

# **Transnational Fishers' Movements and the Politics of Global Fisheries**

Elyse Noble Mills

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# **Transnational Fishers' Movements and the Politics of Global Fisheries**

## **Transnationale vissersbewegingen en de politiek van de mondiale visserij**

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*For my parents,  
who taught me to be curious about the world*



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## Acronyms

<b>AG</b>	Advisory Group
<b>AqGR</b>	Aquatic Genetic Resources
<b>AVI</b>	Archival, Virtual, In-Person
<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>CBD</b>	Convention of Biodiversity
<b>CC</b>	Coordination Committee
<b>CFP</b>	Common Fisheries Policy
<b>CFS</b>	Committee on World Food Security
<b>COFI</b>	Committee on Fisheries
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>CSA</b>	Climate-Smart Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
<b>CSM</b>	Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>ENGO</b>	Environmental Non-Governmental Organization
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FIAN</b>	Food First Information and Action Network
<b>GA</b>	General Assembly
<b>HLPE</b>	High Level Panel of Experts
<b>ICSF</b>	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>IFQ</b>	Individual Fisheries Quotas
<b>IIPFCC</b>	International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change
<b>IITC</b>	International Indian Treaty Council
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IPC</b>	International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>ITQ</b>	Individual Transferable Quotas
<b>KSP</b>	Knowledge Sharing Platform
<b>LMPA</b>	Large Marine Protected Area
<b>LVC</b>	La Vía Campesina
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals

<b>MFU</b>	Maritime Fishermen’s Union
<b>MGR</b>	Marine Genetic Resources
<b>MPA</b>	Marine Protected Area
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally Determine Contributions
<b>NFF</b>	National Fishworkers Forum
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PIPA</b>	Phoenix Islands Protected Area
<b>PSM</b>	Private Sector Mechanism
<b>REDD+</b>	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SFPA</b>	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
<b>SSF-GSF</b>	Global Strategic Framework on the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines
<b>SSF Guidelines</b>	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries
<b>TAC</b>	Total Allowable Catch
<b>TAM</b>	Transnational Agrarian Movement
<b>TBTI</b>	Too Big To Ignore
<b>TFM</b>	Transnational Fishers’ Movement
<b>TNI</b>	Transnational Institute
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCCC</b>	United Nations Climate Change Conferences
<b>UNCLOS</b>	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
<b>UNDRIP</b>	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
<b>UNDROP</b>	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>VGFSyN</b>	Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition
<b>WFF</b>	World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers
<b>WFFP</b>	World Forum of Fisher Peoples
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WG</b>	Working Group
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization
<b>ZAC</b>	Zone of Action for the Climate





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## Abstract

The politics of global fisheries, including the organization of the production, circulation and consumption of (sea)food, are complex and contentious. These politics have become even more complicated by climate change and related mitigation and adaptation agendas. With new actors, issues and initiatives constantly emerging, it becomes increasingly unclear who is doing what, how, and for what reasons. Within the politics of global fisheries, what remains particularly obscure, is the role that social movements play. This study explores these obscurities, focusing on two transnational movements – the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) – aiming to link the politics of fishers’ movements more directly with academic and political debates. It undertakes the exploration of three connected analytical spheres: 1) transnational movements contesting and seeking to influence the politics of global fisheries; 2) international political spaces movements are prioritizing; and 3) contentious fisheries issues shaping movements’ struggles and political agendas. It addresses the question: *Why and how do transnational fishers’ movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries?*

The 2007-2008 food price crisis contributed to a re-emergence of interest in the politics of the global food system. Yet, while this has increased global attention to agrarian issues and the role of small-scale farmers and their movements, awareness of small-scale fishers’ perspectives and movements remains vague and limited. Fishers’ movements and their political agendas have played an important role in contemporary fisheries politics, especially in the context of rural, agrarian and environmental transformations. Such transformations have involved climate change politics moving to the forefront of development processes and politics; the conception of ‘rural’ moving beyond the purely agrarian; and transnational arenas of political contention rendering conventional settings for studying movements, namely the local and national, relevant but limited. These global transformations also accentuate the importance of social movements mobilizing beyond their national boundaries and expanding internationally. Studying specific transnational movements, such as WFFP and WFF, helps us concretize the dynamics that are reshaping both global contexts and social movements. More specifically, research on fishers’ movements can, first, Broaden the scope of food politics beyond land and agriculture, implicating fishers, fisheries resources (fish and shellfish) and territories (areas where fishing activities occur) in food system transformations. Second, extend

debates around climate politics through analysis of the impacts of mitigation and adaptation initiatives on fishers and fisheries. Third, strengthen research and understandings of fisheries politics through the integration of knowledge, insights and alternatives from small-scale fishers' movements.

This study is embedded in political economy and political ecology debates, developing a multi-layered approach which centres around the socio-ecological dynamics of fisheries politics. This approach draws insights from relations of production and ecosocialism, the politics of transnational movements, and historical influences and interconnections. Employing a multi-sited global ethnography approach, grounded in engaged research and scholar-activist principles, this study was conducted using a combination of three complementary sets of methods, namely archival, virtual and in-person (AVI), to collect both primary and secondary data. This approach allowed me to cover more ground transnationally and collect a range of data at multiple places and times. This approach addressed a necessity to rethink traditional analytical approaches and methodologies, that has emerged out of the current globalized context in which research is now so often conducted.

This study demonstrates that there have been three distinct, yet overlapping waves of capitalist development in global fisheries, namely the industrialization wave (post-1900), the privatization wave (post-1970), and the conservation wave (post-2000). In combination, these three waves have contributed to overlapping processes of exclusion in the fisheries sector, excluding small-scale fishers from traditional marine and inland fishing territories, threatening their livelihoods and infringing upon their rights. The study shows, first, that overlapping processes of exclusion have contributed to both triggering and propelling transnational mobilization, as fishers seek ways to respond to exclusion and through anti-capitalist strategies of resistance. Second, fishers' movements' engagement with fisheries, food and climate politics have been crucial catalysts for both internal capacity-building and the formation of productive alliances with civil society and intergovernmental organizations. Third, fishers' movements contribute an essential critical voice to international political spaces, by analysing and challenging particular agendas put forward by governments and intergovernmental bodies. Fourth, fishers' movements play a key role in raising the profile of the issues and threats small-scale fishers are facing globally, by developing and presenting a political narrative that challenges the status quo and offers alternatives for advancing fisheries justice.



## Samenvatting

De politiek van de mondiale visserij, waaronder het organiseren van de productie, distributie en consumptie van (zee)voedsel, is complex en omstreken. Door klimaatverandering en de mitigatie- en adaptatieagenda's is deze politiek bovendien nog gecompliceerder geworden. Omdat daarbij voortdurend nieuwe actoren, vraagstukken en initiatieven opduiken wordt het steeds onduidelijker wie wat, hoe en om welke redenen doet. Het is met name onduidelijk welke rol sociale bewegingen spelen binnen de politiek van de mondiale visserij. Dit onderzoek verkent deze onduidelijkheden en richt zich daarbij op twee transnationale bewegingen: het World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) en het World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF). Het doel van dit onderzoek is om de politiek van vissersbewegingen directer te betrekken bij het wetenschappelijke en politieke debat. Deze verkenning richt zich op drie met elkaar verbonden analytische sferen: transnationale bewegingen die zich bezighouden met de politiek van de mondiale visserij; internationale politieke arena's waaraan bewegingen prioriteit geven en waarin ze opereren; en omstreken visserijkwesties die de worsteling en politieke agenda's van de bewegingen vormgeven. De onderzoeksvraag is: Waarom en hoe proberen transnationale vissersbewegingen de politiek van de mondiale visserij te betwisten en beïnvloeden?

De voedselprijzen crisis in 2007 en 2008 heeft bijgedragen aan een hernieuwde belangstelling voor de politiek van het mondiale voedselsysteem. Hoewel de aandacht voor agrarische vraagstukken en de rol van kleinschalige boeren en hun bewegingen hierdoor wereldwijd is toegenomen, blijven de perspectieven en bewegingen van kleinschalige vissers onderbelicht. Vissersbewegingen en hun politieke agenda's spelen echter een belangrijke rol in de hedendaagse visserijpolitiek, vooral op het gebied van rurale, agrarische en ecologische transformaties. Door dergelijke transformaties heeft de klimaatpolitiek een prominentere plaats gekregen in ontwikkelingsprocessen en -beleid, heeft het begrip 'ruraal' een bredere betekenis gekregen dan alleen 'agrarisch', en maken transnationale arena's van politieke twist de conventionele (nationale en lokale) onderzoeksgebieden van bewegingen relevant maar beperkt. Deze mondiale transformaties maken ook duidelijk hoe belangrijk het is dat sociale bewegingen buiten hun nationale grenzen gaan opereren en op internationale schaal uitbreiden. Door specifieke transnationale bewegingen zoals het WFFP en WFF te onderzoeken, krijgen we een concreter beeld van de dynamiek van zowel de mondiale context als de

vissersbewegingen. Specifiek kan onderzoek naar vissersbewegingen: 1) het terrein van de voedselpolitiek verbreden door niet uitsluitend te kijken naar land en landbouw, zodat vissers, visbestanden (vis, schaal- en schelpdieren) en visgronden (gebieden waar visserijactiviteiten plaatsvinden) te betrekken bij transformaties van voedselsystemen; 2) het debat over klimaatbeleid uitbreiden door te onderzoeken welke gevolgen maatregelen in verband met klimaatverandering hebben voor vissers en visserij; en 3) onderzoek naar en inzicht in visserijpolitiek versterken door de integratie van kennis, inzichten en alternatieven van vissers en hun bewegingen.

Dit onderzoek is gebaseerd op debatten over politieke economie en politieke ecologie en past een gelaagde benadering toe, waarin de sociaalecologische dynamiek van de visserijpolitiek centraal staat. Deze benadering omvat elementen van ecosocialisme en relaties van (zee)voedselproductie, de politiek van transnationale vissersbewegingen (TFM's) en de centrale rol van geschiedenis en onderlinge verbondenheid in de politiek. . In dit onderzoek is een wereldwijde etnografische benadering gehanteerd, geworteld in de principes van geëngageerd onderzoek en 'scholar-activisme', is dit onderzoek uitgevoerd met behulp van drie complementaire sets onderzoeksmethoden: archivaal, virtueel en in-persoon (AVI). Hiermee zijn zowel primaire als secundaire gegevens verzameld. Deze aanpak maakte het mogelijk om een groter transnationaal gebied te bestrijken en op meerdere plaatsen en tijdstippen gegevens te verzamelen. Deze aanpak komt voort uit een noodzaak om traditionele analytische benaderingen en methodologieën te heroverwegen, vanwege de huidige geglobaliseerde context waarin onderzoek tegenwoordig vaak wordt uitgevoerd.

Uit dit onderzoek komt naar voren dat er drie verschillende maar overlappende golven van kapitalistische ontwikkeling in de mondiale visserij zijn geweest, namelijk de industrialisatiegolf (na 1900), de privatiseringgolf (na 1970) en de conservatiegolf (na 2000). Deze drie golven hebben gezamenlijk bijgedragen aan overlappende processen van uitsluiting in de visserijsector, waarbij kleinschalige vissers worden uitgesloten van hun traditionele zee- en binnenvisserijgebieden. Hierdoor worden zij in hun levensonderhoud bedreigd en worden hun rechten geschonden. Dit onderzoek toont in de eerste plaats aan dat deze overlappende processen van uitsluiting hebben bijgedragen aan zowel het op gang brengen als het voortduren van transnationale mobilisatie als het ontwikkelen van antikapitalistische strategieën van verzet. Ten tweede laat het zien dat de betrokkenheid van vissersbewegingen bij visserij-, voedsel- en klimaatpolitiek een cruciale katalysator is geweest voor interne capaciteitsopbouw en het vormen van productieve allianties met het maatschappelijk middenveld en intergouvernementele organisaties. Ten derde wordt duidelijk dat vissersbewegingen een

essentiële kritische stem laten horen in internationale politieke ruimten, door specifieke agenda's van regeringen en intergouvernementele instanties te analyseren en aan te vechten. Ten vierde blijken vissersbewegingen een sleutelrol te spelen bij het onder de aandacht brengen van de problemen en bedreigingen waarmee kleinschalige vissers wereldwijd worden geconfronteerd, door het ontwikkelen en uitdragen van een politieke boodschap die de status-quo uitdaagt en alternatieven biedt om een rechtvaardige visserij te bevorderen.









## 1

# Introduction: Diving into the Politics of Transnational 'Fisheries Justice' Movements

## 1.1 Introduction

Contemporary politics around the production, circulation and consumption of (sea)food<sup>1</sup> and climate change mitigation and adaptation are complex and contentious. New actors, issues, and agendas constantly emerge, making it unclear who is doing what, how, and for what reasons. What remains particularly obscure is the role that social movement actors, particularly within fisheries, play in such politics. This study explores these obscurities in relation to two transnational movements representing small-scale fishers – the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) – and aims to bring the politics of these movements more purposefully into academic and political debates. It focuses on three connected analytical spheres: transnational movements contesting and seeking to influence the politics of global fisheries; international political spaces movements are prioritizing; and contentious fisheries issues movements are struggling over (see Figure 1.1). The study addresses the central question: *Why and how do transnational fishers' movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries?*

Despite being under-researched, fishers' movements and their political agendas have been critically important in contemporary politics of global fisheries, especially in relation to rural, agrarian and environmental transformations. Such transformations have involved climate change politics moving to the forefront of development processes and politics; the conception of 'rural' moving beyond the purely agrarian; and transnational arenas of political contention that render conventional settings for studying movements, namely the national and local, still relevant but very limited (Borras et al., 2018). Such transformations have also accentuated the importance of fishers' organizations mobilizing beyond their national boundaries and expanding their movements internationally. Studying specific transnational movements, such as WFFP and WFF, helps us concretize the dynamics reshaping both global settings and social

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<sup>1</sup> The use of '(sea)food' refers to foods produced both in the sea and on the land in order to draw more attention to the inclusion of fisheries in food systems debates. Seafood includes fish, shellfish and other aquatic animals which are caught for food. It does not include aquatic vegetation such as seaweed and kelp, which is beyond the scope of this study.

movement politics. Research on fishers' movements can: broaden the scope of food politics beyond land and agriculture, embedding small-scale fishers, fisheries resources and territories in food systems transformations; extend debates around climate politics by digging deeper into the impacts of both environmental change and mitigation and adaptation initiatives on small-scale fishers and fisheries; and strengthen analyses of fisheries politics through the integration of knowledge, insights and alternatives from small-scale fishers and their movements.



**Figure 1.1:** Three analytical spheres  
Source: Author

This study draws from political economy and political ecology debates, developing a multi-layered approach which centres around socio-ecological dynamics of fisheries politics. In this context, fisheries, food and climate politics are underpinned by *the formal and informal structures, practices and processes linked both to (sea)food and its production, circulation and consumption, and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures*. These politics also involve numerous actors – such as fishers' movements – engaging with (negotiating, establishing and reinterpreting) these structures, practices and processes, and the political spaces (places of activity, debate or conflict) where the actors engage. The analytical approach framing this study draws insights from relations of production and ecosocialism, politics of transnational movements, and historical influences and interconnections. It is inspired by questions of who gets what and why in the fisheries sector (Bernstein, 2010), the ecological impacts of fishing, as well as the notion of the second contradiction of capitalist, in which the

fisheries production system both depends on and is undermined by intensive extraction and the overconsumption of natural resources (O'Connor, 1998; Friedmann, 2016; McMichael and Friedmann, 2007). The fisheries sector is a visible example of this contradiction in the global food system, as a mode of food production that remains largely dependent on extracting animals from their natural habitats, and to such an intensive extent that fish stocks are collapsing. Fish are the last hunted commodity left on earth, and due to their portrayal as a renewable resource, their exhaustibility is often ignored. This is part of why fisheries are such an analytically distinct and challenging field (Campling et al., 2012).

The research presented in this study was conducted using a combination of three complementary sets of methods, which were used to collect both primary and secondary data, namely, archival, virtual and in-person (AVI). The archival methods involved reviewing and analysing existing literature, policies, reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, social media pages, and other documents. The virtual methods involved tracking discussions, news and documentation about particular processes and events online; attending online meetings and webinars; and conducting formal semi-structured interviews with key actors. The in-person methods involved engaging in participant observation at events; conducting both formal semi-structured and informal conversational interviews with key actors; and taking and collecting photos to observe visual nuances. All interview participants have been kept anonymous due to the political sensitivity of the subject matter. This multi-method approach allowed me to cover more ground transnationally and collect a range of data at multiple places and times, reflecting a necessity that has emerged out of the contemporary globalized context, challenging researchers to rethink their units of analysis and methodologies (Mendez, 2008).

In the rest of this chapter, I first situate fishers' movements in the context of food, climate and fisheries politics and debates through a review of relevant literature, highlighting why such politics have become both increasingly significant and complex in the context of contemporary food systems and climate change mitigation and adaptation. This section also points to critical gaps in existing bodies of academic literature and political debates on food, climate and fisheries, which have tended to neglect fishers' movements. Secondly, I elaborate on the approach I propose for exploring the role of fishers' movements in the politics of global fisheries via three connected analytical spheres: transnational movements, political spaces and contentious fisheries issues. Thirdly, I outline the organization of this dissertation and the chapters within.

## 1.2 Fishers' Movements in Food, Climate and Fisheries Politics

Since the 2007-2008 food price crisis, the politics of the contemporary food system has gained prominence as a topic of widespread interest. This has increased global attention to the role of small-scale farmers and agrarian issues in the global food system and the issues affecting them, resulting in a remarkable expansion of scientific literature in this field (Clapp, 2014). In contrast, awareness of small-scale fishers' issues and perspectives remains vague and limited, and the body of scientific literature too thin. It is important to highlight at the outset of this study, that considering the many forms small-scale fisheries take globally, including for example artisanal and subsistence, and the diversity within these categories, it is difficult to adequately address all of their specificities within a broad discussion on transnational movements and the politics of global fisheries. Yet, as Charles (2011) notes, small-scale fisheries do share a core set of characteristics in terms of, for example, the methods used, particularly in comparison to large-scale, industrial fisheries. These commonalities make it useful to explore small-scale fisheries collectively, with small-scale fishers making up one broad socio-economic group, especially in the context of international processes like fisheries governance, (sea)food production and trade. Therefore, in this study, '*small-scale fishers*' refers to:

People that fish to meet food and basic livelihood needs, and/or are directly involved in harvesting, processing or marketing fish. They typically work for themselves, without hiring outside labour; operate in near shore areas; employ traditional, low-technology or passive fishing gear; undertake single day fishing trips; and are engaged in the sale or trade of their catches.

