of management: SSCF governed by a regime of community quotas and exclusive spatial access to inshore waters; and LSF governed by a regime of individual transferable quotas (ITQs).

Keywords English small-scale coastal fishery · Separation theory · Integration theory · Large-scale fisheries · Co-management

Introduction

World-wide, capture fishing employs 40 million people (FAO 2020b), 95% of whom are small-scale (Salmi 2015), making it the ocean's largest employer (Damasio et al. 2016). Small-scale coastal fisheries (SSCF) contribute 45% of global capture fish production (Scholtens et al. 2016), almost all of which is used for direct human consumption (Pauly 2006; Basurto et al. 2017) and to provide food security and employment opportunities for millions of coastal residents (Willmann 2015). Moreover, SSCF have profound

psychological, social and cultural significance: for many SSCF, fishing is a way of life, not merely a job (Morgan 2013), in which they derive a sense of pride and identity (Onyango 2011). SSCF are often the bedrock of coastal communities, providing the glue that holds them together (Brookfield et al. 2005) and maintaining their cultural heritage (Acott & Urquhart 2014). Their localised nature means they hold highly valuable ecological knowledge and are often found to pursue more environmentally sustainable operations than do large-scale fisheries (LSF), following voluntary conservation codes of conduct (Kolding et al. 2014).

However, in many parts of the world, SSCF are facing threats to their livelihoods (Campling and Havice 2014). One of the main threats is said to be 'ocean grabbing' (Bavinck et al. 2017; Pedersen et al. 2014; Knott and Neiss 2017), which is the ousting of SSCF from their age-old fishing areas by LSF (Pinkerton and Davis 2015; Pauly 2006; Amarasinghe and Bavinck 2011; Guyader et al.

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2013; Bailey 2018; Ifremer 2007; Smith et al. 2014), disrupting traditional coastal fishing communities by undermining their economic livelihoods and social well-being (Bennett et al. 2015). Compounding this threat is an ineffective decision-making process that inadvertently discriminates against SSCF and empowers LSF because SSCF are under- or mis-represented on management bodies which decide fisheries policy (Béné 2003; Béné et al. 2015). SSCF's weak economic power means they do not attract much political support (Faraco et al. 2016), and their issues are often complicated for managers to engage with partly because SSFCs are not collectively organised into one group (Krogseng 2016). As a result, policy makers favour the interests of the major players in the LSF sector (Prosperi et al. 2019). Carvalho et al. (2011) point out that during the 1970s and 1980s, there was a widespread assumption that the small-scale sector would be either absorbed into or replaced by the large-scale sector. Smith and Basurto (2019) explain how SSCF were regarded as naturally evolving into LSF, first by being mechanised (i.e., equipped with more technically sophisticated and powerful equipment), and second by being liberalised (i.e., subjected to market forces), both of which eroded their distinctiveness from the LSF. Neo-liberal ideas encouraged fisheries managers to adopt a market-based system centred on individual transferable quotas (ITQs), but the distribution of fish quotas under a market-based system of ITQs is invariably skewed towards LFS at the expense of SSCF because initial quotas in a new ITQ system are disproportionately awarded to LFS since they have more authoritative catch track records, with consequent loss of employment among SSCF and the concentration of quota ownership in fewer hands (Pinkerton 2017; Acheson et al. 2015; LIFE 2016; Pauly 2018).

Pinkerton (2019) says some economists at the World Bank and the FAO judged SSCF through a lens of economic efficiency that ignored the massive subsidies given to LSF vessels (see also Villasante et al. 2022). Examples across the world of the decimation of SSCF caused by privatisation come from Pedersen et al. (2014), Høst (2015), Percy and Orlandini (2017), Krogseng (2016), Said et al. (2016), Soreng (2013) and De Alessi (2012). Bavinck et al. (2018) characterise this tension between SSCF and LSF as a 'social struggle'.

We discuss these issues in a case study of the English SSCF which face an existential threat to their survival. The UK government is aware of these threats, and according to SAIF (2010) is sympathetic and supportive, because it acknowledges the valuable role that the SSCF play in coastal communities. However, effective action has yet to be taken to secure the future of the English SSCF. A central issue is whether or not the SSCF would be better placed if it were integrated with the LSF into a single English fishery sector.

As will become clear, our view is that separation of SSFC from LSF is far safer than integration with it.

In what follows, we describe the dire situation in which the English SSCF find themselves ("The English SSF" section); we explain the concepts of integration and separatism which inform our analysis ("The concepts of integration and separatism" section); we apply those concepts to the fishing industry in general ("Applying the concepts of integration and separatism to the fishing industry" section); we analyse the arguments used by integrationists and separatists respectively to deal with the future of the English SSCF ("Integrationist and separatist arguments relating to the English SSCF" section); and finally we summarise our argument in the paper including our recommendation of continued separation ("Conclusion" section). The material we use in the paper is drawn from a literature review; archival documents from UK government agencies, EU and FAO fishers' organisation reports, postgraduate theses, environmental organisation reports, newspaper articles and personal communications.

