



31 March 2016 - Polytechnic University of Valencia

WORKSHOP 3: HALIEUTIC RESOURCES

Translated from French by Tara H, Translators Without Borders (TWB)

EVALUATION

We are currently seeing the development of a set of laws and practices preventing artisanal fishermen and their communities from having rights to fishing stock. The topic of halieutic resources generally provokes little interest when raised in relation to natural resources grabbing, despite the fact that millions of people's income earning rely on fishing and aquaculture¹. In the same way, fishing is vital to ensuring global food security. In many countries, fish is the largest source of high-quality animal protein for people and form an important part of their diet. Witness accounts reveal that the overfishing of sea and rivers is a reality, just like land grabbing. All over the world, fishermen, like farmers, are facing serious threats to their livelihood. Since the mid-1980s, various countries have privatised fishing by implementing quotas for large-scale industrialists. We are seeing fish stock increasingly controlled by a handful of large companies to the detriment of the communities of artisanal fishermen who are much more numerous. In Chile, for example, fishing reforms in 2013 led to 90% of quotas being awarded to just seven families active in the industrial fishing sector. Figures like these reveal the exclusion of thousands of small fishermen, quite simply signalling the end of family and artisanal fisheries.

The growth of intensive industrial fishing comprising powerful stakeholders driven by nothing other than maximising their profits has led to waters being overfished. According to the FAO, fish resource levels are now a cause for concern with some 25% of stock seriously depleted. The prevalence of intensive industrial fishing everywhere has led to a loss of fish populations which consequently threatens food security for humans and marine ecological balances.

Unequal fishing agreements signed between "industrialised" and "developing" countries favour this development. The impact of fishing agreements signed by the member states of the West African Subregional Fisheries Commission² (CSRP) with other countries is a very concrete example of this. As part of these agreements, countries which are members of the CSRP provide foreign boats with fishing licences in return for what is often poor financial compensation. Due to their technological capacity and highly organised approach to global markets, foreign companies are restructuring the local fishing sector, which leads to economic, social and cultural changes. While the African countries concerned are experiencing a shortage of high quality animal protein, the majority of fish sourced from their waters are destined for export. Conversely, nowadays 60% of fish consumed in the EU comes from waters outside the EU.

In addition, the fish farming industry continues in rising inexorably. Aquaculture which is centred on the fish farming of a small number of species (using food sourced from the sea which cannot be traded, and pesticides, antibiotics, food colourings, etc.) which produce extremely polluting effluent and sometimes even introduce invasive species into the environment. It disrupts local ecosystems and leads to the extinction of native species traditionally fished by small fishermen. Governments have a tendency to allocate parts of coastal areas to industrial aquaculture stakeholders reducing the access of small fishermen's to privatised coastal zones.

Another process leading to the destruction of the marine and coastal environment, and the disruption to the livelihoods of communities of family and artisanal fishing, is the development of tourism and coastal infrastructure. In Sri Lanka, many luxury tourist resorts are now preventing fishermen from accessing the coastal belt and are even going as far as to prosecute trespassers. Construction works on a huge port city by Chinese investors in Colombo which, if carried out, will deprive thousands of access to fishing zones.

¹ The sector counts approximately 55 million workers.

² Members of the CSRP: Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone

In response to these elements which are contributing to the destruction of family and artisanal fishing, millions of small fishermen have become increasingly impoverished and are forced to abandon their jobs to help swell the ranks of those excluded from the benefits of "progress". By way of example, twenty years ago some 200,000 Spaniards subsisted on artisanal fishing, against just 60,000 today. In Galicia, 40,000 people were making a living from small-scale fishing in the late 1990s compared to 8,000 today.

The destructuring of fishing communities all over the world goes hand in hand with the disappearance of traditional ways of life and cultures. It is causing the irreversible extinction of a vast tranche of human diversity.

PROPOSITIONS

Sustainable family fishing and artisanal fishing must be preserved to serve the needs of local communities. This involves working for the democratisation of access to fish stock by putting in place regulations by which people are fully involved and even responsible for managing the stock belonging to their territories.

Citizen action

- Broadening alliances: as long as fishermen are left to their own devices to protect fishing, the situation will not improve. There is a need to include various categories of stakeholders in the debate over fishing, most particularly consumers.

- Giving greater visibility to the issue of halieutic resources grabbing when tackling the grabbing of natural resources phenomenon: it is vital to raise awareness among the greatest number of people possible that among rural dwellers there are also a very high number of fishing communities. It is vital to highlight the misdeeds of the industrial fishing sector, implement awareness raising campaigns and encourage responsible consumption of fish produce.

- Putting pressure on governmental institutions to:

- revise the high number of unequal fishing agreements in force worldwide which ensure that industrial fishing will prevail over artisanal fishing,
- implement policies which favour family and artisanal fishermen (see below).

Appropriate policy measures to take

- Phasing out unequal bilateral fishing agreements,

- Ensuring the access of family and artisanal fishermen to coastal areas and fish stock as well as other means of production and in particular the granting of preferential loans,

- Putting in place a grant system to foster the diversification of family and artisanal fishing activities to enable durable small-scale fishing (fish processing, association with agricultural activities, etc),

- Implementing the co-management of fish stock ensuring that the views of small fishermen are genuinely taken into account during this process and that coastal communities are full partners when it comes to determining regulations,

- Reducing the size of fishing boats,

- Prohibiting bottom trawl fisheries in deep water.

INTERVENTIONS

The following list is not exhaustive: We would like to apologise to any speakers or participants at this workshop whose name is not on the list. We would appreciate it if you could send an email to the following address with your name in order to enable us to publish a new version of this overview with the full list: secretariat@landaccessforum.org

Introductory interventions:

MBENGUE, Moussa, General Secretary of the West African Association for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries, WADAF (ADEPA in French), Senegal

Interventions of participants:

COCHET, Hubert, Professor, AgroParisTech, France

HERNANDEZ, Jorge, Chairman and Executive Director of the Asociación Mensa Cívica and SlowFood Saragossa, Spain

Dr MATA, Francisco, MD, Social Marine Institute, Valencia, Spain

Reporter:

SEGBENOU, René, Coalition for the Protection of African Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN) and member of the West African Association for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries (WADAF/ADEPA).

Moderator:

GARCIA ALLUT, Antonio, Chairman of the Lonxanet Foundation for Sustainable Fisheries, Spain