Small-scale farmers and transnational agrarian movements (TAMs) have been able to gain access to new avenues for engagement with policymakers, NGOs and researchers, which has contributed to broadening the visibility of prominent agrarian movements, namely La Vía Campesina (LVC)<sup>2</sup>, and their agendas (Edelman and Borras, 2016). Yet, their fisher counterparts, namely WFFP and WFF, remain less visible. Fishers are typically subsumed into 'agrarian' or 'peasant' categories, which is partially accurate in that fisheries may be understood as a component of the agricultural sector, but also limits our understanding of the

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<sup>2</sup> La Vía Campesina is an international grassroots movement established in 1993 that defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies that are marginalizing people and destroying nature. It currently has 182 member organizations in 81 countries around the world (LVC 2017).

particular, complex set of issues that fishers face. This lack of attention is striking considering the crucial role that small-scale fisheries play in producing food – contributing 66 per cent of catches for direct human consumption, and providing 90 per cent of employment in the fisheries sector globally (FAO, 2015). WFFP also claims to represent “over 10 million fisher people from all around the world” (WFFP, 2020a). This raises the question: why are transnational fishers’ movements so much less visible than their farmer counterparts? Putting this into historical context, it is important to note that all three transnational movements (LVC, WFFP and WFF) were established in the 1990s, partially in response to the ramping up of international food trade and the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 (WFF, 1997; Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019).<sup>3</sup> Initially, most members of WFFP were part of WFF, as one consolidated international organization. However, internal political tensions caused a split in 2000 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> WFF General Assembly in Loctudy, France.<sup>4</sup> The Icelandic, French, and the North and South American members remained in WFF, while the members from Asia, Africa and Oceania, along with the Bear River First Nations member organization from Canada, formed the WFFP (Sinha, 2012). Today, public lists show that WFFP has 75 member organizations from 50 countries (WFFP, 2020a), while WFF has 44 member organizations from 42 countries (WFF, 2020a). WFFP considers itself:

... a mass-based social movement of small-scale fisher people from across the world, founded by a number of mass-based organisations from the Global South. WFFP was established in response to the increasing pressure being placed on small-scale fisheries, including habitat destruction, anthropogenic pollution, encroachment on small-scale fishing territories by the large scale fishing fleets, illegal fishing and overfishing. Years later, climate change was added to the list of threats that WFFP addresses in its work (WFFP, 2020a)

Meanwhile, WFF considers itself:

... an international organization that brings together small scale fishers’ organizations for the establishment and upholding of fundamental human rights, social justice and culture of

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<sup>3</sup> Information that is cited this way throughout the dissertation was gathered from multiple formal interviews and informal conversations with members of WFFP and WFF, and individuals from allied civil society and intergovernmental organizations. Permission was obtained from the individuals to use the information in the dissertation. Since the information came from multiple interviews and conversations over the course of several years (2017-2020), months are not specified in citations. The specific use of methods is elaborated upon in Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> There are many accounts of what exactly transpired during the Loctudy meeting that led to the split. Interviewees noted that there were differences of opinion between members from the Global North and South about what small-scale fisheries entailed, what sort of organizations could become members, and how the movement should be structured and led. This important historical moment is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

artisanal/small scale fish harvesters and fish workers, affirming the sea as source of all life and committing themselves to sustain fisheries and aquatic resources for the present and future generations to protect their livelihoods (WFF, 2020a).

Since the split, however, WFFP and WFF have collaborated on a lot of their international work, particularly since 2014.<sup>5</sup> Both movements have played an important role in contributing to political debates in global fisheries and advocating for the rights and survival of small-scale fishers by continuously voicing the concerns of small-scale fishers and demanding space at decision-making tables. Yet there has been little empirical work inquiring into their engagement and the significance of their role. The following three sections highlight the gaps in literature on food, climate and fisheries politics, pointing out key areas where research on fishers' movements can make important contributions.

### ***1.2.1 Food Politics***

Tracking fishers' movements as actors engaging with food politics, as well as the historical processes and events that have shaped them and their evolving forms of resistance, is central to understanding what kind of influence they have had. As Clapp (2014) argues, the types of actors involved in the global food system, and the tools they use affect food politics and contexts for resistance. From a historical perspective, the structural context from which fishers' resistance has emerged has been referred to as a global food regime based on a system of production, circulation and consumption (Friedmann, 1993; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). This food regime has been built upon the preference for 'efficient' industrial methods, such as monocropping and aquaculture expansion; corporate dominance over the agricultural and seafood markets; and exclusion from resources due to increasing privatization – all of which threaten the livelihoods of small-scale fishers (TNI, 2017; Levkoe, 2014; KNTI and WFFP, 2017; Mansfield, 2011).

Debates around food systems and politics highlight the need for radical alternatives that can address the current global crisis (Duncan and Pascucci, 2017; Giménez and Shattuck, 2011; Clapp and Cohen, 2009). Yet, there has been limited discussion of fishers as crucial contributors to such alternative visions. There have, however, been some efforts toward reframing 'fish as food', both in its literal sense and as a political statement, as a move towards

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<sup>5</sup> These collaborations are also discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.



broadening food sovereignty discourse (Levkoe et al., 2017). Food sovereignty is a prominent example of an alternative constructed by social movements – namely La Vía Campesina – which is understood as:

The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations (Nyéléni, 2007).

However, food sovereignty debates have been weak in their engagement with fishers. While proponents of the food sovereignty movement have always considered fishers to be allies involved in the movement-building process (Pictou, 2017; Nyéléni, 2007), there have only recently been more concerted efforts toward establishing stronger alliances between fishers and farmers' movements. These efforts are slowly becoming more visible on the ground within movements, as well as in research (Gioia, 2017). Fishers' and agrarian movements have placed food sovereignty at the centre of both their food and climate agendas, highlighting it as a key approach to address overlapping food and climate crises through more sustainable and environmentally responsible production methods. Through this collaboration they have also recognized that they are facing a common struggle against both the impacts of climate change and the potential impacts of mitigation and adaptation efforts. This has catapulted fishers' and agrarian movements into the arena of key actors engaging with the politics of climate change (Gioia, 2017; Barbesgaard, 2018).

### ***1.2.2 Climate Politics***

Climate change agendas were initially amplified after the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was put into effect in March 1994. The UNFCCC aims to stabilize the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in order to prevent dangerous impacts on the climate system, by focusing on protocols and agreements, and setting (non-binding) limits for emissions in individual ratifying countries (Bulkeley and Newell, 2010). While curbing climate change is a popular widespread concern, the mainstream governance and research approaches to mitigation and adaptation tend to focus on strategies that gloss over imbalances in power, control and consumption in society, and thus do not appropriately address

related issues like uneven access to and distribution of resources. This may stem partially from a lack of political will to upset the status quo and address the deep structural issues which contribute to the ineffectiveness, and even counter-productiveness, of conventional agendas. Such agendas often ignore the many nuances and specificities of how particular groups of people are impacted by mitigation and adaptation initiatives (Hunsberger et al., 2017). To a large extent, academic and political debates also tend to just engage with civil society perspectives that are politically ‘safe’ or conservative, while ignoring more radical actors who are raising red flags about how mitigation and adaptation are currently being implemented. There are some important works by critical scholars who address such specificities and/or work closely with civil society actors (see for example Newell and Taylor, 2018; Hunsberger et al., 2017), but this literature is typically excluded from broader policy debates, and represents a small proportion of the research being done on climate change globally.

Although fishers live on the frontlines of coastal climate impacts, such as intensifying storms, sea level rise, and coastal erosion, little is known about their participation in climate politics, particularly in policy and research. Fishers are also some of the first to feel the impacts of mega projects carried out in the name of sustainable development, such as tidal energy, dams, wind turbines, and ocean conservation initiatives, such as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), blue carbon initiatives<sup>6</sup> (FAO, 2011; Barbesgaard, 2018; Bavinck et al., 2017). Yet, little critical reflection has emerged on the social impacts such initiatives could have on fishing communities, with some notable exceptions including Barbesgaard (2018), Bavinck et al. (2017), Pictou (2017), and WFFP (2017). Understanding the processes and actors involved in climate politics more holistically to include fishers, and critically, analysing mitigation and adaptation strategies and their implementation, is urgent (Gasper et al., 2013; Adger et al., 2005). However, it is not obvious how to do this, and at what level to engage with such a challenge. Bulkeley and Newell (2010), for instance, assert the importance of shifting our thinking away from the importance of the nation-state as an actor engaging in climate politics, and to consider other public and private actors involved, how and why they engage with climate governance, and what the implications are. In exploring the role of fishers’ movements, for example, tracking how they negotiate, establish, and reinterpret existing structures, practices

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<sup>6</sup> Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are large ocean and coastal areas that are designated as fully or partly off-limits for fishing activities intended to conserve the space and the resources therein. Blue carbon initiatives, which target CO<sub>2</sub> stored in coastal ecosystems (for example, mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses), involve the establishment of carbon credits derived from protected coastal areas as an approach to mitigating climate change (Barbesgaard, 2018).

and processes in formal and informal political spaces can contribute to this shift in thinking. This can also help to re-cast fishers as important actors within the civil society sphere in and of themselves, rather than simply allies of or adjuncts to agrarian and climate justice movements.

### ***1.2.3 Fisheries Politics***

The rise of the industrial fisheries sector has played a central role in complicating fisheries politics, not least due to the rapid expansion of international fish trade. Spurred by growing demand and facilitated by advances in freezing and storage technology, and decreasing costs of transportation, fish is currently the most highly traded food commodity worldwide. Since 1960, global fish consumption has experienced rapid growth, increasing by 3.2 per cent per year – exceeding the 2.8 per cent growth in consumption of all land-based meat combined. This has led to consumption more than doubling in the last six decades, from 9.0 to 20.5 kilograms per person per year (FAO, 2020e).

Similarly, the value of global fish trade grew more than twenty-fold since 1976, from USD 7.8 to 164 billion per year (FAO, 2020e). This has meant that fisheries have become an extremely lucrative business, particularly for a few large industrial fishing companies. The world's top five fishing companies alone, Maruha Nichiro (Japan), Nippon Suisan Kaisha (Japan), Thai Union Group (Thailand), Mowi (previously Marine Harvest) (Norway), and Mitsubishi Corporation (Japan) collectively pulled in USD 23.8 billion in revenue in 2019 (Berge, 2019; Bizvibe, 2020), illustrating who is benefitting the most from growth in the sector, and just how few hands fisheries wealth is concentrated in. This concentration has been facilitated by fisheries governance strategies that favour these industrial players through investment in expanding their operations, support for gear improvement, and fuel subsidies (Mansfield, 2011). This governance approach has contributed to a transformation of the fisheries sector, in which government officials and powerful fishing companies maintain a tight grip on fisheries resources, allowing little space for other actors, such as small-scale fishers, to determine how resources should be managed (Meynen, 1989). This raises important issues about the implications of investment flowing into fisheries and rural areas, and who profits from the control of natural resources, which have mainly been discussed in the context of land and land-based resources (Borras et al., 2016; Hall, 2013; Castree, 2003), and more recently also in relation to fisheries resources (Bennett et al., 2015; Longo et al., 2015; Mansfield, 2004).

In the current era of rural, agrarian and environmental transformations, new and existing processes of exclusion emerge out of, and are fuelled by, the global resource rush, ‘recasting the political economy of land, water, fisheries and forests in the rural world, and reconfiguring how capital penetrates agriculture and the countryside’ (Borras and Franco, 2018, 11).

In fisheries, clear connections exist between transformations in the sector and political-economic shifts that need to be better understood (Sundar, 2012). Such connections are visible in the overlap of the global resource rush, numerous existing international governance institutions and instruments, such as the Committee on Fisheries (COFI); the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS); and the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries* (SSF Guidelines), and the growing popularity of private property-based fisheries management approaches, such as Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs)<sup>7</sup>. Yet, understanding these connections requires the development of innovative approaches for analysing the political economy and ecology of global fisheries and the actors therein (such as fishers’ movements), which has become significantly more complex by intersecting food and climate crises. These intersections make it much more difficult to manage and ensure equal access to finite fisheries resources, which is especially problematic for small-scale fishers, whose political and economic power continue to be weakened alongside the strengthening of the capital-intensive industrial fisheries sector (KNTI and WFFP, 2017). While there has been some important critical work done on analysing food/agrarian issues and movements (see for example Edelman and Borras, 2016; McMichael, 2011; Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010), few similar explorations have emerged on fishers’ movements (notable exceptions include Sinha, 2012; Sundar, 2012).

### **1.3 Transnational Movements, Political Spaces and Fisheries Issues**

The political spaces and contentious fisheries issues that are analysed in this study, have featured prominently in the agendas and activities of transnational fishers’ movements since the mid-1990s, and have therefore been important in both shaping and being influenced by such movements. While there are certainly other important and emerging issues in fisheries

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<sup>7</sup> Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs), also known as Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs), are a type of catch share system, which many governments, particularly in the Global North, use to regulate fishing and adhere to limits established by sustainability measurements (Bromley, 2009). Quota systems are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

which fishers' movements have not engaged with significantly or directly, or which may be seen as silences in the movement, the aim of this study is to explore those they have chosen to engage with in order to understand why and how they have done so. The movements, spaces and issues at the core of this study are rooted in the context of uneven capitalist development in global fisheries. This development has been characterized by several key elements.

First, due to the capitalist economy's dependence on continuous expansion into new domains, privatization and corporate interests constantly expand into new spaces and sectors (O'Connor, 1998; Campling and Colás, 2018; Schlüter et al., 2020). In fisheries, this materializes in the industrial sector's continuous state of expansion, seeking out new ventures and ways to accumulate capital through seafood production, such as the rapid intensification of global aquaculture production in the past two decades. Second, capitalist development has produced uneven spatial distribution – both between and within regions – of consumption, wealth, and labour relations in food systems. It has also contributed to the particular combination of economic, social and political characteristics that determine the level of development within and between regions (O'Connor, 1998; Campling and Colás, 2018). In fisheries, uneven development materializes in imbalances across global fisheries, mainly in terms of management, state support, and resource access, in which owners of industrial fishing companies in some regions are able to accumulate vast amounts of capital, while small-scale fishers in other regions struggle to survive.

Third, both the expansion of capital and uneven and combined development, particularly in the neoliberal era, have contributed to fostering the emergence of organized forms of resistance and contestation, in which fishers' movements react to issues of exploitation, exclusion and dispossession emerging from capitalist development (Campling and Colás, 2021; Fraser, 2021; O'Connor, 1998). These reactions are also uneven, in that they are not constant nor consistent, emerging in varying levels of intensity and coherence at different moments in time. The emergence of contestation materializes in the way that transnational fishers' movements have evolved over the past two decades, with their visibility and political agendas changing depending on current local and global contexts. Movements are not always able to respond and mobilize as they wish, but are often confined by the constraints created by capitalist development. In other words, the politics and political actions of fishers do not develop and emerge in a vacuum, but have very structural and material influences (Olin Wright, 2019; Scott, 2008; McMichael, 2008; Edelman, 1999). The impacts and constraints emerging from capitalist development in fisheries, as well as the ways in which fishers'

movements are responding to and resisting against these constraints, are introduced below and explored in more detail in the subsequent chapters of this study. The impacts, constraints, responses and resistance are at the core of the three analytical spheres – transnational movements, political spaces and contentious issues – framing this study.

- In the first sphere exploring transnational movements, three pivotal developments emerge: 1) how fishers' movements are responding to converging fisheries, food and climate crises, 2) how agrarian movements and platforms and converging with fishers' movements, and 3) how intergovernmental organizations are engaging with fisheries issues. The importance of these developments is elaborated upon in Chapter 4.
- In the second sphere, three international political spaces have been pinpointed as important spaces for engagement and movement-building: 1) the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), 2) the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and 3) the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), all of which also pose critical challenges for movement participation. The significance of these political spaces is discussed in Chapter 5.
- In the third sphere exploring contentious fisheries issues, four global phenomena reflect critical threats to small-scale fishers and the issues fishers' movements are struggling over: 1) the expansion of the industrial (sea)food system, 2) intensive investment in the 'sustainable development' and use of aquatic resources, 3) the accelerated spread of climate change mitigation and adaptation agendas, and 4) the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The implications of these phenomena are expanded upon in Chapter 6.

### ***1.3.1 Tracking the Movements: Transnational Contestation in the Politics of Global Fisheries***

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) have been the two most politically important transnational fishers' movements since the mid-1990s. Global transformations in fisheries have contributed to the expansion of these movements, as they seek out ways to strengthen their global networks and find spaces and platforms for engagement. As more platforms emerge for addressing international concerns, intergovernmental bodies become increasingly implicated in trying to navigate the

political integration of diverse global actors (Tarrow, 2005; Smith and Guarnizo, 2006), such as transnational fishers' movements. Also referred to as 'fisheries justice' movements, these movements are *collective struggles involving local, national and transnational alliances of small-scale fishers, fishing communities, and their allies, who are concerned with issues of inclusion, equity, human rights, democratizing access to and control of natural resources, and the politics of climate change* (Mills, 2018). While little is publicly known about the particularities and significance of why and how WFFP and WFF contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries, I argue that this can be partially tracked and analysed through three pivotal developments.

First, fishers' movements have internalized the convergence of fisheries, food and climate crises, and are aligning their activities and demands accordingly. Fishers have put food and climate issues forward as central pillars of their political agendas. For instance, food sovereignty is a key mobilization tool, analytical guide, and alternative that fishers' movements have been engaging with in recent years, due to its counter-narrative that strives for food and climate justice. Fishers are concerned about the impacts of climate change and mitigation and adaptation on fishing communities, and have mobilized around alternatives like food sovereignty as possible ways forward (KNTI and WFFP, 2017; Barbesgaard, 2018). Fishers' movements are also increasingly discussing how the context of climate change has caused privatization strategies to be reframed within new 'blue' agendas, described as blue economy, blue growth and blue carbon initiatives (Barbesgaard, 2018; WFFP, 2015a). As fishers' movements grapple with reframed privatization agendas and their many complexities, their strategies for analysis, engagement and response continue to evolve and expand.

The second pivotal development is that transnational agrarian movements, such as La Vía Campesina (LVC), and the international platforms they participate in, such as the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) and the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM), are increasingly converging with fishers' movements and engaging with fisheries issues. The IPC, established in 1996, and the CSM, established in 2010, bring together organizations representing farmers, fishers, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, and NGOs, and provide autonomous spaces for mobilization that link local struggles and global debate. The IPC and CSM are also both platforms which coordinate civil society participation in Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a specialized agency that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security. It also has a large Fisheries and

spaces and processes, such as CFS and COFI (IPC 2017). Fishers' movements participation in both the IPC and CSM has contributed to increasing attention to and strengthening analysis of fisheries issues in these spaces, while also bolstering alliances with agrarian movements. However, despite significant gains in alliance-building between fishers and agrarian movements in recent years, there is still work to be done in strengthening modes of communication and collaboration between them, as well as in increasing opportunities for mutual learning at the global level.

The third important development is that key intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations (UN), such as the FAO and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), have further internalized fisheries in their analysis and activities. This includes, for example, greater attention to the protection of fisheries resources and territories in UN agendas, such as in Goal 14: *Life Below Water* of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, which are a central pillar guiding the IPCC assessments (UN, 2019; IPCC, 2018). A further example, is the 2018 ratification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). This Declaration aims to protect the rights and improve the living conditions of all rural people, including peasants, fishers, nomads, agricultural workers and indigenous peoples, while strengthening food sovereignty, fighting climate change, and conserving biodiversity. The adoption of a high-level international governance instrument that was written by and for small-scale producers is a historical event and a landmark achievement for agrarian and fishers' movements (Claeys and Edelman, 2019; FAO, 2018a).

