



# Fishing cultures: marine fisheries and sense of place in coastal communities

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# Outline

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- Aim & Rationale
- Methodological approach
- Initial results
- Next steps



# Channel Integrated Approach to Marine Resource Management (CHARM)



Programme INTERREG IIA  
NUT20000 004-Programme

Atlas des Habitats des Ressources Marines de la Manche Orientale  
Eastern Channel Habitat Atlas for Marine Resource Management

Projet CHARM  
CHARM Project

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# CHARM 3 partners

Ifremer



Université de Caen  
Basse-Normandie



PML | Plymouth Marine  
Laboratory

Plymouth Marine  
Laboratory



SAHFOS



University of Plymouth



University of  
Portsmouth



# University of Greenwich: Project Aims

- To explore the social and cultural impacts of marine fisheries on coastal communities
- Looking at the contribution and importance of marine fishing to: place identity, cultural heritage, sense of place and social capital.
- To inform the development of fisheries policy



# Rationale

- Most fisheries policy and research has centred around biological and economic objectives (Clay and McGoodwin 1995; Symes & Hoefnagel 2010)
- There has been a lack of understanding of the socio-cultural impacts of fishing reforms and policies
- Active fishing communities contribute to local social fabric, culture & image of an area & its use for marketing



# It's not just about the fish!



# Sense of Place

- Based on individual relationships and experiences of a place.
- Based on collective symbolic identity of a place.
- Usually a mix of both natural and cultural features in the landscapes and includes the people who occupy that space.

“Places [are] complex integrations of nature and culture that have developed and are developing in particular locations, and which are linked by flows of people and goods to other places.” (Relph 1976)





# Sense of Place

- “Social and historical *processes* by which place meanings are constructed, negotiated and politically contested” (Williams and Stewart 1998)
- The meanings that people attach to places can be representative of a range of social, historic, political and cultural structures.



# Case study selection

- Scoping visits
- Inventory – processing, fishermen's organisations, tourism-related activities (e.g. sightseeing trips), museums, festivals, fishing agencies (also NGOs, partnerships)
- Fishing vessel data – catch value & number of vessels (MMO\*)
- Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England)
- Tourism representation – selected from MMO stats on registered fishing vessels & catch data (every town in study area with registered fishing vessels)



# Study Areas

Devon – Brixham

Cornwall – Cadgwith, Helford River, Mullion Cove, Newlyn, Pembroth, Porthleven, The Lizard, Mevagissey, Sennen Cove



Kent – Whitstable

East Sussex – Hastings, Rye

Normandy –  
Boulogne-sur-mer,  
Fecamp, Le Crotoy?

Brittany – Paimpol?