The English SSF

There is some controversy over what constitutes a SSCF vessel (CCRI 2011). In England, the legal criterion is that the length of the vessel is 10 m or less, so the SSCF fleet is known as the 'under-10 s'. There are approximately 2500 fishing vessels in England, of which 80% are under-10 s (UK Sea Fisheries Statistics 2020). However, there is an anomaly in that some of the under-10 s are called 'super under-tens' because they have a high level of technical sophistication and physical power with a catching capacity resembling that of much larger vessels. The super under-tens are not as affected by many of the threats posed to the ordinary under-10 s—they constitute about 20% of the whole under-10 fleet and take about 75% of the quota allocated to the under-10 s (because although each super-under-10 vessel is allocated the same amount of quota as each ordinary under-10 vessel, super-under 10 s are able to catch much more of their allocated quota as they can hold more gear and work in a wider variety of conditions (Percy 2021b)) and they account for about 50% of the fleet's catch value. We do not, therefore, see the super under-tens as in need of special protection by legislation. Symes (2002: 14) characterises the super under-10 s as an aberrant element in the under-10 fleet, threatening "the spirit if not the letter of regulations which seek to protect inshore stocks from excessive levels of exploitation". Percy (2021b) claims the super under-10 s have much more in common with LSF than they have with ordinary under-10 s. There are signs that the UK government is planning to scrap the under-10- or over-10-m distinction and replace it with a low-impact/high-impact distinction (Williams 2019;

Oliver 2020) which could result in special treatment for the low-impact segment:

“Defra [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] and MMO [Marine Management Organisation] can use this opportunity to review how the English inshore fleet, many parts of which could be viewed as relatively low impact (such as artisan fishers with close ties to their coastal communities), is managed and regulated. Instead of the current ‘under 10 metre’ category we will consider a variety of potential options including limits to engine power and restrictions on where such vessels can fish. This approach...could allow us to provide increased fishing opportunities, or lighter regulation, for those involved in low impact fishing activity” (Defra 2018: 28).

The value of the English SSCF is often expressed by their advocates in terms of their economic importance for fisheries-dependent coastal communities (Percy 2021b). Their cultural importance is also frequently highlighted by advocates (Reed et al 2013), as the following quotations from research carried out by CCRI (2011: 17; 20, 21, 22, 35) indicate: “fishing is central to Amble’s sense of identity”; “Fishing is the lens through which the visitors’ impression of the town [Padstow] is filtered”; “The fishing industry is also absolutely central to the community [Rye]’s collective identity and sense of place; “People have a strong sense of identity and perceive Whitby as being ‘unique’ with its links to the maritime past...For most people interviewed fishing was ‘emblematic’ of their community - it helped define what made their communities distinct or unique.” Furthermore, there are public goods which SSCF claim to provide “as custodians of the sea” like “the role of farmers in agri-environmental schemes” (CCRI 2011: 45).

Of the many threats to the survival of the English SSCF, the most serious are the dwindling fish stocks, lack of quota and effective exclusion from decision-making. On the dwindling fish stocks, Jerry Percy (CEO of the New Under-10 Fishermen’s Association (NUTFA)) says this is more worrying than lack of quota: “if we were having this conversation three years ago, the vast majority of the calls to this office would have been—We need more quota, we have less than 2% of national quota...But now the vast majority of calls to this office are—there’s no fish on the inshore grounds” (Percy 2021c: 2). Percy (2019: 1) claims the paucity of fish inshore is due to “authorities ignoring the impact of larger-scale operations on stocks overall”—e.g. by allowing large vessels to fish too close to the six-mile limit. For example, scores of large vessels (mainly foreign fly-shooters, otherwise known as Danish or Scottish seiners, which have a killing power between four and eleven times greater than that of inshore vessels) are fishing intensively just outside the 6 nm limit in the English Channel, thereby depleting inshore

fisheries on the south coast (McVeigh 2021; Oliver 2021). Percy says the failure of Brexit to end access by EU vessels to the UK’s 6–12-mile zone has compounded the problem of dwindling fish stocks.