The three developments above and their significance for fishers' movements' political agendas and transnational alliances are explored and analysed more deeply in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. This chapter also seeks to contribute to understandings of the context and implications of transnational mobilization, through the analysis of the emergence of fishers' movements, their strategies for broadening their political reach, and how they try to address the constraints of certain social relations (Edelman, 2001). At the transnational level, the strength of a movement is linked to its level of cohesion, shared collective identity, and horizontal exchange between members which contributes to the connections they feel between one another. Transnational movements, such as WFFP, WFF and LVC, can also be described as 'movements of movements', due to the wide array of national movements, local

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Aquaculture Department which leads intergovernmental policy discussions and negotiations on global fisheries issues.



organizations and NGOs that participate in them (Fox, 2010). However, defining the boundaries of a movement, in terms of which actors are included or excluded, has been consistently complicated in movement literature. This complexity stems from the direct and indirect social and political ties that make up movements, which link multiple smaller networks, organizations and individual activists, and contributes to the constant shift of boundaries (Diani, 2015). This means that conventional approaches to social movement research, which focus only on the people involved, can be too narrow, and should consider that movements comprise much more – such as spaces, processes, moments, rallies, events and virtual interactions. All of these elements have an impact on movements and their evolution over time. However, due to the rarity of extensive movement archives, more information needs to be collected on their social and political evolution, and how this influences their engagement in particular spaces and the issues they choose to prioritize (Diani, 2015).

### ***1.3.2 Mapping the Political Spaces: International Arenas Movements are Prioritizing***

Mapping particular spaces and the opportunities they provide for fruitful interactions, is a crucial element in understanding movement politics (Diani, 2015). In the context of citizen action and participation, spaces can provide opportunities, moments and channels for citizens to potentially influence discourses, policies and relationships that have an impact on their interests and lives. Such spaces can be categorized as *closed spaces*, involving decisions being made by powerful actors mainly behind closed doors without an interest in making these spaces more inclusionary; *invited spaces*, involving people being invited to participate by more powerful actors, such as governments, intergovernmental agencies, or NGOs; and *claimed/created spaces*, involving less powerful actors claiming spaces from or against powerful actors, or creating autonomous spaces of their own (Gaventa, 2006). Fishers' movements have prioritized several claimed, created and invited spaces, while also choosing not to participate in others, and have developed strategies to engage with certain closed spaces through parallel civil society channels. I argue that there have been three key intergovernmental UN spaces which fishers' movements have both targeted as important spaces to engage in, and have been able to gain access to – which is not always easy or possible. The three spaces that are introduced here are each comprised of several physical events, and offer important insights into when and where movements are engaging with particular fisheries issues, collaborating

with other actors, and building alliances. Part of the analysis of these spaces includes tracing how they have developed, how they are linked, and what their role is in broader global processes.

The first space is the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), which was established in 1965 as a subsidiary body of the FAO, and is currently the only international intergovernmental forum that examines fisheries and aquaculture issues. COFI membership is open to all UN Member States, and other international and regional organizations involved in the FAO can participate as observers without voting rights (FAO, 2021c). The fishers' movements participate in COFI Sessions as members of the IPC and its Fisheries Working Group – which is considered the official representative of fishers and fishing communities in this space. While the COFI has been an important space of engagement for fishers' movements, particularly in the last decade, it has not been without challenges. During the development of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines between 2009 and 2014 for example, fishers' movements had to make concessions on some of the issues they felt should be included in the Guidelines in order for them to be acceptable to and endorsed by a wide range of COFI Member States (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). In the post-Guidelines endorsement period, fishers' movements have had to continuously push to have their voices heard in a space that is first and foremost a forum for government delegates, and one in which the theme of small-scale fisheries has been relatively marginalized in agendas in which economic interests like trade, aquaculture and sustainable development take priority (see for example FAO, 2021d; 2018d).

The second space is the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which was established in 1974 to serve as a UN forum for monitoring and reviewing world security policies, such as those addressing production and access to food. Since its reform in 2009, which the IPC contributed to proposing and shaping, the CFS has been heralded as the most inclusive intergovernmental platform for collaboration and coordination between diverse stakeholders working toward ensuring global food and nutrition security. The CFS is made up of Members with voting rights, including governments participating in the FAO, IFAD, and WFP; Participants, including representatives from UN agencies, civil society, NGOs and International research networks; and Observers from invited organizations (FAO, 2021e). The CFS has been an important space for fishers' movements, particularly through their participation in the CSM, which offers a structural channel through which movements can engage with the CFS. This channel has allowed fishers' movements to gain direct access to and

gain political experience in a space that plays a key role in global food politics and food systems governance. The CSM has also been a key convergence space in which fishers' and agrarian movements have shared experiences, and developed collective agendas and strategies (Claeys and Duncan, 2019). However, the CFS has also involved challenges, due to its focus on agriculture, crops and livestock, and relative marginalization of fisheries issues in its agendas and discourse. Similarly, within the CSM, the vast majority of civil society representation comes from the agriculture sector, which has meant there has been considerably more attention to farmers than there has been to fishers in its discussions and activities (Fieldnotes from the CSM Forum and interviews with movement members and allies, 2019).<sup>9</sup> This is reflective of a broader issue in global food governance in which fisheries is often treated as a commodity sector, rather than a crucial contributor to global food security (Levkoe et al., 2017).

The third space, which is fundamentally different than the first two, is the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The COP was established after the 1992 adoption of the UNFCCC, and is now the principal global decision-making body on national emission limits and climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. The 197 UNFCCC Parties, which are UN Member States, participate in an annual COP, review the Convention's implementation, and negotiate institutional and administrative measures intended to improve implementation (UNFCCC, 2021a). A momentous event in UNFCCC history was COP21 in 2015, in which the Paris Agreement was adopted, focusing on strengthening state-level response to tackling climate change. Parallel to the COP in another part of Paris, an autonomous civil society space was created called the 'Zone of Action for the Climate' (ZAC), where hundreds of civil society organizations (CSOs) gathered, including fishers' and agrarian movements. This was also an historical moment for CSOs, in which they held meetings and workshops, and important gains were made in terms of alliance-building among movements and mobilization around climate justice (Mills, 2018; Claeys and Delgado Pugley, 2017; Tramel, 2016). Parallel spaces such as the ZAC have been crucial for fishers' movements' engagement with global climate discussions, both because they have chosen not to formally engage with official COPs out of principled disagreement with the climate 'solutions' being discussed there, and because COP spaces have strict limitations on slots available for CSO participants (Orr, 2016). Considering

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<sup>9</sup> Fieldnotes (written notes) that are cited this way throughout the dissertation refer to information collected via participant observation in particular events. Examples include the 33<sup>rd</sup> COFI Session in 2018; 46<sup>th</sup> CFS Session in 2019; CSM Forum in 2019; and numerous virtual events and meetings. Relevant events are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, and can be found in a table in Appendix 2.

the centrality of the COP in determining international climate regulations that directly impact the lives of fishers, civil society-led spaces for discussing climate issues and policies will continue to be strategically important for fishers' movements to engage in.

Mapping the three political spaces above reflects the importance of analysing the evolution of transnational movements across time and space, within which particular events offer important historical markers (Edelman and Borrás, 2016). The COFI, CFS and COP, as well as fishers' movements' participation in the IPC and CSM, and the significance of these spaces for movements' political agendas and alliance-building with other transnational actors, are explored and analysed more deeply in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. Key to this analysis is tracing historical connections, and understanding how time, relations between different actors, and the dynamics of particular events, contribute to shaping the complex social and political processes that transnational movements are involved in (Schiavoni, 2017). Such an approach also aims to offer a more flexible alternative to analyses that focus on systematically linking spaces, processes and events in order to establish generalizations. Instead, the political spaces and events within are analysed in this study with acknowledgement of their blurred boundaries, which are constantly being renegotiated by different actors. Such spaces are therefore seen as ongoing dynamic processes, involving contentious social negotiation, and a particular temporal character that makes past events relevant for understanding current dynamics that shape the present (Tilly, 2002).

### ***1.3.3 Analysing Contentious Issues: Shaping Movements' Struggles and Political Agendas***

Several contentious issues have shaped fishers' movements' struggles and political agendas in the past decade, while also featuring prominently in global fisheries politics. These include blue economy and blue growth, ocean and coastal grabbing, aquaculture, aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity, and inland fisheries. These issues are becoming more compounded, and perhaps more visible, by emerging intersections between fisheries, food and climate politics. The expansion of blue economy and blue growth agendas, ocean and coastal grabbing, and aquaculture are of particular concern, due to the ways in which they contribute to the exclusion and dispossession of small-scale fishers from traditional fishing territories and

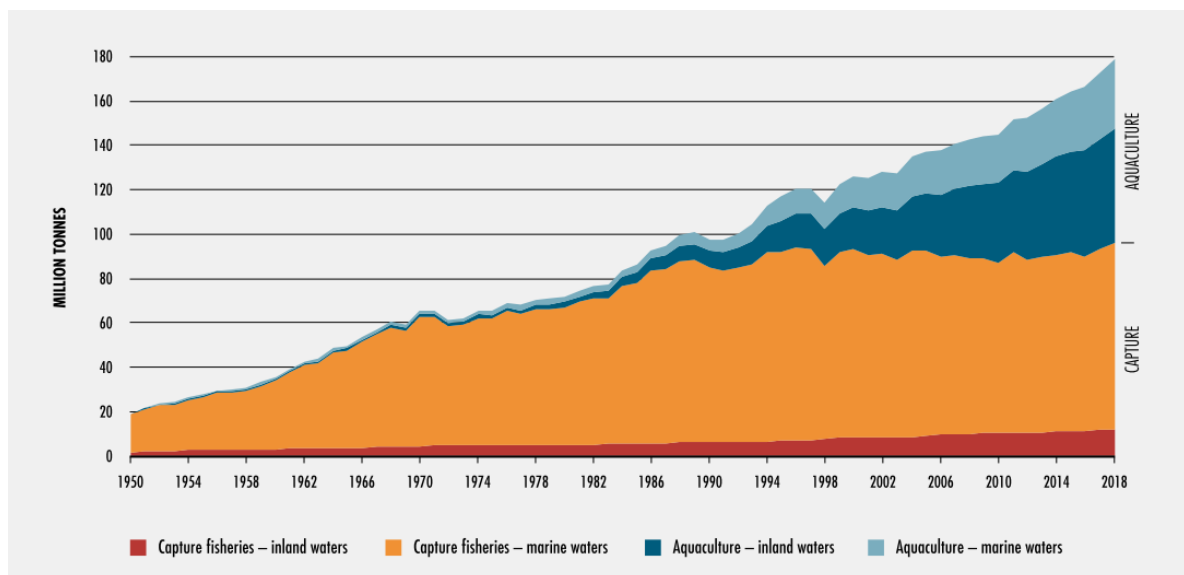
fisheries resources, and the exploitation of their labour.<sup>10</sup> Mainstream approaches to fisheries governance are propelling this expansion through the implementation of policies underpinned by property ownership, quota allocations, access rights and resource conservation. Such governance approaches can be ineffective, and even problematic, due to both the mobility of fish and the transformation of aquatic areas from commonly managed to privately owned (Campling et al., 2012). Small-scale fishers' organizations and movements have been shaping their political agendas and making demands around these issues for years, yet empirical research digging deeper into what broader global processes propel these agendas and demands remains limited. To address this, I argue that four global phenomena, which pose critical threats to small-scale fishers, can help us analyse the structural issues propelling fishers' movement mobilization and how they are framing their political agendas:

The first phenomenon is that the continuous expansion of the industrial (sea)food system has broadened and intensified privatization in fisheries, dominated by large-scale industrial fishing corporations. The privatization-centred approach to fisheries governance represents a type of wealth-based fisheries management being promoted by the World Bank and international agencies, as a way to garner rent from access to and use of natural resources (Biswas, 2011; Høst, 2015). One prominent example of this process has been the implementation of fishing quota systems, such as Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs), which are a type of state-implemented catch share system intended to control access to fisheries resources (Longo et al., 2015; Sundar, 2012). An ITQ system allows fishers to sell or lease their quota to another fisher or a fishing enterprise, leading to the creation of a competitive quota market. Large-scale industrial seafood corporations, which have grown rapidly in numbers, size, economic power and capacity, have the capital needed to procure extensive access to resources by buying up multiple quotas from other fishers. This often leads to access being concentrated in the hands of a few big corporations, and fewer quotas left over for small-scale fishers who have less spending power (see Longo et al., 2015; Sundar, 2012; Isaacs, 2011). This concentration has contributed to increased poverty in many small-scale fishing communities, with many fishers finding themselves in desperate situations without prospects for making a living to support their families. (Biswas, 2011; Isaacs, 2011; Pinkerton, 2017).

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that fishers' movements have engaged very little with labour issues, since they do not claim to represent industrial fishworkers. The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), discussed later in the dissertation, has paid more attention to labour issues, although it works more closely with small-scale fishers and fish processors, rather than labourers on industrial boats.

The second phenomenon is that intensive investment in the ‘sustainable development’ and use of natural resources has extended beyond forests and agricultural lands, and into new territories and frontiers – particularly the oceans. The sustainable development approach, which has become especially prominent in the context of the UN’s SDGs, promises to provide economic growth and opportunities while simultaneously protecting the environment and ensuring resources will continue to be productive (UN, 2019). In recent years, both freshwater and marine areas, such as mangroves, marshes, shallow coastal areas, have increasingly become the target of sustainable development agendas, with investors approaching such areas as new frontiers full of profitable opportunities (Campling and Colás, 2018; Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2018; Steinberg, 1999). A prominent example is that intensive investment is being poured into the development of large-scale industrial aquaculture, which has quickly become a popular ‘sustainable’ solution for addressing the crisis of fisheries resources. Proponents of such aquaculture claim it is a sustainable way to provide for growing global demand, address overfishing by decreasing pressure on wild fish stocks, and conserve aquatic ecosystems by limiting fishing activity (Ocean Foundation, 2020; World Bank, 2013). Since the 1980s, aquaculture has rapidly become one of the world’s fastest growing food-producing industries, with annual production increasing from 5 to 82 million tonnes (FAO, 2020g) (see Figure 1.2).



**Figure 1.2:** World capture fisheries and aquaculture production  
Source: FAO (2020e)

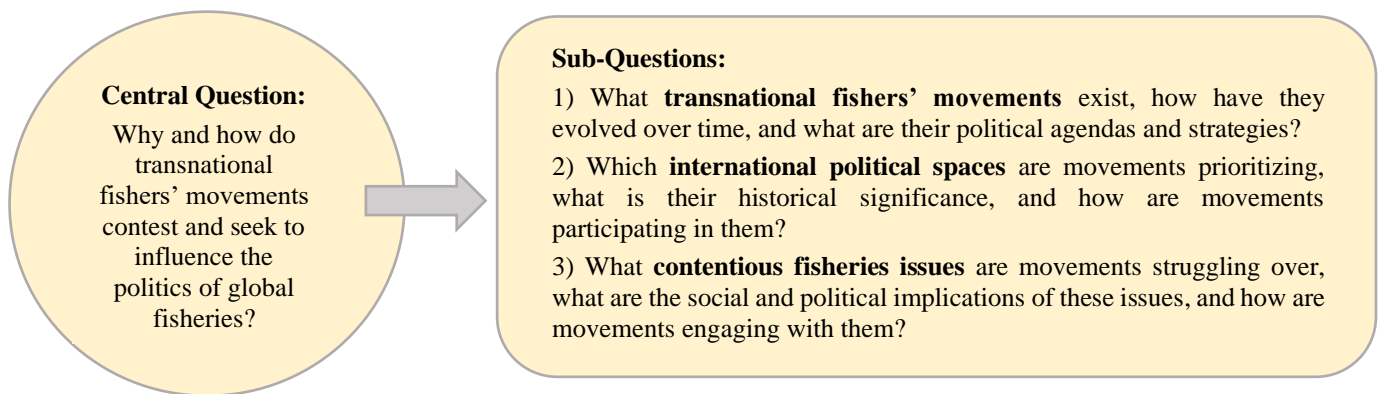
The third phenomenon is that the accelerated spread of mitigation and adaptation initiatives, and their intersection with conservation agendas, further restrict access to fisheries resources and territories. A key element of this phenomenon is that global and national climate

governance agendas are increasingly reframing development initiatives as mitigation and adaptation efforts, with many governments forming partnerships with private sector actors to accelerate such efforts. Such agendas have also begun to prioritize adaptation measures over mitigation efforts, as the effects of climate change – particularly coastal storms and sea level rise – become more frequent and severe sooner than predicted (Uson, 2017). The overlap between mitigation and conservation is perhaps most prominent in the context of land-based initiatives involving the sale of carbon credits as an approach to addressing deforestation, offset existing and future emissions, and slow global warming (Beymer-Farris and Bassett, 2012). More recently, however, this type of approach has also seeped into fisheries, such as through initiatives implemented as part of a blue growth agenda. Such initiatives are presented as win-win-win solutions to address destructive production practices, environmental degradation and climate change-induced natural disasters. However, despite promising benefits for all, many small-scale fishers end up losing either partial or complete access to fisheries resources and are excluded from potential benefits (Barbesgaard, 2018; Clapp et al. 2018).

The fourth phenomenon is a bit different, and has emerged much more recently than the previous three. This involves the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has both illuminated and exacerbated multiple vulnerabilities in the fisheries sector, including dependence on international trade and markets; the insecurity of fisheries livelihoods; and the lack of access to healthcare and other social services in fishing communities. In countries around the world, fisheries were closed and fishing seasons cancelled because fishing boats and processing facilities did not have enough space for fishers and processors to work together safely (FAO, 2020f; Guttal, 2020). The closure of restaurants, hotels and other tourism facilities caused a sudden, radical drop in demand for seafood, which caused a huge loss of income for many fishers, particularly small-scale fishers who are dependent on selling fresh fish daily and do not have access to processing, storage or freezing facilities (Guttal, 2020; FAO, 2020f). The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented and historic global moment across all sectors, and fisheries have certainly felt the full force of the crisis. While the short-term impacts of the pandemic are already visible, questions remain about what the longer-term impacts will be for the already-vulnerable small-scale sector, and what sort of obstacles and setbacks will emerge in global struggles against poverty and food insecurity (Samudra, 2020; Clapp and Moseley, 2020; HLPE, 2020).

## 1.4 Purpose of the Study

This chapter has so far introduced the main analytical and empirical elements of this study, which are explored in more detail in the following chapters. It has outlined the approach used in this study, which involves digging deeper into three connected analytical spheres: transnational movements contesting and seeking to influence the politics of global fisheries, international political spaces movements are prioritizing, and contentious fisheries issues movements are struggling over. Examining these three spheres has allowed me to gain critical insights into the role of transnational fishers' movements in the politics of global fisheries, both historically and in the context of contemporary politics around food systems and climate change. Linked with these spheres, this study is guided by one central question and three sub-questions:



This study focuses particularly on the two transnational fishers' movements that have been engaging in transnational forums for the past two decades – the WFFP and WFF. It argues that it has become increasingly important to bring the role of these movements in fisheries politics more deliberately into academic and political debates, in order to expand and deepen our understandings of food systems and social movements, and how they have been reshaped in the context of climate change. This is illustrated by some of the emerging connections between fishers' movements, food politics and food sovereignty; climate politics and mitigation and adaptation initiatives; and broader debates around fisheries politics and governance. More specifically, this study explores how deeper analyses of the politics of transnational fishers' movements can:

- 1) Broaden the scope of food politics beyond land and agriculture, through a focused exploration of how small-scale fishers, fisheries resources (fish and shellfish) and



territories (where fishing activities occur) are entangled in food system transformations, and how fishers' movements are contributing to alternatives.