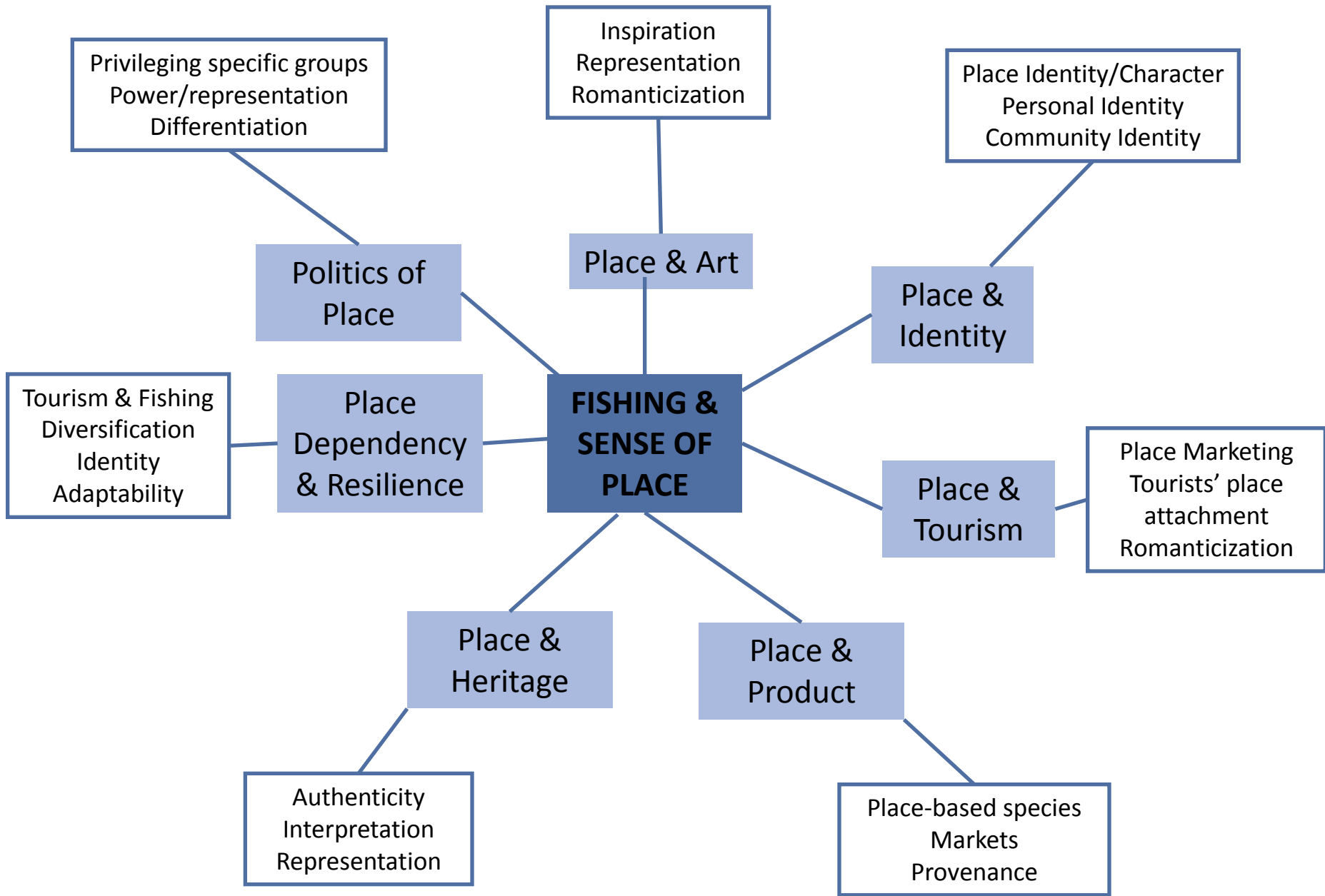
Normandy – Barfleur,  
Fermanville, St  
Vaast?



# Methods

- In-depth semi-structured interviews(to date: Hastings 19; Cornwall 39; Brixham 19; Whitstable 5)
  - Fishermen
  - Fishing associations/industry
  - Tourism providers
  - Museums/heritage
  - Artists/galleries
- Intertwined with material culture study





# Place and Identity

- Way of life / Job
- Sense of belonging
- Rootedness
- Family ties
- Connection with nature



# Personal identity

“It’s the most important thing in my life, all my life revolves around it, always has done. Every single thing I’ve ever done revolves around the fishing”  
(Fisherman, Hastings)

“A big motivation for me out at sea is the fact that it’s been in my family for near 100 years now and ... the first time I ever went out on my dad’s boat I was 8 months old .... it becomes part of the fabric of your life. You see it and you’re around it all the time and you become accustomed to it” (Young fisherman, Mullion Cove) 🔊

“I’ve been fishing ever since I was 15 years old, I’ve never had a job interview. My dad was a fisherman, his dad was a fisherman and I think his dad was a fisherman”  
🔊 (Fisherman, Mevagissey)

“It’s in my blood, when you speak with a lot of fisherman they will always say the same, once a fisherman always a fisherman” (Fisherman, Mullion Cove)



# Place Character

“You don’t want places to feel like a museum” (Tourism provider, Mevagissey)