On lack of quota, Percy (2019: 2) says this is due to “the way that individual quotas were given out to the over ten sector in the first place [which] was based, by their own admission, on falsified landings data...the under-tens, circa 79% of the fleet by number, have access overall to only 2% of the UK’s fishing opportunities” (see also Anbleyth-Evans & Williams 2018; NEF 2018). Smith et al. 2019) explain how it is common for SSCF to be denied quota because of lack of catch data. Percy (2021b) says the English “Under 10 s simply do not have sufficient quota based on these records to be economically viable”. In 1999, the ‘unjust’ distribution of quota allocation to the English SSCF was formalised into the fixed quota allocation (FQA) system, based on a reference period of 1993 to 1996. Percy (2021b) points out that even the then Fisheries Minister, George Eustice (later Defra Secretary of State), described the FQA system as unjust: “As we depart from relative stability and have new fishing opportunities coming in, I do not think it makes any sense at all to compound the injustice of the FQA system”. Eustice is quoted in *Fishing News* (25–11–21: 3) as saying that Brexit did produce some extra quota which Defra allocated in a way that meant “some of the inshore fleet have had a significant uplift in quota”. However, many of the increased quotas were not for species that the inshore fleet target, while others were for species they cannot catch since the fish no longer exist in inshore waters in large part because they have been over-exploited by LSF in the 6–12 nm area.

Defenders of the FQA system include the National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations (NFFO) who argued that the mismatch between quota and capacity in the English under-10 fleet is mainly due to the arrival of the super-tens in the late 1990s, many of them exiting from the over-ten fleet (NFFO 2019a). This is an important point and is the reason why we propose that the super-tens should be assessed under specific criteria of good social, ecological and economic practice and where they are found to be lacking are taken out of the low impact inshore fleet and put into the high impact offshore fleet. However, the NFFO (2019a) is opposed to any redistribution of FQA from LSF to SSCF because they say this would be an arbitrary act violating the property rights of FQA holders and undermining the integrity of the FQA system which has provided security for the fishing industry in England for nearly a quarter of a century—though it is the security of the ‘main’ fisheries (i.e. LSF) not the security of the SSCF, that the FQA system guarantees. The NFFO (2019a) also argues that critics ignore the fact that SSCF vessels could not catch most of the quota species. In response to this argument, Percy

(2020) points out that many under-10 vessels were forced into targeting non-quota species, particularly shellfish, because they were excluded from catching quota species due to low quotas awarded to them in the first place. Also, on non-quota species, SSCF management is much more restrictive than is LSF management. For example, minimal landing sizes, landing bans on berried hens and pot limitations are common in inshore areas but not in offshore areas. As a result, species which are well managed in the inshore area such as whelks, crabs and lobsters continue to decline due to unmanaged large-scale offshore operations. For example, Percy (2021c) reports that some LSF ‘super crabbers’ in the North Sea are working offshore with up to 10,000 pots. Percy (2021b) says “Many SSCF consider that Defra is just waiting for the SSCF to wither and die of old age (not long now)”.

On effective exclusion from fisheries management decision-making, the voice of the English SSCF is rarely heard in the corridors of power, exemplifying their political weakness. In an attempt to address the democratic deficit regarding representation of SSCF in decision-making on fisheries, the UK government is encouraging the establishment of a new co-management system to manage the SSCF sector. The initiative for this move came from the Future of Our Inshore Fisheries (FOIF) project facilitated by Seafish in January 2019 (FOIF 2019a, 2019b). However, even if the English SSCF were admitted to co-decision-making processes alongside the LSF that would not guarantee their sustainable future: their rights to a fair quota allocation and exclusive spatial access need to be protected by law not representation. Percy (2021b) claims “The threat of co-management unless introduced properly...is it gives the fox the keys to the hen house and would allow LSF to dominate the conversation and Defra to be able to abrogate responsibility and then blame SSCF when it fails”. Our view is that co-management shared with the LSF will not necessarily deliver benefits to the SSCF. Instead, it risks merely shifting the venue in which power is wielded by LSF over SSCF (Davis and Ruddle 2012), as happened in South Africa (Béné 2009) and Chile (Gelcich et al. 2006). Co-management is no guarantee even of the implementation of legally protected SSCF rights: history is full of examples of dominant interests using democratic means to block the implementation of legal rights of minorities (Jentoft & Chuenpagdee 2017). Protection of the SSCF requires separation from the LSF, not co-management with them.

In the “[The concepts of integration and separatism](#)” section, we explain what the concepts of integration and separation mean, in order to apply them clearly to the SSCF in “[Applying the concepts of integration and separatism to the fishing industry](#)” section.

