

ON THE AMBIGUITY OF USING MARGINALITY AND SECTORAL DIVISIONS TO TALK ABOUT COASTAL FISHERS (AND THEIR ANTHROPOLOGISTS)

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In a very dense, incisive, and provocative keynote address, Daniel Pauly proposes a reappraisal of the global role of small-scale fisheries from a biologist's point of view. In doing so, he frames new tasks for social scientists, particularly anthropologists. This unusual exercise with the intent of bridging the gap between natural and social sciences is welcome, especially in light of his call for '...vibrant small-scale fisheries contributing to coastal economies and supplying the bulk of fish for human consumption...in a sustainable fashion...once freed from the constraints under which they presently operate'. This is indeed a noble statement of principle, of high ethical and political scope, which until now cannot be said to form part of the agenda of world agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation. Such a transition in the view of fishing, especially in the tropics, which harbour in South and South-east Asia the immense majority of small-scale fishers, implies reversing the overwhelming flow of landless or cattle-less newcomers expelled from the land. While current small-scale fisheries are still sustained by relatively rich marine biodiversity and social systems founded on extended families as the smallest economic unit, the basis of their largely extractive economic activities is being increasingly eroded. These livelihood strategies of traditional fishing communities and their governance arrangements ruling access to marine resources in the coastal zone are put at risk by migrants. Pauly formulates a model and suggests it 'might provide good questions for fisheries anthropologists and other scientists', who 'have failed to propose and to test models of social behaviour of sufficient generality to be useful for policy making'. Pauly proposes that this lack of generalisation capacity, rooted in the 'prizing' of the local as the basis for credibility in anthropology, is the reason for the 'negligible role of anthropology and related social sciences' in the production of the ideas of fisheries management, as attested by the paucity of hits on Google Scholar that result from the entry of the key words *anthropology* and *fisheries*.

Beyond the Google Scoring: the Contributions of Maritime Social Sciences

Twenty-five years ago Acheson (1981), in his review of developments in the 'anthropology of fishing' already remarked on the dominance of biology and economics in the field of fisheries management. Dyer and McGoodwin (1994) did the same and asserted that in spite of the pioneering works of Johannes and Ruddle and, in the 1980s, a 'flore-scence' of studies focusing on folk management (more than twenty citations), 'regretfully this new literature has not made much impact in fisheries management circles'(Dyer and McGoodwin 1994:7). In Europe this 'flore-scence' was equally impressive, as seen with the European Un-

ion funded *Social Science Concerted Action in Fisheries* headed by D. Symes as a major example. This effort pooled the research of a large group of social scientists in seven volumes and in a single issue of a journal, between 1996 and 2001. Recent developments in the maritime anthropology of southern Europe and South America have been recorded by Alegret (1998), Pascual Fernandes (1999), and Diegues (1999).

The analysis of change in inshore coastal fishing communities is at the very heart of the many anthropological and geographical studies that have followed the lead of Breton (1977), who focused on the study of social reproduction of inshore fishing communities. These studies have worked out with a precise and high level of generalisation the forms that the social and economic transition process takes. Inshore coastal fishing societies do not belong at all to a 'sector' but are a *social halieutical morphology*; they are the expression of a way of life, a way to appropriate and to deal with marine nature to make a livelihood. It is a little bit disappointing to note the resounding silence about this tradition of study from scholars who, in the framework of the broad church of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, have analysed the structural conditions and prerequisites for 'protecting' and 'reinventing' the commons, and 'making them work', while proposing models and strategic pathways, including for the Mediterranean's fisheries (Collet 1989, 1999, 2001, 2002).