“I think the harbour looks far better with the different coloured fishing boats in the harbour etc, if it was just filled up with white plastic yachts for instance... It’s the changing nature of it I suppose, the colour, the fact that you see nets being mended, you know they’ll be a trawl being pulled off, you know different things just going on around.” (Harbour Master, Cornwall)





# Place Character

- Landscape
- Messiness / Real place
- Activities / Smell / Sounds



# Community Identity

- Social fabric
- Heart/soul of community
- Traditions



“It’s quite hard to put into words how it influences people and influences everyone’s sort of life here. I mean it would be great to be able to describe what that is but I am just not articulate enough to do it.” (Artist, Cadgwith)



# Tourism

- Romanticization
- Expectations of visitors



“It’s all part of the image of Cornwall as well isn’t it, you know you see... in tourism books and there’s always little ports” (Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee)

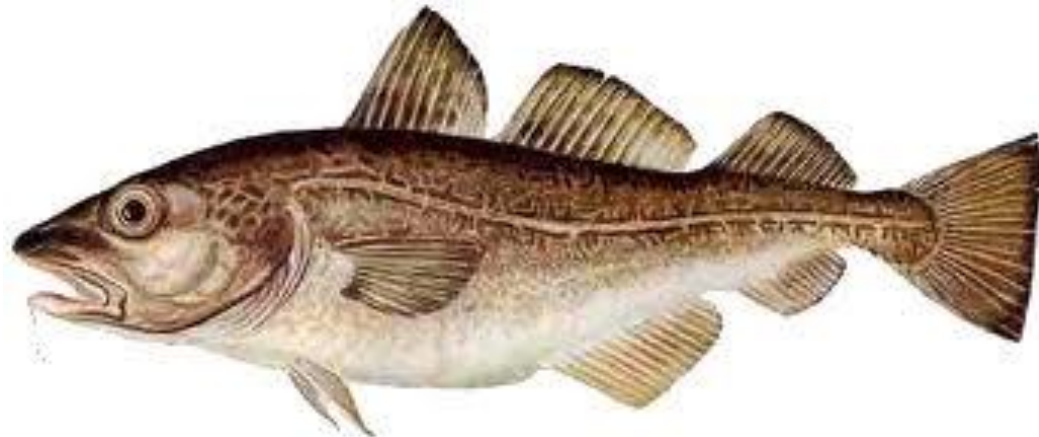
“There is a certain romantic appeal of somebody getting out of bed at 4 o’clock in the morning, getting in a little boat on their own and going and earning their living” (Fisherman, Sennen)



“Being in a place where there are real live people that you can talk to in the pub or on the harbourside does bring things to life, I think again it adds another dimension to people’s holiday the fact that they’re not living in some museum” (VisitCornwall tourism manager)

# Product and Place

- Reduced fish stocks
- Public concern & iconic species in the fisheries crisis
- Increased interest in provenance



# The Product

“That sense of place is really important on all levels. You know whether it’s for the local community or for the tourists. You know the fact that you’re coming here and you’re eating something that was caught by that man there, just out there is special. That authenticity of experience as well as keeping it real.” (Museum & Gallery Director, Cornwall)



# Policy and Place

- Sustainability
- Scientific evidence/local knowledge
- Power/representation

“They don’t take into consideration anything at all to do with community. To do with the social aspects of what their plans and what their intentions are going to mean at the end of the day for everybody that’s got to get on with it ...and it’s absolutely tearing us to pieces. The fishing industry is not on it’s knees ... it’s in its coffin. ...At the moment we’re just getting trodden on and just rammed into the ground by civil servants, scientists, scientific evidence that we don’t say it’s wrong, but we don’t understand a lot of it.” (Fisherman, Hastings)



# Next steps

- Full analysis of data & integration of both physical & subjective dimensions.
- Comparative study with Northern France.

*“The most endangered species on the water is fishermen”*  
(Hastings fisherman)