The concepts of integration and separatism

Integration

Holzner (1967: 51) defines integration as a relation between a set of objects “in such a way that they form an integral entity, that is...they are united to form a whole... [which] has its own distinct attributes”. The purpose of organisational integration is to join groups together to benefit from economies of scale, more efficient use of resources, greater security and less silo mentality. There are different forms of integration, including vertical and horizontal, and there are different degrees of integration. For example, tight integration binds the parts very closely together—so close that a part may lose its sense of individual identity (Barki & Pinsonneault 2005: 166). Holzner 1967: 61) describes this extreme form as “loyalty”, “where the sense of personal identity completely meshes with the sense of membership in the society”. Loose integration is a form of interdependence between the parts that allows them to keep at least some elements of their own sense of identity: “two or more different and complementary components of organizations behave as a unified whole... without being merged into a single entity...leaving the two units separate, specialized, and distinct, while assuring that they are responsive and work together as a unified whole” (Barki & Pinsonneault 2005: 166, 167). We see elements of both tight and loose integration in advocacy of a unified English fishery.

Separatism

There are two main reasons why a small group may want to preserve its independence from a large group—identity and power. On identity, a minority group may see its essence being undermined by the alien norms and values of the majority group. Mashuri and van Leeuwen (2018: 174) refer to this as ‘identity subversion’: “identity subversion reflects resistance to a common identity because it threatens to replace the valued subgroup identity”. Identity subversion is invariably triggered by the perception that the majority has treated the minority unjustly, and this elevates “subgroup members’ sense of marginalisation” (Mashuri & van Leeuwen 2018: 181). On power, Mashuri and van Leeuwen (2018: 175) characterise it as a threat experienced by the minority to its capacity for self-determination: “Power threat refers to a group’s perception that its ability to have influence, control, and make decisions over its own resources is dominated, hindered, or decreased by another group”. As we shall see, issues of both identity and power resonate deeply with the English SSCF.

Applying the concepts of integration and separatism to the fishing industry

Integration in the fishing industry

Applying integrationist theories to the fishing industry, several writers argue that the fisheries sector in a country either is or should be a single industry. Those writers who say the industry in many countries is already united include Mills et al. (2011: 1) who claim that since the 1950s, SSCF has lost its distinctiveness, and there is now a continuum on which both SSCF and LSF are placed. On this view, separation of SSCF and LSF is entirely arbitrary: inshore fleets cannot be definitively differentiated from offshore fleets (Macfadyen et al. 2011; Damasio et al. 2016). Smith and Basurto (2019: 4) report the perception that “attributes should be understood as variants along a continuum rather than as belonging to hard and fast categories”. Integrationists point to the myriad of different criteria that have been used by separatists to define inshore vessels and show how all of them fail to provide a watertight distinction from offshore vessels. Criteria such as length of vessel, tonnage, engine size, distance to fishing grounds, number of crew, type of gear, species of fish targeted and closeness of links to local communities have all been used either singly or in combinations, to define inshore vessels, but without achieving any consensus. As Natale et al. (2015) point out, these dimensions often overlap and are sometimes too vague to apply. Even SSCF advocates, Jentoft et al. (2017: 7), state that “small-scale fisheries are rarely a distinct sector. They do not operate in isolation from the rest of the fishing industry... Small-scale fisheries must be understood in relation to their large-scale counterpart, as the two often interact”.

Those writers who argue that the industry should be united argue that the fishing industry must be as strong as possible to fight its corner against common enemies such as hostile conservationists—‘united we stand, divided we fall’—and one important element of its strength lies in coalescing around a shared goal of economic efficiency. For some integrationists, the inshore fleet must modernise its practices along the lines of the offshore fleet if it is to become economically efficient. This process, called ‘rationalisation’, entails the assumption that economies of scale cannot be ignored. Writers point out that LSF fishing has resulted in a vast increase in global catches—from 19 to 90 million tonnes since the 1960s (Eide et al 2011). SSCF need to embrace “professionalization” as Lalancette (2017: 52) terms it, and like LSF become “‘business managers’ with efficiency and profitability as the primary goals”, or else they will go under. So, integrationists argue that joining up with LSF is a lifeline for SSCF, not

its demise: assimilation with the LSF is the SSCF’s best means of survival (Brattland 2014). Finally, some integrationists such as the Norwegian Fishers’ Association (NFA) state that “No one should be given special treatment” because this is positive discrimination (Jentoft and Sørensen 2017: 282).

Separatism in the fishing industry

Applying separatist theories to the SSCF, many sources postulate a fundamental difference between SSCF and LSF. For example, the EU Commission recognises “the important differences between small-scale and larger scale fisheries at the European Union (EU) level” (FAO 2020a: see also Philipson and Symes 2010; Macfadyen et al. 2011; and FAE 2011). The EU Green Paper of 2009 on CFP reform stated.