- 2) Extend debates around climate politics through analyses of how environmental change and mitigation and adaptation initiatives are impacting small-scale fishers and fisheries, and how fishers' movements are responding to these impacts.
- 3) Strengthen existing bodies of fisheries research and analyses of fisheries politics through the integration of knowledge, insights and alternatives from fishers and their movements.

This study aims to contribute to understandings of where and how organized fishers' movements are engaging in the politics of global fisheries, and through what channels they are finding ways to participate in formal and informal governance spaces and processes. The approach used to carry out this study also contributes analytical tools and empirical information which help to expand our understanding of transnational fishers' movements (TFMs) as movements that both overlap with, but are also distinct from, transnational agrarian movements (TAMs). Beyond academic debates, the hope is that this study may also offer useful tools for fishers' movements themselves to gain critical insights into their own positions and contributions in different political arenas, and to identify new ways forward in strengthening and expanding practical pursuits toward fisheries justice.

## **1.5 Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of seven chapters, including this introduction and a conclusion. In **Chapter 2**, I develop the analytical and methodological approaches I used to frame and conduct this study. In that chapter, I first introduce myself as the researcher, including the research objectives and my motivations for conducting this study. Secondly, I discuss the epistemological and ethical considerations that emerged during the research process, including discussions on reflexivity and how my positionality influenced the process; the challenges involved in conducting engaged or scholar-activist research, and the biases that may emerge; and the scope and limitations of this study. Thirdly, I develop the multi-layered analytical approach used in this study, which centres around the socio-ecological dynamics of fisheries politics, gathering insights from relations of production and ecosocialism, politics of transnational movements, and historical influences and interconnections. Fourthly, I delve into

the methodology I used to conduct the research, multi-sited global ethnography. This includes a discussion of the archival, virtual and in-person (AVI) data collection methods used, and how I specifically employed tools of thematic analysis, participant observation and interviewing. Finally, I outline my PhD trajectory and activities between December 2016 and September 2021.

In **Chapter 3**, I look at the historical development of global fisheries, arguing that there have been three distinct yet overlapping waves: the industrialization wave (post-1900), the privatization wave (post-1970), and the conservation wave (post-2000). The chapter provides the global and historical framing for this study, reflecting on structural and institutional transformations in fisheries in the last century, and situates the research within development studies debates. First, I discuss the technological transformations in global fisheries during the industrialization wave, highlighting how this impacted fisheries production, aquatic ecosystems, and small-scale fisheries. Second, I turn to the privatization wave, delving into the expansion of private property agendas, the introduction of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs), and the establishment of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and the impact this has had on access to fisheries resources and capital accumulation. Third, I explore the conservation wave, including a discussion on the emergence of the blue economy and blue growth agendas; the enlargement of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); the intensification of aquaculture; and why mobilization and organization among fishers has expanded during this wave. The concluding discussion reflects on how these three waves of development have facilitated overlapping processes of exclusion in global fisheries.

In **Chapter 4**, I track the transnational movements that are contesting and seeking to influence the politics of global fisheries. The chapter focuses on addressing my first sub-question: What transnational fishers' movements exist, how have they evolved over time, and what are their political agendas and strategies? I first trace the history of the transnational fishers' movements, exploring the steps that were taken toward building an international fishers' network between 1984 and 2000, including the birth of a world fishers forum in 1984, and the split that created two movements (WFF and WFFP) in 2000. I then discuss WFF and WFFP's evolution between 2000 to 2020, focusing particularly on the development of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines (2009-2014), and the post-2014 era after the Guidelines were endorsed. The chapter then turns to the three pivotal developments introduced earlier in this chapter, which I argue offer critical insights into fishers' movements' political agendas and alliance-building strategies. These include fishers' movements' internalization of overlapping

fisheries, food and climate crises; convergences between fishers' movements and agrarian movements and platforms, namely LVC, IPC and CSM; and intergovernmental bodies, namely FAO and IPCC, increasing their attention to fisheries issues in their analysis and activities.

In **Chapter 5**, I map the international political spaces, introduced earlier in this chapter, that movements are prioritizing. The chapter focuses on addressing my second sub-question: Which international political spaces are movements prioritizing, what is their historical significance, and how are movements participating in them? I first discuss the COFI, its purpose and structure, how fishers' movements participate in it via the IPC, and some of the key challenges they face in this space. Second, I examine the CFS, its purpose and structure, how fishers' movements have participated in this space via the CSM, and reflect on how the marginalization of fisheries issues vis-à-vis agricultural issues in this space has posed a key challenge to fishers' movements' active engagement. Third, I discuss the COP on the UNFCCC, its purpose and structure, fishers' movements' engagement in parallel civil society-led climate justice spaces, and the challenges the official COPs pose for direct CSO engagement.

In **Chapter 6**, I identify the contentious fisheries issues that movements are struggling over. This chapter focuses on addressing my third sub-question: What contentious fisheries issues are movements struggling over, what are the social and political implications of these issues, and how are movements engaging in them? I first discuss the five main issues highlighted by the IPC's Working Group on Fisheries, including blue economy and growth, ocean and coastal grabbing, aquaculture, aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity, and inland fisheries, and how fishers' movements have grappled and engaged with these issues. I then explore how these five issues are entrenched within the four global phenomena introduced earlier in this chapter, contextualizing their significance, and arguing that they can provide crucial insights into the structural issues propelling mobilization in fishers' movements. These phenomena include the expansion of the industrial (sea)food system and the intensification of privatization in global fisheries; the extension of intensive investment in 'sustainable development' into oceans and inland fishing areas; the accelerated spread of climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives and intersections with conservation agendas; and the COVID-19 pandemic's illumination and exacerbation of existing vulnerabilities in the fisheries sector.

In **Chapter 7**, the concluding chapter, I elaborate on the role of fishers' movements in the politics of global fisheries by narrowing in on the dissertation's main arguments,

conclusions and implications. I discuss the study's central questions and four key findings: First, overlapping processes of exclusion have contributed to both triggering and propelling transnational mobilization, as fishers seek ways to respond to exclusion and through anti-capitalist strategies of resistance. Second, fishers' movements' engagement with fisheries, food and climate politics have been crucial catalysts for both internal capacity-building and the formation of productive alliances with civil society and intergovernmental organizations. Third, fishers' movements contribute an essential critical voice to international political spaces, by analysing and challenging particular agendas put forward by governments and intergovernmental bodies. Fourth, fishers' movements play a key role in raising the profile of the issues and threats small-scale fishers are facing globally, by developing and presenting a political narrative that challenges the status quo and offers alternatives for advancing fisheries justice. I then turn to the broader analytical and methodological implications of this study, highlight implications for fisheries, food and climate policy, and pinpoint key challenges for political activism and fisheries justice.

## 2

## Analytical and Methodological Approaches: Framing and Doing Research on Fishers' Movements

### 2.1 Position and Context of the Researcher

An important element of understanding how and why someone does a particular type of research is understanding the researcher's story. What sparked their interest? What steps led them to conceiving of the research, and later, conducting it? In introducing this analytical and methodological chapter, I will first give a brief account of what sparked my interest, both politically and academically, in fishers' movements and the politics surrounding fisheries. I grew up in the rural fishing community of Prospect Bay, just outside of Halifax in the eastern province of Nova Scotia, Canada. As a child, lakes and oceans were a regular part of my daily life. I spent my summers fishing and paddling around the lake behind my childhood home, catching 'tickle fish' (small crayfish) and hermit crabs, and swimming in the cool waters of the Northumberland Strait at our family cottage. For dinner, we would often go to the local 'Lobster Pound' or buy the freshest catch directly from the lobster fishers that docked a few minutes down the road. When I finished high school, several of my classmates went into lobster fishing, usually because they inherited a license from a relative. The local fishers were always a visible fixture in the community, either because you could see their colourful boats tethered to their buoys in one of the bays, or because a big storm had caused someone to be lost at sea. After the tragic Swissair 111 crash off the coast of Peggy's Cove in 1998, the fishers were the first to get in their boats and help comb the waters for possible survivors, with many of them suffering from lifelong trauma because of what they found.

A decade later, during my undergraduate programme in International Development Studies at York University in Toronto (2009-2012), my interest in social movements was sparked in a class about civil society in Latin America. As part of that class, I did research projects on mobilization among the *cocaleros* (coca producers) in Bolivia, and on development and agency in small-scale fishing communities in Nicaragua. This fascination with social organization continued to grow throughout my undergraduate life, propelling me to apply for a Master's programme where I could explore this interest more deeply. The Agrarian and Environmental Studies (AES) major at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)

offered just that, and I chose to further specialize in Agriculture and Rural Development in order to delve deeper into Critical Agrarian Studies and debates around rural social movements, particularly TAMs. I soon began to notice that fishers were very rarely visible in debates about rural social movements – even when mentioned in passing, as for example, allies of agrarian movements, fishers never seemed to be the key point of interest, nor was much understood about their politics or history. In 2015, while working as a freelance researcher, I had the opportunity to join the Transnational Institute (TNI) team in Paris for the COP21 (UN Climate Change Conference), where the well-known Paris Agreement was adopted. There was a parallel people’s assembly taking place in another part of the city, and TNI was part of a group of social movements and allied organizations that were organizing workshops and events at the people’s assembly. Together with the WFFP and WFF, TNI co-organized events on blue carbon as a ‘false solution’ for climate change and converging land and water struggles, and filmed some interviews with WFFP and WFF members for a documentary project. This was my first opportunity to work with the transnational fishers’ movements, and during the following year, I continued to work with them, co-authoring a TNI brief on EU Fisheries Agreements (see Mills et al., 2017), and writing a PhD proposal on ‘The Politics of Global Governance, Social and Climate Justice, and Emerging Alternatives from Fishers and Food Sovereignty Movements’, which I submitted to ISS in the summer of 2016. I was lucky enough to receive one of five of ISS’ first PhD Fellowships that year, and started my PhD in December of that year.

Over the last five years, I have had many more exciting opportunities to collaborate and learn more about the transnational fishers’ movements. Some of the highlights include participating in the WFFP’s 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in New Delhi in November 2017, contributing as part of the declaration drafting team; conducting a project evaluation for WFFP from May to August 2018; participating in a four-day preparatory training for the fishers’ movements and the biennial COFI session in Rome in July 2018, contributing as part of the statement drafting team and conducting interviews for the WFFP evaluation; and participating in the annual CSM forum and the CFS session in Rome in October 2019. These experiences taught me a great deal about the politics of global fisheries and how fishers’ movements navigate international forums, while also allowing me to develop invaluable relationships with many of the members and allies of transnational fishers’ movements. This has been crucial to being able to conduct this study, not only by being recognized as a researcher, but also as an ally that supports the struggles of the movement.

My position as an 'engaged researcher' who is both sympathetic to, and critical of, the movements being studied (Edelman, 2009), or a 'scholar-activist' who conducts rigorous academic work that is explicitly connected to political projects or movements (Borras, 2016), has been central in guiding my approach to this research. While the approaches of researchers and movements may be quite compatible and even similar, there is still a possibility for tensions or misunderstandings to arise, and sometimes in subtle ways that go unnoticed. Tensions and misunderstandings, however, should be recognized as a normal part of all social and political relationships, and not as a barrier to fruitful and productive interactions and collaborations (Edelman, 2009). This has been an important reflection that I have kept in mind throughout the research process. An engaged, scholar-activist approach has also been key in formulating the central question and three connected sub-questions guiding this study. These questions, which were introduced in Chapter 1, were carefully selected in order to seek and explore information that would not only contribute to academic debates, but could also be used by movements themselves. These questions were revised and reformulated countless times throughout the research process in order to accurately capture what I aim to contribute with this study.

In the rest of this chapter, I will first explore the epistemological and ethical considerations that emerged during the research process, including discussions on reflexivity and how my positionality influenced the research process, the challenges of conducting engaged or scholar-activist research and potential biases that emerge, and the scope and limitations of the research. I will then set out the multi-layered analytical approach, which I have developed by interconnecting debates drawn from three core sets of literature on fisheries, food and climate politics. These serve as building blocks to construct an analysis of the politics of global fisheries and answer the central questions guiding this study. This approach centres around the socio-ecological dynamics of fisheries politics, and involves three main elements: relations of production and ecosocialism; the politics of transnational movements; and historical influences and interconnections. I will then delve into the methodology that guides this study, multi-sited global ethnography, which addresses the need to gather data on multiple issues, among multiple actors and at multiple places and times. I offer a set of complementary qualitative methods, categorized as archival, virtual and in-person (AVI), which I have used to collect a range of primary and secondary data. In combination, these methods have enabled me to cover more ground transnationally than I would have been able to if I were physically present at multiple research sites. Finally, I outline the timeline of the PhD trajectory and activities between December 2016 and September 2021.

## **2.2 Epistemological and Ethical Considerations**

In order to address the adequacy, validity and ethicalness of this PhD project, there were several considerations that I reflected on at every stage of the research process – from conceptualization all the way to completing the full manuscript. These issues also created or uncovered some research limitations along the way, which are expanded upon below. In order to protect the data collected (including interview recordings, transcriptions, and field notes) and the privacy of the research participants, all data was stored on external, password protected hard drives that I have exclusive access to. The identities of all research participants and interviewees have also been kept anonymous due to the sensitive political views, personal perspectives and information that have been graciously shared with me. I also paid careful attention to which information I included in this dissertation, allowing me to engage in critical analysis, while also protecting the privacy and integrity of the movements, organizations and individuals involved. As an engaged researcher or scholar-activist, this is an important, albeit constantly challenging, part of the research process as you try to contribute useful, critical work and raise difficult questions, while simultaneously not causing unnecessary damage to movements and allied organizations.

### ***2.2.1 Reflexivity and Positionality***

As a researcher, it is important to always keep in mind what kind of effect certain aspects of your identity and positionality might have on different aspects of the research process. This becomes especially pertinent when working in international contexts with complicated history and politics that you may be less familiar with. Conducting international research requires one to be aware of diverse histories of colonialism, development, globalization and local realities, while avoiding research approaches that may be exploitative or perpetuate unequal power relations. Ethical considerations must therefore be reflected upon continuously throughout the research process, from start to finish, with researchers being particularly conscious of how ethics are negotiated in the field (Sultana, 2007). This can help to ensure that the research process is both productive and rewarding, allowing you to engage with critiques and carry out research that is politically engaged, materially grounded and institutionally sensitive. Being reflexive and paying attention to your own positionality and the power relations inherent in all research processes is crucial, since positionality and subjectivity are formed both spatially and temporally and are constantly changing. The politics of time is especially important in relation



to moments and events that ground research. Spatial and temporal dynamics are altered by their context, and may involve a blurring of the boundaries between the various actors involved in the research. While some have rightly argued that simply acknowledging your positionality, reflexivity and identity does not in itself result in research that is politically engaged, or that challenges unequal power relations and creates change, however recognizing and engaging with these aspects is an important first step (Sultana, 2007).

In my case, as a young, white woman, who grew up in a small Canadian fishing community and is based at a Dutch university, these characteristics of my identity and positionality may influence the way I am perceived by the people I am working with, interviewing, or even meeting in an informal context. Important questions that I asked myself throughout the research process were: How do the actors that I am interviewing see me? What is my position in relation to the movements and organizations I am working with? Do they perceive my position differently than I perceive it? Do particular aspects of my identity or positionality pose problems in being accepted by fishers or movement members? Do these aspects create barriers or limit the kind of information I have access to? Am I treated as an outsider? Am I seen as trustworthy? In working with fishers, social movements and political organizations, identity is always an important issue to consider. Fishers may not want to talk to you because you are a woman; movement members may not accept you because you are an outsider; and organizations may not trust you because you are a researcher.

There is a fine balance that needs to be established between being a researcher and not getting too deeply involved in movement politics, and demonstrating that you are an ally with the movement's best interest at heart. This balance may also shift from side to side depending on the setting you are in and the interactions you are involved in. I found that my social skills and quiet, reflective personality came in handy in allowing me to build trust with the various actors I engaged with. I consciously did not make myself too visible in event or group settings, and although I engaged in group discussions, I did not present my opinions or ideas too vigorously, choosing instead to be an active listener to others. I felt that this was useful in appearing unthreatening, and as an equal collaborator, rather than an 'expert academic'. I feel quite fortunate to have been accepted and seemingly trusted quite quickly, which became evident to me in the smooth and relaxed way that most interviews and conversations played out. Even in discussions with particular fishers' movement members whom I was initially intimidated to meet due to their preceding reputation for being distrustful of 'outsiders', I was pleasantly surprised by their warm welcome and openness in sharing their personal history and

perspectives. Overall, I feel that my positionality and identity had a positive impact on the access and interactions I had throughout the research process.

### ***2.2.2 Engaged Research, Scholar-Activism and Biases***

Identity, positionality and subjectivity become particularly delicate when pursuing an engaged or scholar-activist approach to research. Having worked with TNI on fisheries issues and with fishers' movements for a year prior to starting my PhD, my familiarity with the debates and politics around them meant that I already had a set of mental scripts into which I sometimes found myself trying to fit new information that I encountered during the research process. This made it especially crucial for me to carry out my research rigorously, systematically and thoughtfully, by not taking anything at face value and cross-checking information in a way that forced me to see things from new perspectives. Furthermore, as a scholar-activist who is sympathetic to the politics of fishers' movements (namely WFFP and WFF), I already have biases regarding what I think about their importance and effectiveness. Therefore, I also made sure to engage in conversations with informed people who posed critical questions that challenged my perspectives on movement politics and broadened the scope of my research. Presenting my work at a diverse range of conferences and publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals, which provided me with rigorous and thought-provoking feedback, also contributed greatly to strengthening and sharpening my research.

A scholar-activist approach is challenging, and involves a constant balancing act in figuring out how emotionally or politically invested you can be in your research and the people you engage with, and when to create boundaries. A wise person who has worked with social movements for decades, once told me that there are typically four types of researchers that engage with movements:

- 1) Those who work closely with the movement, often taking on a staff role within the movement to support it from the inside. They often only publish what they see as beneficial to the movement;
- 2) Those who are considered an ally and are invited by the movement to work on a particular project for short periods of time or to contribute their expertise on a particular issue;

- 3) Those who are sympathetic to the movement, but are autonomous enough to offer constructive criticism on how things are functioning as a way to possibly strengthen its agenda;
- 4) Those who are completely autonomous from the movement, conducting observational research from a distance, but are occasionally invited by the movement to participate in events or discussions.

As someone who moves between both the second and third roles, I had to keep in mind that my role fluctuated between these at different moments during the research process. At times I felt conflicted about setting boundaries, and about how aligned I am with the political struggles of the actors and movements I work with. Questions arose about how (constructively) critical I should or could be, and what information should be revealed in order to not negatively impact the various actors and movements involved or their political reputations. Since there is no handbook for addressing such questions, I dealt with these using social and political intuition, as well as advice from colleagues and mentors who had experience with similar situations. I also had many conversations with people engaging in or with fishers' movements to get a sense of what kind of critical analysis they found most useful to include in the research. These conversations served as important guideposts throughout the research process.