In the Mediterranean, the disaggregation of long enduring inshore fishing communities is mainly driven by a hard competition between very destructive semi-industrial extractive activity and marine culture (expanding tuna farming); the shrinking of the sea's fishing territory by the growing pressure of tourism, urbanisation, and recreational fisheries; coastal pollution; and the will of the state, like in France, to hinder the regeneration of fishing folk (the French *Prud'homies* grow old). The marginalisation of traditional inshore fishing communities has proceeded from the same reduplication of state promoted fisheries mal-development, based on productionist trends aiming at the maximisation of economic profitability and leading to the erosion of marine biodiversity and functions of the marine ecosystem coined as the process of *fishing down marine food webs* by Pauly, Christensen, Dalsgaard, Froese and Torres (Pauly *et al.* 1998); Pauly's response, looking at the Pacific and at recent studies of the South Pacific Commission and the World Bank, challenges anthropologists to scrutinise the inshore catch where the undervalued evidence of the effective marginalisation process would be found.

Quantitative Assessment, Marginalisation, and the Role of Women: Opening Our Eyes about Oceania

The marginalisation of small-scale fisheries is evident from the failure of many states to collect adequate coastal catch data. Coastal gleaning by women on Pacific reefs, and the catch from other forms of subsistence fishing do not make it into government fisheries statistics. Many anthropologists, following the seminal contributions of Slocum (1975), Chapman (1987), and Johannes (1981, 1991), have underlined the role of women as main protein providers in fishing communities in the Pacific, but without giving catch figures. In Pacific islands, seventy to eighty percent of the catch from inshore fishing is used for subsistence purposes

(Dalzell *et al.*, 1996). A large percentage is taken by women who thus contribute to the overfishing of reefs and put at risk the function of reef ecosystems. If Pauly only suggests such a social process, World Bank studies assert it (Gillet and Lightfoot 2002; DemEcoFish Project, South Pacific Community 2001-2003). At the global level, small-scale fisheries have thus begun to be 'reappraised' *only* because they probably catch more than thirty million tonnes, which is equivalent to one third of global catches. Anthropologists are therefore asked to open their eyes and provide 'good' figures because they are well 'embedded' in these societies and because the Food and Agriculture's (FAO) Fisheries Department is criticised for providing truncated statistics. Instead of calling anthropologists to open the public's eyes to the well-known fact that more than eighty percent of fishing people capture only one third of the global catch (the remaining twenty percent that are industrial fisheries capture two thirds) social scientists are enjoined to understand how women 'subsidise' their fishermen husbands...

The obsessive preoccupation of the state in the nineteenth century was to record the numbers of the extremely numerous and dangerous poor of the working class (Joseph and Fritsch 1977; Leclerc 1979; Collet 1982). Today the South Pacific Community is targeting women and children for eroding the reef bounty in the insular Pacific (DemEcoFish Project, South Pacific Community 2001-2003). Do women and children do this? Surely yes, but it is at minimum a very complex and difficult issue. Recent statements assert that the grand 'epic colonisation of Polynesia' was 'a rolling wave of destruction' (Wilson 2003:95) and Jackson *et al.* state that 'humans have been disturbing marine ecosystems since they first learned how to fish' (Jackson *et al.* 2001:629). If indigenous people and modern man have always been horrible 'planetary killers' (Wilson 2003:39-72), such ideologically equalising appraisals make it impossible to design precautionary governing arrangements, conservation ethics, and to understand the reasons for the existence of those which may have worked in the Pacific and elsewhere in the world, often by the means of sacred refuges. On the contrary, we have to be able to distinguish between forms of *haliutical appropriation* -- and this is where the social science perspective is fundamental.

As the Pacific example shows, how can we explain the evidence that archaeologists and biologists at Matenkupum (New Ireland, New Guinea) have revealed for the longest continuously exploited lagoon fisheries in the world -- an astonishing period of more than 32,000 years -- which has not affected the insular coastal ecosystem? Allen, Gosden and White (1989) explain their relevant findings by suggesting a form of rotational cropping of the shellfish population, which supposes a mental construction of marine abundance and the conduct of a collective form of restraint. As reported by Chapman (1987:275), that was indeed the case with the ancient Hawaiians and many tribes of the Northwest Pacific Coast, and very probably for the Phoenician's marine-based settlements in the Mediterranean (Collet 1991, 1995). In light of what could be called a 'back to the future' logic, *women's sea commons* or *sea gardens* have been reinvented with success today in the Solomon Islands as rotating reef protected areas in the framework of community based management arrangements implemented by women anthropologists who do their ethnography and act with people in the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods (Aswani and Weiant 2004). These are people asserting their right to autonomously exist and develop at their own pace.