“There is a legitimate social objective in trying to protect the most fragile coastal communities... One way could be to have differentiated management regimes: one for large-scale fleets, where capacity adjustment and economic efficiency are at the core, and another for small-scale fleets in coastal communities with a focus on social objectives. The arrangements for the large-scale segment could then include economic incentives for fleet adaptation such as market-based allocation mechanisms, while small-scale coastal fisheries would be managed through direct allocation of quotas or effort or through collective schemes. The approach to public financial support could be different for the two segments: the large-scale fleet would be expected to be economically self-reliant, while public funding may help the small-scale segment adapt to changing conditions in the wake of the CFP reform, thereby strengthening its economic viability, and maintain its contribution to the life of coastal communities” (EU 2009: 14).

As the NFFO (2010: 4) explains, “the Commission has advanced the idea of a fundamental dichotomy in the fleet. In this view the ‘offshore/industrial/large-scale/high-impact’ part of the fleet will be governed by economic principles and internationally tradable fishing rights, whilst the ‘inshore/small-scale/artisanal/low-impact’ sector will be eligible for public support and local management”. Likewise, the European Parliament said “A key distinction was made by the Parliament in the CFP reform process between small-scale and large-scale or industrial fishing, outlining the benefits of ‘small’ and the need to recognise their social, environmental and economic contribution” (Britton et al. 2013).

Many academic researchers have also endorsed a distinction between SSCF and LSF. For example, De Vos and Kran (2015: 631) say SSCF “can be understood by what it is *not*; it is

not industrial or not large-scale. The opposition between small-scale and large-scale or industrial fisheries is a basic way to categorize fisheries". Defeo et al. (2016: 177) argue there is an 'intrinsic' distinction between them. Johnson (2006) suggests SSCF stand for relationship networks, whereas LSF stand for exchange networks. Kolding et al. (2014: 7–8) say SSCF are based on the 'welfare-based approach' linked to community well-being and poverty alleviation, whereas LSF are based on the 'wealth-based approach' linked to the free market, privatisation and ITQs. Pinkerton (2017: 2) holds that SSCF are driven by 'sufficiency', whereas LSF are driven by wealth accumulation. Jentoft and Chuenpagdee (2018: 305) claim they have different "rationalities": SSCF are focused on maintaining "their family enterprise and tradition", whereas LSF are focused on "the urge to invest and expand, to accumulate wealth and maximise profit". Likewise, Symes (2002: 92) says "inshore fishing is more about 'earning a living' than it is about making a profit". McGoodwin (1990: 46) claims that "large-scale fishing is mainly a business enterprise, whereas small-scale fishing is...a way of life". Nisa (2017: 658) states that "Small-scale fisheries contribute to poverty alleviation and food security in rural coastal communities whereas large-scale industrial fisheries contribute mostly to national gross domestic product (GDP)" (see also Knutson 2017 and Pinkerton 2019). Sunde (2017) says SSCF is founded on the human rights paradigm, whereas LSF is founded on the property rights paradigm. De Vos and Kran (2015: 630) hold that SSCF possess the positive image of being "socially just and environmentally friendly", whereas LSF possess the positive image of efficiency and the negative image of "plunder, greed and monster-boats". Johnson (2018: 2, 4) argues that SSCF "are by definition context-specific and committed to place and community by embedded social and economic relations and particular histories", whereas LSF are "the capital-intensive, profit-oriented, mobile capitalist enterprise that is typical of the large-scale and, particularly, industrial sector of fisheries". Therkildsen (2007) emphasises a geographic distinction: SSCF targeting inshore stocks and LSF targeting offshore stocks. Such spatial specialisation reflects the physical fact that SSCF cannot fish offshore and the ethical principle that LSF should not fish inshore. Finally, Stobberup et al. (2017: 111) characterise SSCF as victims and LSF as perpetrators, of injustice: "There are...historical wrongs that must be taken into account".

Integrationist and separatist arguments relating to the English SSCF

Arguments in favour of integrating LSF and SSCF in England

The arguments in favour of integration of English SSCF and LSF are fourfold. First, the two sectors are structurally