### ***2.2.3 Scope and Limitations***

Research on transnational movements, political spaces and contentious fisheries issues is complex and challenging, particularly due to the large number of actors and processes involved. I had to be pragmatic about how much data I could feasibly collect within a four-year PhD project, with modest funding, and which ended up including the COVID-19 pandemic, presenting a whole other set of complications. This meant that I was not able to conduct in-depth interviews and observation with all of the actors, groups and organizations involved in the politics of fishers' movements, and I had to make choices about who and what I could engage with. These choices were made due to a combination of factors, including who was willing and able to engage, who and what spaces I had access to, time constraints, funding constraints, and being selective throughout the research process about what data to include based on what movements, spaces and issues emerged as the most significant. One important choice I made was to focus on the politics of fishers' movements at the transnational or

international level, which meant that it was not feasible to also look deeply at national or local politics. This has had an impact on the scope of the research and limited my ability to track whether successes and gains made by fishers' movements in international spaces (for example, FAO) were trickling down to have real impacts on the ground nationally or locally. However, the transnational focus also makes this dissertation unique, as far as I am aware, in that the relatively small body of literature that does engage with fishers' movements focuses on national and local level politics. The transnational/national issue came up numerous times in interviews and discussions in which people criticized the disconnect between the international and local fisher spaces, and the absence of mechanisms for ensuring that information was being 'brought back home'. This would be an interesting issue to explore in future research.

There are also some conceptual points I want to flag, which are beyond the scope of this study. While I recognize the importance of aspects of gender, generation and ethnicity in the politics of fishers' movements, and social movements more broadly, I was not able to engage deeply with these concepts in this study. I felt these were issues that required more focused attention and in-depth analysis, rather than mentioning them in passing. Interestingly, generation and ethnicity were not concepts that featured prominently in my interviews and conversations as elements that impacted fishers' movement mobilization, unity within the movements, or engagement at the transnational level. Gender did come up more frequently, particularly in relation to the important role of women in fishing communities and their contributions to fish processing and selling, and both fishers' movements do highlight this issue in their agendas and campaigns. I have woven some discussion on gender into various parts of the dissertation, but a more in-depth analysis on gender relations in the fishers' movements could be interesting to explore in future research. While some important research has been done on gender and ethnicity in fisheries (see Alonso-Población and Siar, 2018; Frangoudes and Gerrard, 2018; Menon et al., 2016), there is certainly a need for more work to be done to unpack and try to understand the role particular attributes play both more broadly within the fisheries sector, and more specifically within movements.

I have done my best to be forthcoming about the choices I have made while writing up this dissertation. While employing a multi-sited, multi-method approach allowed me some flexibility in where, when and how to collect data, particularly in addressing time and funding constraints, it also complicated the research process in other ways. During the design phase of the research, I had to have a somewhat open-ended fieldwork and data collection plan that would allow me to make space for new opportunities that came up at the last minute, or to let

go of plans that did not work out. My trip to Cape Town to conduct archival research, for example, was an opportunity that presented itself relatively late in the research process, but was one that was too valuable to be passed up. However, adding this trip to the fieldwork schedule meant that two other trips that had initially been planned to international events had to be cancelled, since my funding could not cover everything. I did my best to address such complications, and whenever possible, incorporated discussion on emerging complications into the dissertation.

### **2.3 Analytical Approach: Socio-Ecological Dynamics of Fisheries Politics**

This study employs an interdisciplinary and crosscutting approach, in order to construct a well-informed critical analysis and contribute to societally relevant research. As research emerging from the international development field, it engages with insights from both social and political sciences, including political economy and ecology, international relations, history, sociology and human geography. It weaves together three core sets of literature on fisheries politics (for example, fishing communities, fisheries governance, policy), food politics (for example, small-scale producers, food systems, food sovereignty), climate politics (for example, climate governance, mitigation/adaptation, climate justice). Engaging with interconnected debates from these three sets of literature has been central to the development of the multi-layered analytical framework I used, serving as building blocks to construct an analysis of global fisheries politics and answer the central questions guiding this study. A crosscutting approach has been crucial to trying to make sense of the complex relationships that exist within the politics of fisheries and movements. It has allowed me to incorporate multiple views, which is useful for attempting to holistically understand diverse perspectives, forms of knowledge and means of generating data. The framework guiding this study is expanded upon below.

At a broader conceptual level, this research draws from key political economy and ecology theories and debates, particularly at the international level, which have proved useful because of their ability to combine political, economic and ecological issues, across multiple intersecting disciplines, methodologies, geographies and cultures (Wolford, 2005). As Staniland (1985) argues, the timeless relevance of international political economy is reflected in its “continuing effort to make a highly complex reality intelligible, and more manageable” (9). Core political economy debates about the interplay between structure and agency, patterns

and actions, rule and behaviour, property and fragmented classes of labour, and asymmetrical power relations (Bernstein, 2010; Wolf, 1999; Fox, 1993; Paige, 1978) are particularly important here, as issues that characterize power, control and resistance in the fisheries sector (Campling and Havice, 2014; Campling et al., 2012; Mansfield, 2004). The analytical building blocks used in this study have contributed to the development of a particular understanding of the links between transnational movements, political spaces and contentious fisheries issues. Political economy and ecology tools have been used to analyse the dynamics of development or the forces that drive change within both the fisheries sector, in which movements are embedded, and in relationships, such as between fishers' movements and other actors. Understanding such dynamics is an important part of social and political analysis, since this can help us to recognize how particular actions, behaviours or events contribute to shaping the politics of fisheries. While political economy and ecology frameworks have historically been useful in the analysis of food and agrarian politics, they provide useful tools for connecting this analysis with fisheries and climate politics as well.

### ***2.3.1 Relations of Production and Ecosocialism***

This study engages with questions of how agency, mobilization and contention shape and are shaped by the politics of fisheries. These questions have been discussed at great length in the context of agrarian politics (see Wolf, 1999; Fox, 1993; Paige, 1978), but can also provide insights into the unequal power relations, structures and institutional roles that exist within fisheries. As Goodin and Tilly (2006) argue, political analysis is not simply employed when observing clashes between conflicting principles; it involves 'watching the continuous creation and re-creation of rights through struggle' (5). In this study, this creation and recreation is especially visible in the context of property relations, the structures and institutions that facilitate power hierarchies, rights to resources, and how fishers' movements organize themselves to protest exclusion from resources and property. Property policies and privatization agendas implemented by governments globally have been a central factor in this exclusion. As Campling and Havice (2014) argue 'questions of property and rent have long been at the heart of debates over the growing fisheries crisis, a debate that is gaining attention because of the importance of fisheries in ecological systems, food security and economic development' (723). A contradiction emerges in the global fisheries system in the context of the increasingly promotion of seafood increasingly as the healthiest, cheapest and most

sustainable source of animal protein, which subsequently increases demand, while decision-makers seem perplexed about why there is a global crisis of overfishing and how to deal with it. This reflects how the fisheries system both depends on and is undermined by intense overconsumption of natural resources, or what O'Connor (1998) refers to as the 'second contradiction of capitalism'.

Contributing to understanding this contradiction, this study draws from Bernstein's (2010) four political economy questions, namely, who owns what? (social relations of property, access and ownership or resources); who does what? (social divisions of labour), who gets what? (distribution of income and non-material earnings); and what do they do with it? (social relations of consumption, reproduction and accumulation). Questions of ownership and capital accumulation are particularly useful in Chapters 3 and 6, in order to understand how development in global fisheries has contributed to processes of exclusion, and how small-scale fishers are impacted by issues like the emergence of blue economy and blue growth agendas and the expansion of aquaculture production. In addition, inspired by Fraser (2021), Friedmann (2015), Weis (2007) and O'Connor (1998), an important fifth question is added: what are the ecological impacts? (socio-ecological relations), in order to reflect upon how productive activities affect the environment. As Friedmann (2015) argues, understanding the cyclical importance of land to capital accumulation allows us to 'bring into focus the institutions defining property and markets in land, the products that humans create by interacting with the flows of soils, waters and species, and the inter-relationships among all organisms large and small in each place' (25). Weis (2007) similarly argues that ecological aspects must be brought more centrally into analyses of the global food economy, and that historically tracing the material relations that exist between social and natural systems is a key part of this. In this study, the question of ecological impacts of production has been particularly useful in Chapters 3 and 6, when reflecting upon how fishing and aquaculture impact the environment.

The ecological aspect is critical in discussions around fisheries, as it brings up debates about the 'limits of nature' (see Dressler et al., 2014), which often emerge in the context of how to understand the causes and consequences of the global fisheries crisis. This is particularly important when trying to understand ecological influences on politics and power, and relationships between social, political and economic factors and environmental issues. Neoliberal conservation rhetoric illuminates this complex relationship between politics and ecology clearly, offering up win-win-win technological solutions to natural limits and resource overexploitation that supposedly take care of the environment, the economy and people

simultaneously (Dressler et al., 2014; Arsel and Büscher, 2012; Büscher and Arsel, 2012). In the context of fisheries, this approach is becoming increasingly widespread as the popularity of blue economy and blue growth agendas spreads rapidly worldwide, further blurring the boundaries between conserving aquatic resources and capital accumulation (Barbesgaard, 2018). This also makes fisheries a fascinating, although analytically challenging field, considering fish – as the only commodity that is still hunted in the wild – is often treated as a resource which will continue to replenish itself (Campling et al., 2012). In this sense, ecology is deeply embedded in the politics of fisheries.

The politics of fisheries can also be linked to food regime analysis, an approach introduced by Friedmann and McMichael (1989) for understanding the global linkages between relations of food production, circulation and consumption, and capital accumulation. Grounded in historical political economy, this approach situates food and agriculture in relation to the global development of capitalism, arguing that contestation and struggles among and between social movements, capital and states are the continuous forces that generate social change (Friedmann, 2016; Magnan, 2012). The fundamental challenge of food regime analysis is to trace changes in the global food system in a way that is simultaneously holistic, historically grounded and theoretically sophisticated (Magnan, 2012). This study takes a similar approach in analysing the politics of global fisheries, yet I have found food regime analysis more useful as a heuristic tool, rather than an all-encompassing framework. It is helpful for gaining insights into patterns of formal state and informal non-state structures, practices and processes that govern the production, circulation and consumption of food, and the interactions between the various actors involved (Friedmann, 2016; McMichael and Friedmann, 2007). While existing discussions around food regimes and food systems have engaged particularly with agricultural aspects, I delve into the fisheries side of the story, in order to understand how present and historical relations of fish production, circulation and consumption, and capital accumulation play out in global seafood production. This is fleshed out in Chapter 3 through a discussion of three waves of development in global fisheries.

This study is also rooted in ecosocialist (ecological socialist or Marxist) debates about the impacts of production on the environment, and the emergence of resistance or revolution in response to the deterioration of humans' relationship to the earth. This resistance often seeks upheaval in the current system of unrestrained capital accumulation, and calls for the centring of equitable social and environmental relations in society. Ecosocialism calls for more space for human freedom and creativity, and a society in which people work together to rebuild a



world with ecological pillars at its core (Fraser, 2021; Foster, 2017). This perspective stands in staunch opposition to the ecomodernist vision that typically guides mainstream approaches to fisheries, food and climate governance, focusing on technological fixes for ecological issues and the perpetual expansion of production. This is especially vivid in current regimes of industrial (sea)food production. Ecomodernism ignores the impacts that continuous growth has on the structure of society and the economy, instead believing that even more capital accumulation can fix the environmental damage caused by capital accumulation in the first place. While ecosocialism allows space for civil society to challenge the status quo, ecomodernism fails to question the current overly-consumptive commodity system, allowing power to remain concentrated in the hands of the state and the market (Fraser, 2021; Foster, 2017). The space that ecosocialism opens up for understanding civil society groups that are proposing alternative paths toward a sustainable future, make it a key tool in the analysis of fishers' – or fisheries justice – movements.

Stemming from ecosocialist debates, this study draws fundamental insights from O'Connor (1998), Fraser (2021) and Olin Wright (2019). First, profits are both the means and ends of the capitalist economy, meaning that capital depends on its continuous expansion into new domains. The result is that privatization and corporate interests keep spreading into new spaces and sectors. An example of this is the industrial food system's expansion beyond agricultural production and into seafood through the relatively recent intensification of aquaculture production globally. Second, capitalism generates uneven and combined development globally. It is uneven in the sense that there is a historically produced, uneven spatial distribution (between regions) of consumption, wealth, labour relations, agriculture and fisheries production (among other things); and combined in the sense that regions have a particular combination of economic, social and political characteristics that determine their level of development. This can be illustrated by the imbalances within global fisheries (for example, in terms of management, state support, resource access), in which owners of industrial fishing companies in some regions are able to maintain stable livelihoods, and even accrue profits, while small-scale fishers in other regions struggle to survive.

Third, both the expansion of capital and uneven and combined development have been partially responsible for the emergence of organized forms of resistance, contestation and anti-capitalism, in which social movements react to exploitation, exclusion and dispossession. Anti-capitalism provides a critical organizing narrative, which “disclosing the links among multiple strands of injustice and irrationality, represents the key to developing a powerful counter-

hegemonic project of eco-societal transformation” (Fraser, 2021, 97). Movement reactions are also uneven, in that they are not constant nor consistent, emerging in varying levels of intensity and coherence at different moments in time. Anti-capitalist movements tend to reflect five strategic logics, including taming, resisting, smashing, dismantling and escaping capitalism, across two dimensions of neutralizing harms and transcending structures. Such movements do not confine themselves to a single category, but typically engage in combination of several throughout their political history (Olin Wright, 2019). For transnational fishers’ movements, their visibility and political agendas have not been constant or consistent over the last two decades, but have been influenced by local and global contexts, and strategic shifts reflecting their priorities, capacities and the various actors involved.

### ***2.3.2 Politics of Transnational Movements***

Closely linked to ecosocialist debates about the role of civil society, and when delving into the complex socio-ecological dynamics discussed above, approaches toward understanding the structures and actions of movements enrich underlying political economy and ecology analyses (see Tarrow, 2011; 2005; Tilly, 2004; Edelman, 2001). More specifically, when exploring the transnational mobilization of fishers, I engage with key arguments related to social struggles or movements emerging out of and engaging in actions or repertoires of contention in order to broaden their political reach, and influence the repressive relationships that characterize social life (Edelman, 2001). In relation to fisheries politics, this occurs on multiple levels – local, national, transnational – simultaneously. Actors engaging in political spaces and process demonstrate their agency, not only through large mobilizations – such as some transnational food and agrarian movements have done (see Edelman and Borras, 2016; McMichael, 2014) – but also in smaller, often individual acts of everyday politics (see Kerkvliet, 2009). As Tilly (2004) argues, the emergence of social movements signalled a change in the way people participate in politics in many parts of the world. By the early-2000s, the term ‘social movement’ was recognized globally as a call for popular action and a way to resist oppressive, unbalanced power structures. He conceptualized movements as inclusive organizations made up of different interest groups in society, such as workers, women, students, youth and intellectuals, who are all bound together by a common struggle, often stemming from the malfunctioning or lack of democracy in a specific political setting.

Transnational social movements entail a high level of, cohesion, shared collective identity, and horizontal exchange between active members, who often feel a strong connection with each other despite little direct contact. While the more precise concept 'transnational movement organization' involves an organized membership base in multiple countries, global agrarian justice movements, such as La Vía Campesina, have also been described as a 'movement of movements' because of the wide array of actors (for example, local organizations, NGOs, national movements) actively participating in them (Fox, 2010). Fox further specifies the shared elements that typically characterise transnational movements:<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2.1: Characteristics of Transnational Movements**

Characteristics	Transnational Movement Organizations
Exchange of information and experiences	Shared
Organized social base	Counterparts have bases
Mutual support	Shared
Material interests	Sometimes shared
Joint actions and campaigns	Shared, based on shared long-term strategy
Ideologies	Usually shared
Collective identities and political cultures	Shared political values, repertoires and identities

Source: Adapted from Fox (2010)

In regard to understanding the cohesion and shared identity that actually exists within a movement, and how membership is constructed (who is included and who is excluded), it is important to reflect critically on what this means in practice in particular movements (Li, 2015; Bernstein, 2014; McMichael, 2008). Defining where a movement's boundaries lie, and classifying which events or actors are or are not part of movement dynamics, has proven to be consistently problematic in the breadth of literature on the subject. This is complicated by the existence of both direct and indirect social and political ties, linking multiple smaller networks, organizations and individual activists through diverse movements, spaces and issues. These prove to be exceedingly difficult to track, especially because movement boundaries are often an ever-moving target (Diani, 2015).<sup>12</sup> Similar to social movement analyses that argue that individual organizations in a movement shape and are shaped by their relationship with the larger systems and structures that they engage with (McCarthy, 2005), the analytical approach employed in this study is also underpinned by structuralist elements. Understanding the

<sup>11</sup> Fox's table is expanded upon in Chapter 4 in order to analyse the characteristics of transnational fishers' movements.

<sup>12</sup> Although much of Tilly and Diani's work focuses mainly on urban areas of the Global North, their broader conceptualizations of how movements develop, interact and engage in politics is also relevant in rural settings and other areas where fishers are present.

dynamics of a process or relationship holistically (for example, fisheries politics) requires the careful analysis of multiple parts (for example, movements, spaces and issues) of a larger whole, and how they all fit together and influence each other. As generations of structuralist scholars (for example, Claude Levi-Strauss, Nicos Poulantzas), have argued overlapping phenomena of human life cannot be fully understood without looking at the larger structures that they are part of.

Building on Diani and McAdam's (2003) work on relational approaches to understanding collective action, Diani (2015) argues that current approaches to researching social movements remain too opaque. He puts forward three areas that require further development: First, conceptions of movements need to move beyond being comprised only of people to include objects, moments, spaces, rallies, events, and strategies used. Second, more information needs to be collected on the evolution of movements over time and how changes affect engagement in collective action, since studies of movements are often done at a single point in time and extensive archives of their activities are hard to find. Third, more research needs to be done on the long-term impacts of virtual interactions in social movements. Part of the aim of this study, particularly in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, has been to explore and contribute toward further developing all three of these areas in the relation to fishers' movements.

Exploring the dynamics of spaces in which movements participate, and the significance of these spaces for movement-building, is a key aspect in understanding how and through which channels they engage in politics. As Gaventa (2006) argues, political spaces themselves are opportunities and channels, through which civil society actors can attempt to influence the discourses, policies and decisions that affect them. For transnational movements, international spaces have become particularly important since the 1990s, as the intensification of globalization contributed to changing forms of power and opening up new governance arenas. This subsequently created new spaces for citizen action and engagement (Gaventa and Tandon, 2010; Scott, 2008; Edelman, 1999). As global governance arenas, particularly at the UN level, began shifting toward a more participatory approach, civil society actors seeking to influence policy and decision-making processes, increasingly recognized the strategic importance of engaging in international intergovernmental spaces (McKeon, 2017a). Yet, participation in such spaces is heavily influenced by power relations, which dictate who is able to gain access, when and for what purposes. As introduced in Chapter 1, Gaventa (2006) offers a useful categorization of closed, invited and claimed/created spaces of participation, and how these three categories can help us to analyse how particular spaces emerge and how they are

influenced by power dynamics. These categories become particularly useful in Chapter 5's discussion of the key intergovernmental spaces that transnational fishers' movements have been engaging in, and how they have been able to gain access to and participate effectively in them.