In that respect, Ruddle (1998), Hviding (1996), Sharp (1996), Cordell (2001) and R. Johannes, whose death in 2002 has created an irreplaceable void, are much more qualified than the South Pacific Community to continue to analyse the dilemmas and to frame the institutional, political pathways for reinventing the Pacific customary marine tenures or *halieutical commons* and rebuilding healthy marine-human nexuses. These are inalienable because they are common and they support the formation of identities and personhood (Battaglia 1990).

The Tasks of Anthropologists in Light of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

However, the task of anthropologists remains to continue to explore the black box of the eco-social fabric of traditional inshore fishing communities in the mind and in the practices of human subjects, both women and men. How women relate¹ to marine entities, and how women construct the representation of the future, including marine bounty, is still a crucial issue (Williams, Hochet and Nauen 2005; Collet 2005). Without searching to understand the social and cultural structures by which humans rule their relations with non-human marine entities, in the framework of an ecosystem approach as developed by anthropologists as early as 1963 (Moran 1984, 1990), it is hardly possible to design adequate pathways for the sensitive preservation of these fragments of social-natural biodiversity. As in the past, anthropologists are still at pains to foster these intrinsic values in a destructive global process driven by the continual re-expansion and the deepening of capitalism aimed at creating new forms of commodities (Shiva 1998). Under tremendous pressure to gain access to the world market, many agrarian developing economies have implemented structural adjustment, or, in other words, the privatisation of the commons. As happened more than 200 years ago in Great Britain, this process leads to the 'release' (expulsion) of landless farmers and pastoralists, who swell the masses of the poor in shanty towns, or seek desperately to escape to the European fortress, often at the price of death. Only strong political and civil movements, aiming at transferring massive development aid, removing debt, promoting equitable trade, and dismantling Euro-American agricultural subsidies, can cope with the catastrophic process which is now indeed omnipresent and having a particularly strong impact on coastal fishing communities in South Asia and Africa. Political ecology is welcome in what must be the high priority of rebuilding the world's marine ecosystems, as long as it does not lose sight of the social justice imperative.

In conclusion, the co-operative and interdisciplinary understanding of highly complex and extremely dynamic natural-social systems such as fishing appropriation continues to represent a very daunting challenge. Fisheries management is, after all, nothing more than the ruling of social appropriation practises or conducts. Ethics have been there for a long time, too, and were very often embedded in fisher folk management forms in order to put some limits and benchmarks on the disruptiveness of human action. In that respect, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) (FAO 1995) continues to represent at a global level, in the long history of the modes of appropriation of nature, a normative *aggiornamento* of high historical significance (Collet 1999:118,125), especially in regard to artisanal and subsistence fisheries (see articles 6.2; 6.4; 6.6;

6.18; 7.2.2; 7.6.6; 8.4.5; 10.1.3; 12.10; 12.12). Elaborated mainly from ecological, social, technological, economic, and political positions, the CCRF is today the most advanced and complete guiding ethical framework for human and environmentally friendly fisheries policies. The CCRF should thus constitute an overarching instrument for interdisciplinary collaboration on behalf of fisheries.

Notes

¹An exceptional and complex example of the powerful role of women in Melanesia in relation to the marine sea territory and environment is given by Deborah Battaglia. Such a vivid ethnographic statement is for social natural scientists and policy makers a strong incentive to think of the absolute otherness and beauty of a female way (clashing with many western modes of constructing marine nature) of ordering access and relating to marine entities in the context of a gift exchange. 'The afterbirth is placed in a personal basket and taken by an unmarried woman of the mother's clan to the edge of the reef. When the tide is low: she leaves the basket and its content there for the fish to eat, and it is thought that sharks, stingrays and other "dangerous fish" in particular are attracted to the smell and subsequently reek of it when caught and cooked. This gift of the "first skin" is an essential sacrifice. Without it the child would have no right later to take fish from the sea' (Battaglia 1990:43).

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