interdependent. The Future of Inshore Fisheries (FOIF) workshop enunciates this argument: "Inshore fisheries are frequently viewed as existing in isolation from larger-scale commercial fishing activity. This misconception overlooks the clear interdependence that exists between inshore and offshore fishing. Inshore fisheries are an integral part of the wider fisheries management system and need to be managed as such" (FOIF 2019a: 1, 2). NFFO (2010: 4) claims "There is...an essential unity in the fishing industry arising from shared experience and shared challenges, which exists despite the divisions and segmentation...It is our contention that this essential unity should be the basis for future policy". Richard Benyon, Fisheries Minister in Defra 2010–2013, said "I want to see a fishing industry that's much more integrated, without arbitrary divisions mandated by Government" (Benyon 2011). During his tenure as fisheries minister, Benyon convened a meeting of representatives of SSCF and LSF to discuss integration of the industry (Percy 2021c). The NFFO claims the origin of the distinction between SSCF and LSF was "wholly arbitrary...The UK chose to use this breakpoint principally because under-10 m vessels were not required to complete EU logbooks" (NFFO 2010: 2). The NFFO says the distinction today is out of touch with reality: "The fishing industry does not lend itself to a crude division and simplistic definitions that splits the fleet into two categories: inshore/artisanal/small-scale/low environmental impact on the one hand; large-scale/industrial/offshore on the other. It is possible to find...large vessels that fish inshore for some of the time...and small vessels that fish 40 miles offshore at certain times of year" (NFFO 2011: 1). The NFFO criticises the proposal to replace the length-based distinction between SSCF and LSF with an environmental distinction—low versus high impact—because, it says, this would be to exchange one arbitrary distinction for another: "This is a recipe for division, and arbitrary and unfair pigeon holing – in short a bureaucratic nightmare" (NFFO 2011: 1).

Second, together SSCF and LSF are stronger in fighting the corner of the English fishing industry against non-fishing competing marine users. The NFFO (2011: 2) refers to the value of "Building a united front and making common cause on the major issues confronting the industry, not least the displacement from fishing grounds by marine conservation zones". According to Greenpeace (2013), "The stated purpose of the Federation is to ensure that fishermen have a 'strong and clear voice' when decisions that affect them are taken, whether in Westminster or Brussels. Its founding rationale, it says, is to help all 'fishermen to unite' and 'speak with a single industry voice'. It presents itself as the national voice of the fishing industry, large and small—'all sizes and classes of fishing vessel are represented'". NFFO (2011: 2) recommends to SSCF

a strategy of “working with other sectors for the general good... The NFFO was founded on the principle of mutual-ity—fishermen providing support for those other groups of fishermen when they need it—irrespective of vessel size or where on the coast the vessel is based. It is a principle that has served us well and we will not be abandoning it just yet”.

Third, integrationists say SSCF will benefit from the greater stability that integration would bring. Benyon (2011) refers to “The allocation of more stable and predictable entitlements to fish across the whole English fleet, using Fixed Quota Allocations (FQA)”. The NFFO (2011: 2) argues that separation would leave the SSF at the mercy of unpredictable governmental decisions: “a separatist, protectionist, welfare, approach to the inshore fleets would entail an unhealthy degree of bureaucracy and leave the small-scale sector exposed to the whim of arbitrary political decisions in the future”. Symes (2014: 36) states the UK government is in favour of integrating SSCF and LSF for economic reasons: “The UK government is anxious to merge existing arrangements for quota management into a unified system for all segments of the fleet built on a wealth-based approach that seeks to maximise the economic value of the UK’s resource allocation through tradable fishing rights” (see also Hatcher et al 2002). The NFFO (2011: 2) rejects separatism as ‘apartheid’: “the siren call of the separatists who want a kind of apartheid—separate development—for the small boat sector should be rejected as a half-thought-through approach, leading part of the small-scale fleet [the non-super-under-10 s] into a cul-de-sac of perpetual dependence—and cutting the remainder [the super-under-10 s] loose to survive as they can”.

Fourth, the NFFO warns that separatism risks undermining the FQA system on which the prosperity of the whole English fishery rests. By contrast to “advocacy for a form of separate development”, the NFFO proposes “the reintegration of the under-10 m fisheries into the mainstream UK rights-based management system, as a full and active participant with a high degree of self-determination” (NFFO 2010: 1). The means by which this proposal could be implemented is twofold: first, to establish an under-10 PO affiliated to the NFFO or the UK Association of Fish Producers Organizations (UKAFPO) and second, to extend the FQA/ITQ system to SSFC. The NFFO (2010: 16) argues that “the solution for the under-10 m fisheries in the medium to long term will have to be compatible with a rights-based management system. The NFFO does not see redistribution of quota as part of its integration strategy, because such redistribution “would be fraught with legal and political difficulties” (NFFO 2010: 7). Barrie Deas (CEO of NFFO) characterises quota redistribution as “salami slicing of quotas, many of which have been paid for by bank loans that are still being paid” (Deas 2012) and says it would throw the whole FQA

system into jeopardy and cause chaos. Integrationists claim that because a UK high court determined in 2013 that FQAs have effectively become private property, they cannot be legally redistributed unless they are consistently unused by LSF.