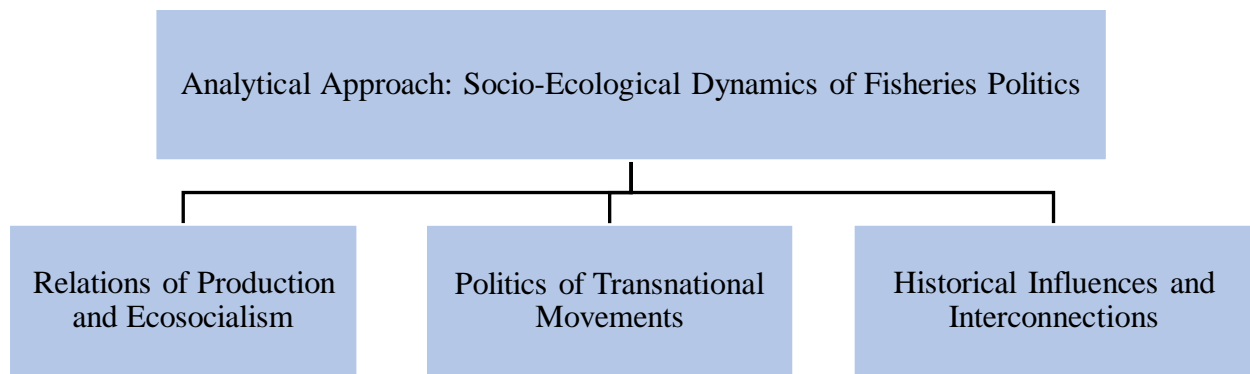
### ***2.3.3 Historical Influences and Interconnections***

When studying transnational movements, analysing their evolution across time and space is crucial, and yet is an approach that has not been given enough attention in movement-centred research more broadly (Edelman and Borrás, 2016). Schiavoni (2017) also discusses the importance of incorporating time, relational elements, and ongoing 'eventing' dynamics into analyses of complex processes. Although Schiavoni's approach focuses on understanding food politics (particularly food systems and food sovereignty), it offers a flexible framework that can be adaptively applied to the analysis of other types of politics as well – namely fisheries politics, how they are historically influenced, and the interconnections within. An historically sensitive approach provides insights into how social structures, agency and institutions influence politics over time, while a relational approach allows us to track the shaping and reshaping of dynamic processes, and an interactive approach sheds light on the connections between various actors involved in constructing political processes (Schiavoni, 2017). When engaging in a multi-layered analysis of fisheries politics, these three elements help us to understand the dynamics that drive development or change within complex processes. In this study, and particularly in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, this has allowed me to holistically analyse the transnational movements, political spaces and fisheries issues by tracking them historically. The historical angle pays particular attention to the continuous importance of history and the moments and events that comprise it, in shaping the present.

As Jackson (2006) argues, the cultural politics of 'eventing', or the ways in which past and present occurrences take shape or take on meaning for us at a particular moment in history, are crucial for analyses of historical processes. Eventing is therefore a logical first step toward understanding connections between events, which are 'plucked out of a "dynamic reality"' (2006, 494). This approach challenges explanatory strategies of trying to systematically link events and their outcomes as a way to generate inflexible generalizations, since an event's contours are unfixed, blurred, and continuously being renegotiated. Eventing should therefore be understood as an ongoing dynamic process in which the boundaries of events are constantly

being produced and reproduced. This form of social negotiation, or ‘contentious conversation’ (Tilly, 2002), has an unusual temporal character allowing it to always take place in the present, even if the event(s) have taken place in the past. When analysing the cultural politics of eventing, it is important to carefully trace how processes and events interact and interconnect and the outcomes this generates. This helps you to recognize the importance of agency within processes, as well the specific contexts within which they occur, which can simultaneously impact the stability of a process, and the ability for it to be changed or reshaped (Jackson, 2006).

The historical analysis carried out in this study also draws on McMichael’s (2000) ‘incorporated comparison’ approach, which is described as a vehicle for historical theory, and frames international organization as a constantly evolving process. While this approach has not been engaged with overtly in this study, it has been useful for seeing connections between multiple spaces, events and issues emerging in different places or moments in history. Incorporated comparison has three core elements: First, it is not a formalized external process that looks at individual situations or cases and tries to find similar or contrasting patterns between them. Instead, it involves an internal approach of historical inquiry where spaces, events and issues can be correlated because of their historical connections and mutual conditioning. Second, incorporated comparison does not take theoretical understandings of the spaces, events and issues involved as a starting point, but rather looks at the connections between them more empirically and how these linkages form a larger whole. This means, for example, that in the context of fisheries politics, the connections between spaces, events and issues are not taken as a given, but are self-shaping in the context of their historical specificity. Third, incorporated comparison can be carried out across time and space, both separately and collectively (McMichael, 2000). In a similar way, the multi-layered analytical approach taken in this study attempts to engage with all of the analytical elements discussed above in a holistic manner. In order to facilitate the analysis of transnational movements, political spaces and fisheries issues, and gather the data required to answer the core research question and sub-questions, a particular methodological approach and set of tools have been carefully woven together and employed in conducting this study.



## 2.4 Methodology: Multi-Sited Global Ethnography

The methodological approach and methods used in this study reflect the need to gather data dynamically on multiple issues, among multiple actors, and at multiple places and times. The multi-layered analytical approach described above thus requires a particular set of interwoven tools that support the collection of diverse forms of qualitative data. This dynamic methodological approach emerges out of the contemporary globalized context in which this study is being conducted, which ‘calls into question social science’s primary object of scholarly inquiry, and in so doing challenges researchers to reconfigure their units of analysis and rethink methodologies’ (Mendez, 2008, 136). This means that traditional means for conducting research must be adapted to more complex and dynamic contemporary contexts, rather than employed with strict adherence to their traditional methodological principles. A major strength of ethnography is its ability to generate empirical data that would typically not be immediately visible in or connected with scientific thought and policy analysis. It does so by enabling grounded research and knowledge generation through which the researcher is able to connect pieces of data to a larger analytical whole that contributes to understanding social relations and political phenomena (Stepputat and Larsen, 2015).

The field of study in this study is the politics of global fisheries, which involves an array of movements, political spaces and contentious issues. This study therefore draws on key features of multi-sited and global ethnography, combining them into a ‘multi-sited global ethnography’ approach. Multi-sited ethnography is a less conventional methodological approach that reaches beyond single sites and local situations, toward the circulation of meanings, objects and identities across time and space. This means it is not being employed

here in the anthropological sense of being physically present in every research site, as is typically associated with ethnographic methods. Instead, this mobile form of ethnography takes unexpected paths, and engages with various tracking and mapping strategies in order to construct an understanding of the associations and connections that exist between various subjects across multiple sites of activity (Marcus, 1995). This is key to tracing the processes that drive development or change within complex politics of global fisheries. Meanwhile, global ethnography emerges from the process of globalization, framed as a composition of time and space which can be divided into three essential components: transnational ‘forces’; flows or ‘connections’; and discourse or ‘imaginings’. It allows the researcher to delve into external forces; explore the connections between sites; and uncover and distil imaginings from daily life. It seeks to link everyday life to broader transnational flows of population, discourse, commodities and power in order to move beyond talking only about global dynamics in broad terms, enriching these discussions with stories and data from the ground. Its global lens shifts from studying only sites to studying fields – meaning the relations between sites, which are often complex and cross-cutting (Burawoy et al., 2000). Looking at globalization as a key force in history is crucial to understanding transnational fishers’ movements, which emerged largely in response to the impacts of globalization in fisheries.

Ethnographic approaches have become increasingly popular in social sciences due to their attention to the multiple interwoven factors that constitute the history and context of social groups and processes. Such approaches are seen as an inclusive and effective way to study the interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within and between organizations and social movements. This approach has a strong emphasis on exploring a social phenomenon, rather than testing hypotheses; tends to work mostly with somewhat unstructured data that is not confined to an inflexible set of analytical categories; focuses on digging deeper into select, emblematic cases; engages with different interpretations of meaning in the collected data (usually in the form of verbal descriptions); and aims for detailed, holistic insights into people’s actions and views on the world (Reeves et al., 2008).

The reflexive nature of ethnography also means it offers useful tools for gathering data intended for social movements to critically reflect (both inwardly and outwardly) on their political agendas and alliances (Reeves et al., 2008; Plows, 2008). The interpretivist epistemological underpinnings of ethnography are crucial in studies of social movements and the political spaces and issues they engage with, in order to take into account the numerous individual and collective understandings of reality and experiences. This approach recognizes



that knowledge will always be partial, and thus never 'complete'. This means that although the research is conducted systematically and rigorously, its objectives are humble and self-critical, leaving space for dialogue with other research and perspectives (both supportive and contradictory) on similar themes. This approach also allows researchers to explore often hidden or latent social conditions, and connect these realities back to analytical questions and theories (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013; Plows, 2008). This study does not follow a strictly Weberian interpretivist approach, which focuses more on *individual* understandings of the world, but focuses instead on contemporary ethnographic approaches to exploring *collective* understandings and ways of organizing.

In relation to the analytical framework above, the methodology used in this study is embedded in a framework of structural, political economy, used when trying to understand social patterns of behaviour, and reasons for mobilization (see Bernstein, 2010; Li, 2007; Edelman, 2001). This becomes especially complicated in a global context where transnational alliances of activists are developing and engaging in new mobilization strategies that challenge existing understandings of what comprises a 'social movement' or 'political process' (Edelman, 2001). This adds another layer of complexity to conducting research on the role of transnational (multi-sited) fishers' movements in global politics. However, despite the challenges, more research on the broader political contexts of such movements is critical. As Edelman (2001: 309) argues, 'ethnographic analyses of social movements have been most persuasive when they transcend the single-organization or single-issue focus of much collective action research in favor of broader examinations of the political and social fields within which mobilizations occur. Although ethnographers have often provided compelling, fine-grained accounts of collective action, they have been less consistent when it comes to developing dynamic analyses of the larger political contexts in which mobilizations occur.'

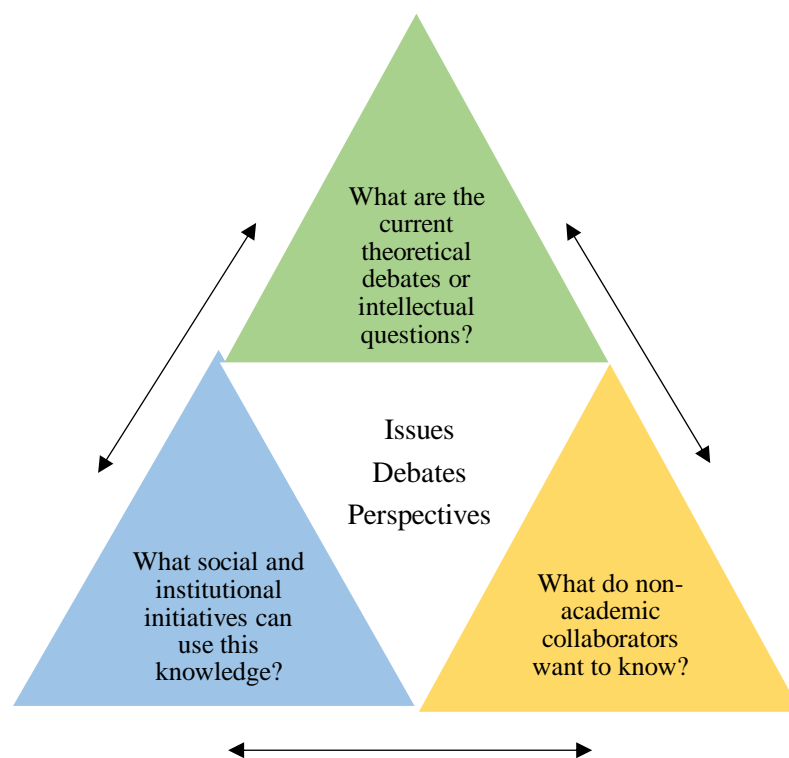
Multi-sited global ethnography is particularly useful for exploring the complex dynamics and multiple layers of the various processes and actors involved in the politics of global fisheries. It offers valuable tools for understanding and theorizing social movements, which are increasingly expanding beyond local and national boundaries and becoming 'transnationalized' – especially those mobilizing around natural resources and environmental issues (Martinez-Alier et al., 2016; Schlosberg, 2014; 2004). The transnational element of this study is explored by tracking and thematically analysing discussions and debates around the politics of global fisheries, both within processes involving international organizations and institutions (for example, WFFP, WFF, ICSF, COFI, CFS, COP), as well as in literature, documents and policies. This transnational approach also extends into my engaged or scholar-

activist approach to research, since I have collaborated with transnational social movements both prior to and throughout the research process. Edelman (2009) describes an engaged researcher as one who is sympathetic yet critical of the movements they study, and who may not see the approaches of movements and researchers as incompatible or even entirely distinct. Similarly, Borrás (2016) defines scholar-activists as those who aim to use scholarly tools not only to understand the world, but also to change it, while also having a connection to a political project or social justice movement. Broadly, the three types of scholar-activists are: '1) ...primarily located in academic institutions who do activist work and are connected to a political project or movement(s); 2) ...principally based in social movements or a political project and do scholar-activism from within; and 3) ...mainly located in non-academic independent research institutions who do activist work and connect with a political project or movement(s)' (23-24). I am personally situated in the first group.

As a social science approach, engaged or activist research has garnered both increasing recognition and critique in recent years. Mendez (2008) points out that 'debates about the blending of political commitments with scholarly research agendas raise epistemological questions about the nature and value of research as well as political questions about how scholarship might act in conjunction with struggles for social justice. The convergence of both critiques at this juncture calls out for critical analysis' (136). The transnational possibilities of engaged or scholar-activist work are also valuable due to the contemporary context of globalization – meaning the current and historical social, economic, and political processes that increasingly connect individuals, groups, and institutions on a global scale. As Mendez (2008) notes, 'given current configurations of global and institutional relations of power, a difficult but worthwhile position for the scholar activist is that of "strategic duality," in which the researcher uses her position within the academy to contribute to social justice struggles, while at the same time working to place at the center alternative voices and ways of knowing' (138). Hale (2006) also reflects on this 'duality' as a defining characteristic, arguing that activist research affirms dual political commitments from the beginning, attempting to be loyal both to critical scholarly production and to the principles and practices of struggles outside academia.

Derickson and Routledge's (2015) 'politics of resourcefulness' framework helps to further shed light on the practicalities of what it means to engage in less-conventional engaged and activist research approaches. This resourcefulness includes academics directing resources and privileges (for example, time, access, technology, space, grant writing experience) toward supporting non-academic collaborators' work (for example, social movements); and research

can be designed explicitly to answer questions that non-academic collaborators want to know; as well as to explore the barriers to long-term, active participation and activism. Such research is helpful in understanding both the challenges faced by non-academic collaborators in achieving change and how social relations can be transformed in order to address those challenges and make change more feasible. This framework (see Figure 2.1) offers a dynamic approach to triangulating information with the research questions we pose as scholar-activists by asking: What are the current theoretical debates or intellectual questions? What social and institutional projects can use this knowledge? And what do non-academic collaborators want to know?



**Figure 2.1:** Scholar-activist approach to triangulating research questions  
Source: Adapted from Derickson and Routledge (2015)

The methodological approach described above offers a flexible way to engage in rigorous and in-depth analysis of the unfolding political dynamics of global fisheries. Grounded in interpretive sociological methods, such as participant observation and open-ended conversational interviewing, multi-sited global ethnography therefore requires a multi-method approach. In this study, this has meant collecting data on two movements, and multiple issues and political spaces, through the use of intersecting and complementary archival, virtual and in-person (AVI) methods. A multi-method approach aims to bridge micro-macro gaps by using

tools that intersect multiple levels of analysis, which is crucial for trying to understand the complexity of real organizational life (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000; Costa et al., 2013). More broadly, this study also draws from overarching social science methods for effectively organizing data and empirical material (see Sayer, 2010; Gerring, 2001), and triangulation methods that are increasingly proving useful in research on dynamic transnational processes and social movements (see Derickson and Routledge, 2015; Della Porta, 2014).

### ***2.4.1 Data Collection Methods: Archival, Virtual, In-Person (AVI)***

Situated within the methodological approach outlined above, a set of complementary qualitative methods have been employed in this study. These methods fall into three categories – archival, virtual and in-person (AVI) – and are used to collect a range of primary and secondary data. In combination, these methods have allowed me to simultaneously collect data at multiple sites, levels and times in order to cover more ground transnationally than I would have been able to if I were physically present at multiple research sites.

- 1) **Archival Methods:** Reviewed and analysed (using *thematic analysis*) existing literature, policies, reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, social media pages, and other documents related to historical development and continuity, and present context of movements, political spaces and contentious issues.. These methods address the need to trace the construction and evolution of movements and politics across time and space, and incorporate key historical moments and events into the data.
- 2) **Virtual Methods:** Tracked discussions, news and documentation about particular events and processes online (using *thematic analysis*), attended online meetings and webinars (engaging in *participant observation*), and conducted *formal semi-structured interviews* (via Skype) with key actors. These methods address the need to track virtual interactions between actors, groups and movements that have added a new element of connectedness to contemporary social research. This also addresses the issue of limited time and funding by allowing multi-sited data collection to be conducted without being physically present in every place.

- 3) **In-Person Methods:** Engaged in *participant observation* at events, conducted both *formal semi-structured* and *informal conversational interviews* with key actors, and *took and collected photos* to observe visual nuances within particular settings and interactions. These methods address the need to be physically present in events and meetings in order to meet key actors that you would like to talk to, and to develop trust and rapport with them, which can be an important entry point for virtual data collection. Being physically present is also important for bringing you into the loop on certain issues and opening up opportunities for invitations to subsequent events.

### 2.4.2 Thematic Analysis

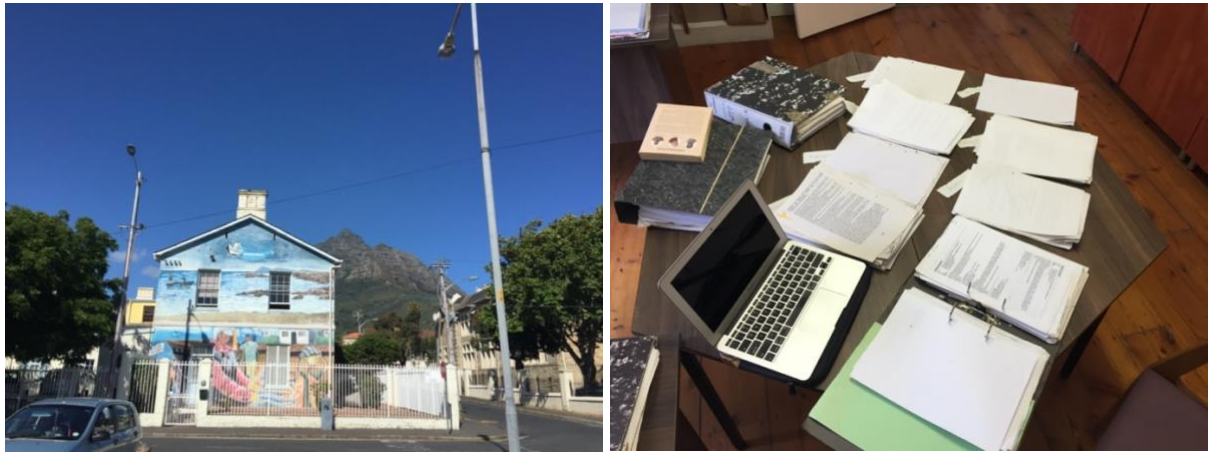
Thematic analysis has provided an important entry point into data collection in this study, as it allowed me to first get a broad overview of the important themes and debates emerging in relation to the politics of global fisheries. Thematic analysis, which is itself a type of content analysis, emerged partly in response to the limitations of more narrow approaches to content analysis, which predominantly focused on coding and quantifying key words and categories in texts. Thematic analysis has a similar systematic element useful for creating thematic categories, while also combining this with the analysis of the meaning of key themes within contexts, incorporating the benefits of subtlety and complexity that characterise truly qualitative analysis. Themes refer to common broad patterns found in documents, field notes and interview transcripts, which are of interest to the researcher because of their relevance to the research and related questions. Such themes can be directly observable, such as in the obvious content of a text, or may emerge at a more latent level, such as in the way a participant or interviewee implicitly talks about or alludes to something. Thematic analyses usually draw on both of these types of themes, often aiming to interpret and understand the latent meaning and relevance of more observable themes within field data (Joffe and Yardley, 2004).

Thematic analysis has been useful for me both at the early stages of developing and designing this research, as well as in later stages when I was organizing and analysing field data (such as field notes and interview transcripts). Prior to attending events where I engaged in participant observation and interviews, I read and analysed a vast array of contextual and archival documents, such as academic literature on fisheries governance and management and on the issues faced by the small-scale sector, reports from events related to fisheries or where

fishers' organizations participated, minutes from fishers' movement meetings, and national and international level fisheries policy. After attending events, I returned to these documents, while also gathering further relevant documents, in order to better understand the context of my field data. I organized all of these documents in a software called Mendeley, which allowed me to categorize and sub-categorize texts into separate folders and add comments and annotations to find important information more easily (see Mendeley, 2021). This slowly evolved into 51 folders, highlighting key themes that emerged during the research process, such as aquaculture, blue economy and growth, climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation, events, fisheries development, food sovereignty, food systems, human rights, neoliberalization of nature, ocean governance, resistance resource grabbing, and social movements and civil society. Mendeley quickly became an invaluable resource for me during the research process, as it allowed me to organize a large library of 820 documents in order to continuously track an array of themes and debates.

An important opportunity that emerged during the fieldwork process was being offered access to an historical archive of fishers' movement documents, which had been donated to the Masifundise Development Trust (in Cape Town) by Andy Johnston, a South African fisher who was one of the founding members of WFF and later joined WFFP. This opportunity came up while in conversation with Carmen Mannarino, who works at Masifundise, in which I was telling her how difficult it was to find archival data specifically about transnational fishers' movements. I then learned about the archive in Cape Town and was invited to come look through it. In exchange for this generous access, I offered to organize and digitalize the archive in order for important documents to be more easily accessible, and so that the archive could be shared more easily among members of the movement. I went to Cape Town in November 2019 and spent three weeks sorting through a closet full of boxes and papers, which turned out to be an incredible source of history and insight into the 1997 emergence and subsequent evolution of the movement. I categorized documents chronologically into digital folders from 1997 to 1999, 2000 to 2002, 2003, 2004 to 2006 and 2006 to 2015, and organized the hardcopies into binders with the same dates. Within those folders, I categorized the documents based on the overarching themes that emerged: internal strategy and communication, campaigns and proposals, events and meetings, financial records, members, reports and newsletters, research, and statements and press releases (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). While some of the documents in the archive are available in online digital archives managed, for example, by the FAO or the International collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), at least 80 per cent of the documents

are not. Being able to access this archive has been an incredibly important contribution for this study, and one which I will be forever grateful to the movement for.



**Figure 2.2:** Masifundise office and organization of archival documents, Cape Town  
Source: Author (2019)



**Figure 2.3:** Archival documents after organization, Cape Town  
Source: Author (2019)

In addition to literature and archival documents, I also tracked themes and information being shared online via social media, such as on the Facebook pages of the WFFP, WFF and ICSF, as well as through mailing lists, such as Samudra News Alerts, FAO Technical Network on Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines Updates), Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA), Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) Digest, World Fishing and Aquaculture Newsletter, The Counter (previously the New Food Economy), CFS Secretariat, CSM Secretariat, UN News

and IISD (Institute of Sustainable Development) Knowledge Hub. I organized all of these emails based on what type of useful information they provided, first into broad thematic folders titled ‘fisheries’, ‘food’ and ‘climate and environment’, and then within these folders emails were more specifically categorized with colour-coded labels titled ‘resistance’, ‘organizations/movements’, ‘economies’, ‘governance’, ‘events’, ‘COVID-19’ and ‘other important information’.

Field notes from conducting participant observation at events and interview transcripts and notes were also organized and categorized to highlight patterns in key themes that continuously came up. I rewrote notes that I had originally handwritten in a notebook into Word documents, and transcribed interviews using an automated programme called Otter, correcting transcription errors manually afterward. I then compiled all of these documents into ATLAS.ti, using word clouds to get a sense of the key emerging themes, before categorizing and coding these themes accordingly (see Otter, 2021; ATLAS.ti, 2021).

The key themes that repeatedly came up reflect the centrality and importance of the three main pillars of this study: movements, political spaces and fisheries issues. These themes include: social movements, organizations, struggles, resistance, participation, engagement, leadership, strengthening, membership, alliances, partners, support, relationships, communication, global and national issues, food sovereignty, climate change, advocacy, knowledge, research, discussion, political agendas, human rights, meetings, processes, positions, criticism, impacts, reflection, dynamics, FAO, COFI, Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines implementation, CFS, and IPC. All of the themes that emerged during my research served as important markers that guided my exploration of the politics of global fisheries, the things I noticed or looked for, the questions I asked, and shaped the trajectory of the research.

### ***2.4.3 Participant Observation***

Participant observation has long been a central method used in ethnography as one approach to collecting information in an unobtrusive manner. As ethnography is often called the ‘science of contextualization’, it requires a kind of inquiry that is based on experiences and interpretative, relational and institutional understandings of current situations. Participant observation has proven valuable for its ability to explore contextualization through first-hand knowledge and being physically present in a site or event – provided such access is possible. Due to the multi-sited global nature of this study, participant observation was obviously not



possible everywhere, but offered useful insights in places where I could be physically present and where in-person methods were employed. Engaging with dispersed networks of fishers' organizations, the focus was on being present in important sites or events at particular moments, such as conferences or meetings, while also making extensive use of a range of documents and photos which emerged directly from particular events or contextualized them more broadly (Stepputat and Larsen, 2015). In this study, participant observation was carried out in the sociological tradition, which aims to interpret social (and political) situations and human interaction in a subjective manner, in order to explain social processes and negotiated institutional orders (Burawoy, 2000). There are two key benefits of this tool: first, is that as a researcher, you are displaced from the familiarity of your office, researching and writing behind your computer, and forced to observe, experience and understand things from within an unfamiliar setting where you may feel uncomfortable or out of place. The second, is that by being in that setting, you are exposed to the ways in which chance, contestation, alliances, and disagreements may influence the outcome of processes and situations, creating change or facilitating continuity at critical moments (Feldman, 2011).

I conducted participant observation at several key events where fishers' movement representatives were participating, including the WFFP's 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and numerous side meetings in New Delhi, India in November 2017; the COFI 33<sup>rd</sup> Session and the pre-COFI fishers movement meetings in Rome, Italy in July 2018; and the CFS 46<sup>th</sup> Session in Rome, Italy in October 2019 (these are further explained in Table 1 below). In some moments I was an active participant in discussions, meetings and drafting teams for writing statements, while in other moments I followed processes, listened to presentations and observed interactions, recording as much detail as possible in my notes. Due to the availability of translation equipment in these events and meetings, I was able to participate and listen to discussions happening in multiple different languages, which was very helpful in overcoming communication barriers with actors who did not speak English – particularly within the fishers' movements. I also took photos at events, collected photos that were publicly available online, and was given a photo archive by one of the founding members of the fishers' movements.

Drawing on elements of visual ethnography, I used the photos not as data to be analysed, as some visual ethnography does, but rather as visual aids for presenting the research. Many of the photos I collected are included in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this dissertation. This was useful for reflecting on the interpretive nature of visual outputs and adding an aesthetic element to documentation and participation (Schwartz, 1989). The formal events themselves

were not the only sites where participant observation could be useful, as anyone who has worked with social movements knows that much of the most important discussion takes place outside of the formal event spaces, in side meetings, during lunch or dinner, or over drinks at the end of the day. I found these moments to be the most illuminating, since people tended to be more relaxed and open, also making these excellent moments for engaging in conversational interviews.

#### ***2.4.4 Formal and Conversational Interviewing***

Conducting interviews in an informal, conversational style, is an approach used by researchers to gather information verbally by talking to participants about particular topics of relevance to the research. Through this approach, the researcher focuses on facilitating an open, casual environment that is less hierarchical than traditional structured interviews, and in which the participants can freely engage in extended discussions around particular themes. Conversational interviews are typically used by sociologists and anthropologists to gather perspectives during ethnographic and field research, and is a popular approach among qualitative researchers who use open-ended, in-depth interview formats and those who advocate emancipatory approaches to interviewing. Conversational interviews must be handled delicately, with great care taken in entering a conversation and building rapport between the researcher and participant before discussing the research topics.

This includes the careful navigation of small talk, attention to body language and presenting yourself as an open and trustworthy person. By creating a friendly and informal atmosphere, the aim is for all participants in the conversation to be seen as equals who can freely share their perspectives regardless of their position, expertise or experience. The main difference between an everyday conversation and a conversational interview is that there is a pre-determined topical agenda, meaning the researcher gently guides the conversation by throwing in open-ended questions or asks about the participants' opinions or experiences on a certain topic, while also providing their own when asked. These questions and topics are usually drawn from a prepared list or semi-structured interview protocol which are relevant to the research, but the conversations are also open to moving in new, unexpected directions initiated by the participants. The researcher, however, is more likely to take the topic-initiating, question-posing and clarification-seeking roles, since the conversation is being generated predominantly for research purposes (Roulston, 2008).

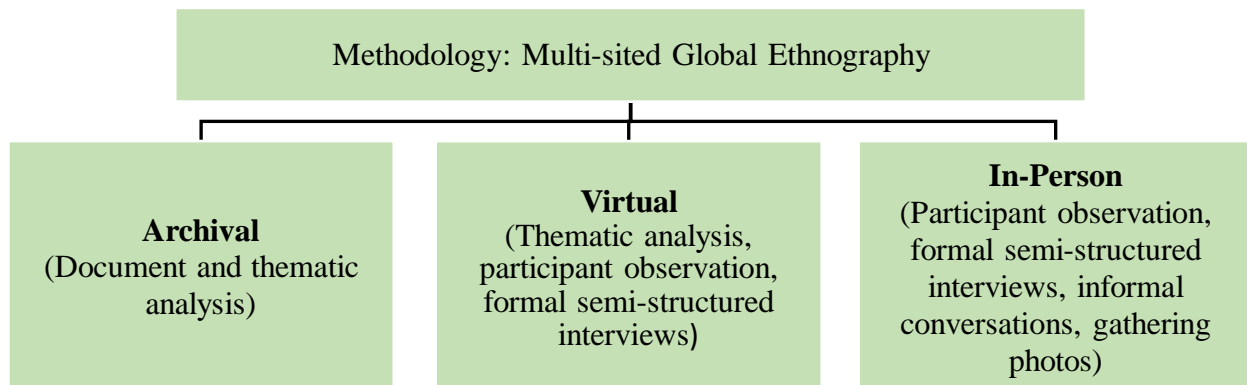
The majority of the interviews I conducted were done in a conversational style, keeping themes or questions in mind and discussing them with participants whenever the opportunity arose. The themes discussed were related to the history of fishers' movements and the contexts from which they have emerged, the issues small-scale fishers are facing, the alternatives fishers' movements are proposing, and broader fisheries debates and policies. More specific guiding questions stemming from these themes are included in Table 2.3 at the end of this chapter. Social skills and friendliness were particularly important for these conversations, which took place both in formal event settings (particularly during breaks or in corridors), as well as informal settings such as over a drink or a meal. The participants were either well-known to me, or were people who I had met previously, and were aware of who I was and what my research was about. I informed them that any information that came up in the conversations may contribute to my research, but would be used anonymously, and I obtained their permission to use such information. It was important to have a prior relationship or contact with these participants in order to have established trust and a relaxed rapport with them, allowing the conversation to flow more freely.

Approximately 50 conversational interviews occurred with members of fishers' and agrarian movements, fishers from non-member organizations, researchers (both academic and not), and representatives from NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. All of these conversations were conducted in English, since all the participants spoke the language to some degree. To avoid interrupting the flow of the conversation, I would typically jot down some notes after the conversation, rather than during, to keep a record of the main themes that were discussed and the important points that stood out. I found this approach particularly valuable in social movement settings where political discussions must be treated delicately, and where scheduling a formal interview with someone may not allow for the same kind of relaxed dynamic and flow that can emerge in a more informal conversation. It also allowed me to be more flexible in my planning and learn a lot from conversations that often came up unexpectedly.

In addition to the 50 conversational interviews, I conducted 25 more formal in-depth interviews (1-2 hours each) with members of fishers' movements and agrarian movements, researchers (both academic and not), and representatives from NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. All of these interviews were conducted in English, since all of the interviewees spoke the language to some degree. I also attempted to interview more people, particularly from the fishers' movements, but several logistical reasons on the side of the potential

interviewees prevented these interviews from taking place. These included lack of regular access to the internet, difficulty finding a time the person was available, or there was no response to my email requests. The interviews I did conduct were semi-structured interviews, in which a formal request was made for an interview, either in person or through email. The interviews were then conducted in person or virtually using Skype, and recorded, with verbal permission from the interviewees.

The same themes and questions guiding the conversational interviews also guided the formal interviews (see Table 2), and interviewees were also free to bring up additional ideas or questions that they felt were important to talk about. The interviewees were also informed that any information or quotes used from our interview in my research would be strictly anonymous, due to the sensitive political nature of the discussions. I transcribed the audio recordings using the automated transcribing programme Otter, and then corrected any transcription errors manually. Doing some formal interviews in addition to the conversational interviews was particularly useful because I was able to listen back to the recordings and read the transcripts to ensure I did not miss any important information, and so I could draw detailed quotes from the transcripts.



## 2.5 Use of Methods and Guiding Questions

### Table 2.2 Use of Methods

The specific spaces and events that were chosen to analyse in this study are those that were repeatedly highlighted in interviews, discussions and documents as spaces in which fishers' movements consistently participated, made important contributions, and were important for movement and alliance-building. Conducting research on and in these spaces, and some of the

particular events within, required the use of a set of complementary AVI methods, which have been discussed in detail above. The particular tools used, including thematic analysis, participant observation, the collection of photos, and informal conversational and semi-structured interviews, were also used to conduct data for the other two analytical spheres at the core of this study – transnational movements and fisheries issues. How these AVI methods were used to collect data in the sphere of political spaces is further outlined in the table below.

Political Spaces and Events	Archival Methods	Virtual Methods	In-Person Methods
<p><b>Transnational Fishers' Movement Spaces</b> – Meetings and events organized by or with movement members and support organizations involved in collective local, national and global small-scale fisheries struggles, focusing on inclusion, equal rights, and democratization of access, ownership, and control of natural resources and fishing territories.</p> <p><b>Examples of Events:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFFP 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly – New Delhi, India, November 2017 (<i>participated in person</i>)</li> <li>• Pre-COFI political training – Rome, Italy, July, 2018 (<i>participated in person</i>)</li> <li>• Archival research at Masifundise Development Trust office (WFFP member organization) – Cape Town, South Africa, November-December 2019 (<i>archival data collection conducted in person</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Reviewed and analysed (using <i>thematic analysis</i>) reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, social media pages, and other documents.</p>	<p>Tracked discussions, news and documentation online (using <i>thematic analysis</i>), attended online preparatory and follow-up meetings, and conducted <i>formal semi-structured interviews</i> (via Skype) with key actors.</p>	<p>Engaged in <i>participant observation</i> at events, conducted both <i>formal semi-structured</i> and <i>informal conversational interviews</i> with key actors, and <i>took and collected photos</i> to observe visual nuances within particular settings and interactions.</p>
<p><b>International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty</b> – An international network founded in 1996, which brings together several organizations representing farmers, fisher folks and small and medium scale farmers, agricultural workers and indigenous peoples, as well as NGOs, providing a common space for mobilization that links local struggles and global debate.</p> <p><b>Examples of Events:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPC General Assembly – Cape Town, South Africa, March 2018 (<i>archival</i>)</li> <li>• Pre-COFI IPC meetings – Rome, Italy, July, 2018 (<i>participated in person</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Reviewed and analysed (using <i>thematic analysis</i>) existing literature, reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, social media pages, and other documents.</p>	<p>Tracked discussions, news and documentation online (using <i>thematic analysis</i>), attended webinars and online meetings (engaging in <i>participant observation</i>), and conducted <i>formal semi-structured interviews</i> (via Skype) with key actors.</p>	<p>Engaged in <i>participant observation</i> at events, conducted both <i>formal semi-structured</i> and <i>informal conversational interviews</i> with key actors, and <i>took and collected photos</i> to observe visual nuances within particular settings and interactions.</p>