Arguments in favour of separating SSCF from LSF in England

The arguments in favour of separation of SSCF from LSF in England are six fold. First, separation would protect SSCF. Percy dubs this ‘Protection through differentiation’. Integration would inevitably mean the disappearance of many SSCF vessels. Poseidon warns that “no segregation is likely to lead to the displacement of small-scale fishing activities... as the financial muscle of larger vessels allows them to out-bid small operators for the small proportion of quota they would initially hold” (Poseidon 2009: 36–37). There is little likelihood that a close relationship with LSF-dominated POs such as NFFO or UKAFPO would benefit SSCF (Percy 2021b). Greenpeace (2013: 10) says NFFO, which claims to represent both SSCF and LSF because 9% of its members are under-10 vessel owners, has taken active steps to persuade the EU Commission to exclude inshore organisations from membership of the (Regional) Advisory Councils, and has lobbied the UK government against a redistribution of quota from LSF to SSCF: so “the NFFO is an obstacle standing in the way of a new fisheries policy that could give higher priority to low-impact fishing... Instead of speaking for small-scale fishermen, it is both side-lining them and trying to shut them out”. Percy (2021b) says “UKAFPO have been damning of the under-10 fleet, even to the extent of taking a judicial review against a government move to reallocate even a tiny fraction of their unused quota”. Percy (2021b) says the integrationists are insincere when they say SSCF and LSF are all in it together: “it suits the purposes of the LSF to say we are all in the same boat but it is equally the case that when it suits them, for instance on the division of quota, suddenly they are far more important and need the quota more than SSCF”.

Second, most SSCF are opposed to integration with LSF. Davies et al. (2018: 202) found that most fishers who took part in a survey in England were in favour of separation: “the majority (91%) supported a distinction between small-scale/inshore and large-scale/offshore vessels”. The negative perceptions SSCF hold towards LSF can be gauged from the Conference Report of the inaugural meeting of delegates to The Future of Inshore Fisheries (FOIF) in which it was shown that many inshore fishers were very critical of the miniscule quota allocation awarded to SSCF compared to the generous allocation awarded to LSF (FOIF 2019b: 36): “a complete redistribution of UK fisheries quota was advocated for by a range of participants”. Further evidence of SSCF hostility towards LSF

comes from the decision of a group of southern North Sea and English Channel inshore fishers to demonstrate on the river Thames on 23 September 2021. NUTFA CEO Jerry Percy says the fishers were protesting that “the small-scale coastal fleet that the government has sworn to protect is now forced to watch their present and future livelihoods being destroyed in front of their eyes firstly by the huge fleet of powerful EU-owned fly-shooters that inexplicably have had all catch limits removed for their target species, and secondly, by massive EU midwater trawlers reducing the resilience of stocks in the Channel” (Oliver 2021). Percy (2021c) refers to “huge super-seiners wiping out all the fish in the offshore. And of course, if they do that offshore...no fish gets inshore”. Martin Yorwarth, one of the skippers who took part in the demonstration, spoke of “how let down we have been by promises made by politicians and by a national federation that does not represent us... or listen to us, and instead represent these large vessels who are destroying our livelihoods” (Yorwarth 2021).

Third, according to the CCRI (2011), SSCF ought to integrate with their local communities rather than with LSF. Such a strategy would entail local communities working together rather than in competition, and encouraging the SSCF fleet to see the value of sector solidarity rather than allowing internal differences to undermine their collective identity and common interest. An important part of community integration is the development of local supply chains, as Percy (2021b) notes: “there is... a significant opportunity for SSCF to develop local supply chains, especially to the food service sector where most people go to eat quality fresh fish”.

Fourth, even some integrationists recognise the distinctiveness of the SSCF. For example, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) acknowledges that “under-10 s and over-10 s are inherently different and it was legitimate for them to operate under different quota systems” (Oliver 2014). The NFFO (2013) acknowledge the separate identity of the under-10 sector devoid of the super-under-tens: “The bulk of the under-10 m fleet...are...recognisable as small-scale artisanal enterprises of limited range which often catch quota species sporadically and opportunistically when available, if at all; the rest of their catch is comprised of non-TAC species...its lower dependence on TAC species sets it apart from the high-catching quota dependent part of the fleet and it is important to take this into account when considering policy”. The NFFO rightly says the super-under-10 s are at the heart of the problems facing the SSCF: “the super-under tens are the cuckoo in the under-10 nest...The emergence of a high-catching category of under-10 s operating on business principles not dissimilar to those in the over-10 fleet, goes a long way to explaining why the under-10 m sector faces quota shortages... predominantly in the Thames estuary and Eastern Channel” (NFFO 2013). And the NFFO (2013) has suggested removing the super-tens from the under-10 fleet and reclassifying them as part of the offshore fleet:

“Our proposed solution which we advance for discussion [includes]...Reintegrating the high catching under-10s into the mainstream quota management system...Membership of existing POs, or a new inshore PO, might be provided to achieve this, but equally, progress could be made through *stronger formal and informal communications links between POs and super under-10s* to ensure effective swap, transfer and leasing arrangements for any under-utilised quota seasonally or permanently available” [italics in the original].

However, according to SSCF representatives, the super under-10 s should not be permitted to take their pool quota allocations with them into the over-10 POs. Cuthbert (2013) from NUTFA says: “These so-called super U10s must not be allowed to remove large amounts of quota from the pool, and then migrate back into the PO sector. Those left behind that have suffered from the previous migration from the O-10 s into the U-10 s must not now be asked to pay the price for the poor management of past administrations that allowed the expansion of the U-10 fleet in this way in the first place”. An alternative way to remove the super under-10 s from the inshore fleet would be to introduce regulations for the whole under-10 fleet that would make it difficult for the super under-10 s to make a living—for example, by imposing a limit of 500 pots per vessel. Or TURF (territorial use rights for fisheries) fishing arrangements could be introduced whereby access was granted to the super under-10 s if they fished in certain ways to meet low impact criteria. Or the Brexit uplift could be used to allow the super under-10 s to take quota out of the common pool quota of species which the ordinary under-10 s cannot catch.

Fifth, some integrationists are sympathetic to the idea of taking the inshore sector out of the quota system altogether. For example, NFFO (2019a) refers with apparent approval to “the possibility of lifting genuine low impact vessels out of the quota system altogether, where this can be done safely”, which suggests the NFFO is not in principle opposed to special treatment for a portion of the inshore fleet known to be working in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner. NFFO (2019b) discusses how such a proposal might be implemented, including how low impact might be defined and calculated (see also Williams 2019), implying a vessel length limit of 7 m might be adopted. Moreover, as we pointed out earlier, the UK government has suggested replacing the 10 m length criterion of inshore vessels with a low impact criterion which could lead to increased quota or fewer restrictions on low impact fishing (Defra 2018).

Sixth, some integrationists occasionally admit that the original distribution of quota between LSF and SSCF which took place in 1989 was unfair to SSCF. For example, NFFO refers to the need “To redress historic deficiencies in the under-10 m allocations arising from the late application

of underpinning” (NFFO 2010: 17) (though it adds the caveat that “It is probably beyond our data to quantify the degree to which the under-10 s have been disadvantaged” (NFFO 2010: 20)). Also, the government has stated that the original distribution was unfair: as we mentioned earlier, George Eustice referred to “the injustice of the FQA system” (Percy 2021a).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the arguments in favour of the separation of the SSCF from the LFS appear stronger than the arguments in favour of their integration. The practicalities of separation require two changes. First, there needs to be a shift of the super under-10 s from the SSCF to the LFS. Both sides recognise the anomaly of the super under-tens’ continued inclusion in the category of inshore fisheries and agree they should join the PO sector alongside the LSF fleet, re-designating the rest of the under-10 s as a low impact fleet. However, two questions need to be resolved: would super under-10 s that meet the criteria of low impact be allowed to stay in the low impact fleet? and would the super under-10 s who migrate to the LSF be permitted to take their pool quota with them? Second, there needs agreement that an inshore fleet devoid of super under-10 s would be afforded special treatment, such as exclusion from the quota system altogether, or ownership of ring-fenced community quotas and/or exclusive access to fishing grounds within 0–6 nm of the coast, in recognition of its low impact status.

Such resolution of the conflict between integration and separatism could be construed as a form of unity in diversity, or peaceful co-existence, or one-industry-two-systems. It would be an acknowledgement that SSFC and LSF have distinct and contrasting identities which justify different management regimes—SSCF based on legally guaranteed rights to sufficient community quota and exclusive spatial access; and LSF based on a market system of FQAs/ITQs, with both fleets subject to technical measures such as minimal landing sizes and other conservation-related regulations. Interestingly, as Van Putten et al. (2014) note, although ITQ systems are becoming more widespread around the world with a current estimate of 250 fisheries, invariably they are confined to LSF and do not include many SSCF.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the elephant in the room—lack of fish (mainly because of overfishing by LSF): “with the exception of some pockets of success, many inshore grounds are devoid of fish, at least in an economic sense” (Percy 2021b). Unless LSF vessels are prevented from vacuuming up tonnes of fish just outside the 6 nm border, the viability of the English SSCF will remain in dire jeopardy: “until there is effective fishery management offshore we’re in trouble” (Percy 2021c).

Data availability All but three of the items drawn on in this paper are in the public domain. The three items not in the public domain are Percy, J. 2021a; Percy, J. 2021b; and Percy, J. 2021c, which are available on request from Tim Gray: email tim.gray@ncl.ac.uk.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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