<p><b>Committee on Fisheries (COFI)</b> – Established as a subsidiary body of the FAO Council in 1965, it constitutes the only global inter-governmental forum where major international fisheries and aquaculture problems and issues are examined and recommendations addressed to governments, regional fishery bodies, NGOs, fish workers, FAO and international community, periodically on a world-wide basis. Fishers’ movements participate in the COFI via the IPC.</p> <p><b>Examples of Events:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COFI 32<sup>nd</sup> Session – Rome, Italy, July 2016 (<i>archival</i>)</li> <li>• COFI 33<sup>rd</sup> Session – Rome, Italy, July 2018 (<i>participated in person</i>)</li> <li>• COFI 34<sup>th</sup> Session – Virtual, February 2021 (<i>participated online</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Reviewed and analysed (using <i>thematic analysis</i>) existing literature, policies, reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, and other documents (for example, tracing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines process and implementation).</p>	<p>Tracked discussions, news and documentation online (using <i>thematic analysis</i>), attended webinars and online meetings (engaging in <i>participant observation</i>), and conducted <i>formal semi-structured interviews</i> (via Skype) with key actors.</p>	<p>Engaged in <i>participant observation</i> at events, conducted both <i>formal semi-structured</i> and <i>informal conversational interviews</i> with key actors, and <i>took and collected photos</i> to observe visual nuances within particular settings and interactions.</p>
<p><b>Committee on World Food Security (CFS)</b> – Established in 1974 as an intergovernmental body to serve as a forum in the United Nations System for review and follow-up of policies concerning world food security, including production and physical and economic access to food. Fishers’ movements participate in the CFS via the CSM.</p> <p><b>Examples of Events:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) CFS 45<sup>th</sup> Session – Rome, Italy, October 2018 (<i>participated virtually</i>)</li> <li>2) CSM Forum – Rome, Italy, October 2019 (<i>participated in person</i>)</li> <li>3) CFS 46<sup>th</sup> Session – Rome, Italy, October 2019 (<i>participated in person</i>)</li> </ol>	<p>Reviewed and analysed (using <i>thematic analysis</i>) existing literature, policies, reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, and other documents.</p>	<p>Tracked discussions, news and documentation online (using <i>thematic analysis</i>), and attended webinars (engaging in <i>participant observation</i>).</p>	<p>Engaged in <i>participant observation</i> at events, conducted <i>informal conversational interviews</i> with key actors, and <i>took and collected photos</i> to observe visual nuances within particular settings and interactions.</p>
<p><b>Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</b> – Established in 1992 alongside the adoption of the UNFCCC, the COP has been meeting since 1995 and is the principal international body for making decisions on national emission limits and climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. Its main task is to review national emission reports and assess the effectiveness of climate measures being implemented globally.</p> <p><b>Examples of Events:</b></p>	<p>Reviewed and analysed (using <i>thematic analysis</i>) existing literature, policies, reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, and other documents (for example, related to annual COP conferences).</p>	<p>Tracked discussions, news and documentation online (using <i>thematic analysis</i>), and attended livestreamed sessions and webinars (engaging in <i>participant observation</i>).</p>	<p>Engaged in <i>participant observation</i> at events, conducted both <i>formal semi-structured</i> and <i>informal conversational interviews</i> with key actors, and <i>took and collected photos</i> to observe visual nuances within particular settings and interactions.</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) COP21 – Paris, France, December 2015 – People’s Climate Assembly (<i>archival, participated in person</i>)</li> <li>2) COP22 – Marrakech, Morocco, November 2016 (<i>archival</i>)</li> <li>3) COP23 – Bonn, Germany, November 2017 (<i>archival</i>)</li> <li>4) COP24 – Katowice, Poland, December 2018 (<i>participated virtually</i>)</li> <li>5) COP25 – Madrid, Spain, 2019 (<i>participated virtually</i>)</li> </ol>			
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**Table 2.3: Themes and Questions Guiding the Methods**

In order to develop a set of guiding themes and questions that would allow me collect the data I needed to answer my central research question and sub-questions, I first needed to establish which categories of data I would need. An important starting point for this study was tracking and understanding the **history and context** of transnational fishers’ movements, including historical and structural reasons for their emergence, what steps were taken among particular actors that led to the establishment of the movements, and how global contexts have an ongoing role in shaping the politics and trajectories of the movements. These global contexts are also closely linked with the particular **policy and debates** that are central to fisheries, food and climate politics and governance. This meant that to understand the ongoing political dynamics that fishers’ movements were being both shaped by and contributing to, I needed to get a broad overview of key policies that were being implemented and debates that were influencing decision-making, and how these were impacting small-scale fisheries globally. These policies and debates were also directly linked with numerous contentious fisheries **issues**, which fishers’ movements were highlighting, engaging with and challenging by advocating for their own **alternatives**. While I was in the process of figuring out these three categories of data, several guiding themes and questions emerged, which played an important role in guiding my thought process, data collection, and analysis, particularly in the early stages of shaping and developing the research. These categories and guiding themes and questions are further clarified in the table below.

Data Needed	Guiding Themes and Questions
<p><b>History &amp; Context:</b> What are the contexts and circumstances within which particular movements, political spaces and issues emerge?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What are the key fishers' movements that have emerged? How can we map the international/regional/national linkages between these movements?</li> <li>2) What particular historical social and political issues and contexts contributed to the emergence of these movements (for example, eras of globalization, neoliberalism and climate change)?</li> <li>3) Where and when did they originate? How have they developed and changed over time?</li> <li>4) What role do fishers play in the global food and climate systems?</li> <li>5) Why is fish now being framed as a more 'sustainable' animal protein alongside fears about the conditions of industrial farm animal production that is turning more people toward vegetarianism?</li> <li>6) How does the increased global demand for seafood impact fisheries?</li> <li>7) How relationship do organizations like the International Coalition in Support of Fish Workers (ICSF), Low-Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE), Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA), and MARE (Centre for Maritime Research) have with fishers' movements?</li> <li>8) How do movements like the WFFP and WFF engage with and contribute to the IPC for Food Sovereignty?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Policy &amp; Debates:</b> What discussions are taking place in fisheries? What kinds of policies are being implemented?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How do movements internalise 'fisheries justice' or other types of resource justice? How are these justices articulated?</li> <li>2) What issues are central in fisheries policies? What do policymakers present as the right solutions for these issues?</li> <li>3) What are the intersections and divergences in debates around fisheries among and between movements, academics, governments and the private sector?</li> <li>4) What role do concepts like food sovereignty, environmental and climate justice play in fisheries debates and policy? How do fishers' movements engage (or not) with these concepts? How can formulating new questions around these concepts inform movements' analysis and strategies?</li> <li>5) How have climate change and mitigation/adaptation discourse and initiatives affected fishers? How is discourse developed by fishers' movements being co-opted by other actors (for example, environmental NGOs, policymakers, transnational corporations)?</li> <li>6) What are the gaps in existing social science research on global fisheries? Why have fisheries researchers (particularly social scientists) neglected to engage with fishers' movements?</li> <li>7) Why do fishers and fishers' movements received so little attention in discussions around the global food system, food sovereignty and climate change mitigation/adaptation?</li> <li>8) How do the dynamics of global debates around climate change mitigation/adaptation and food systems include or exclude particular actors (for example, fishers, sub-sets of groups within the fishers' movements)?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Issues &amp; Alternatives:</b> What are the key issues fishers' movements are facing? How are they responding and what alternatives are they proposing?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What are the key threats to small-scale fisheries in an era of industrial food production and climate change? How do these threats facilitate or strengthen the growth of movements?</li> <li>2) How do fishers respond to these threats? What agendas do their movements promote?</li> <li>3) What kinds of public messages are movements putting forward, and what activities and events are they organizing and promoting?</li> <li>4) What do individual members see as the core goals or trajectories of fishers' movements?</li> </ol>



	<p>5) How are movements challenging climate change mitigation, adaptation and conservation agendas? What alternatives are they proposing?</p> <p>6) How are fishers' movements engaging with other resource justice movements (for example, agrarian, climate) and allies (for example, NGOs, researchers) in promoting their agendas and pursuing alternatives?</p> <p>7) How has the process of documenting and formulating new questions around food sovereignty and agroecology impacted the strategies of fishers' movements?</p>
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## 2.6 PhD Trajectory and Activities 2016 to 2021

My PhD journey began in December 2016 and alongside conducting research, doing fieldwork and writing the dissertation, has involved a range of academic and non-academic activities, including writing and publishing articles, reports, policy briefs and blogs; presenting in and organizing conferences and workshops; and giving lectures and seminars. Some of the key moments of the last five years are highlighted below.

Date	Activities
December 2016 – April 2018	<p>Literature review and conceptual development of the research project; taking courses; writing papers, briefs and the dissertation design document; presenting at conferences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>December 2016:</b> Presentation on 'Dynamics of transnational "fisheries justice" movements: Framing their implications for food and climate politics' at the <i>Agro-Extractivism Inside and Outside BRICS: Agrarian Change and Development Trajectories</i> conference at China Agricultural University, Beijing.</li> <li>• <b>November 2017:</b> Publication of popular format brief on 'EU Fisheries Agreements: Cheap Fish for a High Price' by TNI.</li> <li>• <b>November 2017:</b> Fieldwork trip to New Delhi, India to participate in the WFFP 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.</li> <li>• <b>January 2018:</b> Publication of 'Implicating 'fisheries justice' movements in food and climate politics' paper in <i>Third World Quarterly</i>.</li> <li>• <b>February 2018:</b> Lecture on 'Development of global fisheries: Industrialization, privatization, conservation' for the Global Political Ecology course at ISS.</li> <li>• <b>April 2018:</b> Submission of final dissertation design document.</li> </ul>
May 2018	Dissertation Design Seminar (DDS)
May 2018 – December 2019	<p>Fieldwork, data collection and further conceptual development of the research; writing dissertation chapters, papers and popular format pieces (such as blogs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>July 2018:</b> Fieldwork trip to Rome, Italy to participate in the COFI 33<sup>rd</sup> Session and the pre-COFI preparation sessions with the transnational fishers' movements.</li> <li>• <b>November 2018:</b> Presentation on 'Dynamics of overlapping global food, climate and fisheries politics: Interconnecting issues, movements and events' at the <i>Development and Agrarian Transformations: BRICS, Competition and Cooperation in the Global South</i> conference at the University of Brasilia, Brazil.</li> <li>• <b>July 2019:</b> Presentation on 'Fisheries Politics in the Context of Contemporary Food Systems and Climate Change: Key Issues, Social Movements and Political</li> </ul>

	<p>Events' at the conference <i>MARE People and the Sea Conference X: Learning From the Past, Imagining the Future</i> conference at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>October 2019:</b> Fieldwork trip to Rome, Italy to participate in the CFS 46<sup>th</sup> Session.</li> <li>• <b>November-December 2019:</b> Fieldwork trip to do archival research at the Masifundise office in Cape Town, South Africa; Visiting Researcher at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), including a seminar on 'Is there space for small-scale fisheries in the blue economy?'</li> </ul>
January 2020 – March 2021	<p>Further analysis and synthesis of data and research material; writing papers, blogs and full draft of dissertation document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>September 2020:</b> Presentation on 'Exploring the Politics of Global Fisheries and Fishers' movements' at the POLLEN Conference on Contested Natures: Power, Possibility, Preconfiguration, held virtually at the University of Brighton, United Kingdom.</li> </ul>
March 2021	Submission of full dissertation document.
April – August 2021	Revisions and finalization of full dissertation document
May 2021	Research in Progress Seminar / Full-Draft seminar
September 2021	Submission of final dissertation to Doctoral Committee
December 2021	Public Defence

## 3

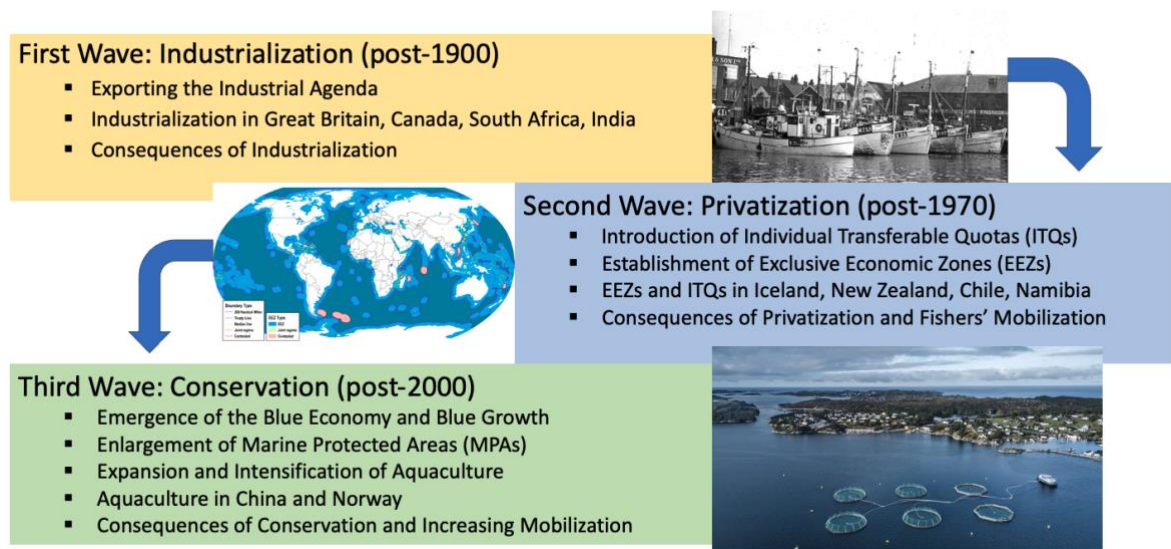
## Three Waves of Development in Global Fisheries: Industrialization, Privatization, Conservation

### 3.1 Introduction

Fisheries sectors the world over are complex and highly contentious spheres of activity in which numerous (often conflicting) interests are at play. As the diversity of interests expands, and the spaces in which these interests interact multiply, it becomes increasingly difficult to get a clear picture of who is doing what, how and for what reasons. As a result, global fisheries have undergone a continuous process of transformation for the last several decades, as various implicated actors seek better ways of managing fisheries resources, conserving aquatic ecosystems, accumulating profits, and ensuring generations of fishers are able to maintain secure livelihoods. In some ways, the transformation of fisheries is inevitable, as a sector that depends entirely on extracting resources from fluid, aquatic spaces, forever shifting, moving and changing. This constantly evolving context also means the governance of fisheries should be adaptable, and flexible enough to take on new challenges as they emerge. This, however, has certainly not been the case, as many national fisheries sectors have stagnated, or even collapsed, under the weight of rigid policies and management tools that focus narrowly on profit-making, streamlining production, and efficiency (Campling and Colás, 2021; Menon et al., 2018; Longo et al., 2015; Sundar 2012).

This chapter examines historical developments in global fisheries, reflecting on structural and institutional transformations in the sector in the last century, and how the politics of fisheries have evolved. It pays particular attention to broad structural issues in the development of global fisheries, particularly since the 1950s, and how these are affecting small-scale fisheries. It also highlights how specific eras have influenced mobilization and organization among fishers, and how movements have responded to structural issues and adjusted or aligned their political strategies accordingly. I argue that there have been three important historical waves, or decisive eras, in global fisheries. These are identified as: 1) the industrialization wave (post-1900); 2) the privatization wave (post-1970); and 3) the conservation wave (post-2000) (see Figure 3.1). While each wave has its own distinct

characteristics, all three waves overlap, both historically and because of similar undercurrents. This means that the features of each wave have been internalized into each successive era. The connection between these eras can be visualized as the movement of waves, continuously lapping into each other, with the motion of each one being influenced and propelled forward by previous waves. These waves have all in some way aimed to address the consequences that have emerged from the previous era by introducing technical and policy solutions, which while they are often presented as new and innovative, often stem from the same approaches that have already been explored and implemented in one form or another for decades. Thus, similar undercurrents become visible and similar outcomes (both positive and negative) often emerge.



**Figure 3.1:** Three waves of development on global fisheries  
Source: Author

A widely shared consensus about the outcome of the inadaptability of fisheries governance is that we are now in the midst of a global fisheries crisis, in which continuous, uncontrolled extraction in the sector has depleted fish stocks and damaged aquatic ecosystems to a critical level. Many have argued that the fisheries crisis stems directly from a process of industrialization in fisheries, which became prominent in the early-1900s and expanded significantly in the 1950s in the aftermath of World War II. Industrialization allowed for an intensification of fishing, both through the modernization of the gear that was used and due to the power and resources invested in expanding the sector. This meant more fish could be caught, more quickly, and in farther corners of the globe (Finley, 2016). Fish were treated as a continuously regenerative resource that would perpetually meet the growing demand of consumers and industries, and for a few decades, this perception persisted. However, as some regions began to face declining fish stocks in the 1970s, the need for stricter control over who

was fishing and how much was being caught emerged. This sparked the emergence of numerous privatization strategies in the 1970s and 80s, which largely meant dividing fisheries into measured quotas and designated spaces in which different types of fishers and fishing activities were permitted (Allison, 2001; Chuenpagdee et al., 2005). A defining moment of this era was the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, which gave states more ownership and control over their coastal waters – including through the establishment of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) (Campling and Colás, 2021).

After several years of implementing and expanding the reach of privatization policies in the sector, it became increasingly clear that this kind of governance approach was not decreasing the depletion of fish stocks, but was actually exacerbating it by making seafood an increasingly valuable commodity (Campling and Havice, 2014). By 2000, attention turned to a more environmentally focused conservation approach, which focused on protecting aquatic spaces and the resources within in order to ensure they were used sustainably and would continue to provide for years to come. This approach, however, had a neoliberal twist which centered around making profit from the protection of the environment, meaning there was more of an incentive for the private sector to stay involved in a central way (Barbesgaard, 2018). The conservation era continues into 2020, having expanded even further in the previous two decades. This era continues to be characterized by an attempt to balance the urgency of a rapidly degrading aquatic environment, with the economy's insatiable thirst for profit and a growing global demand for seafood.

In the context of the three waves of development, this chapter explores how production, circulation and consumption are organized and carried out, what the major features are that characterize industrialization, privatization and conservation, including which features have changed, and which have remained the same (Friedmann, 2016; McMichael and Friedmann, 2007). Conceptually, these three waves draw fundamental insights from O'Connor (1998), Fraser (2021) and Olin Wright (2019) that:

- a) Profits are both the means and ends of the capitalist economy, meaning that capital depends on its continuous expansion into new domains.
- b) Capitalism generates uneven and combined development globally – uneven in the sense that there is a historically produced, uneven spatial distribution (between regions) of consumption, wealth, labour relations, agriculture and fisheries production (among

other things); and combined in the sense that regions have a particular combination of economic, social and political characteristics that determine their level of development.

c) Both the expansion of capital and uneven/combined development contribute to transforming the role of the state in global politics and the economy.

d) This transformation is partially responsible for the emergence of organized forms of resistance and contestation, in which social movements react to exploitation, exclusion and dispossession.

In the rest of this chapter, I first discuss the technological transformation of global fisheries during the industrialization wave (post-1900), highlighting how this impacted fisheries production, aquatic ecosystems, and small-scale fisheries. This includes how the industrialization agenda was exported from the Global North to the Global South, and comparing the industrialization experiences in Great Britain, Canada, South Africa and India. Second, I turn to the privatization wave (post-1970), delving into the spread of private property agendas, the introduction of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs), the establishment of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and how these developments have contributed to capital accumulation and impacted access to fisheries resources. This includes comparing the experiences of Iceland, New Zealand, Chile and Namibia with EEZs and ITQs, and highlighting how impacts on small-scale fisheries contributed to sparking mobilization. Third, I explore the conservation wave (post-2000), focusing on the emergence of blue economy and blue growth agendas, the enlargement of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and the expansion and intensification of the aquaculture industry as two key developments impacting the future viability of small-scale fisheries. This includes looking at Large Marine Protected Areas (LMPAs) in the Pacific Ocean, comparing the aquaculture industries in China and Norway, and highlighting how fishers' organization and mobilization has expanded during this wave. The concluding discussion reflects on how these waves of development have facilitated overlapping forms of exclusion in global fisheries, and how this exclusion has contributed to different strategies for resistance and mobilization within transnational fishers' movements.

### **3.2 First Wave: Industrialization (post-1900)**

The industrialization wave in fisheries arguably had the most significant, enduring impact of all subsequent historical waves in the sector, forever changing the character and structure of

fisheries on a global scale. While this process happened at different moments in different places, on different levels, and under different political circumstances, the processes through which it took place had similar overarching outcomes. While industrialization was already well underway in Europe and North America by the early 1900s, and had already significantly transformed fisheries in the regions by the 1920s, this section gives particular attention to the post-1950 period following World War II, when industrial processes were significantly ramped up due to rapidly growing demand for seafood worldwide. Butcher (2004) called this period, which he notes was initially sparked by post-World War II recovery initiatives, ‘The Great Fish Race’, due to an unprecedented period of fisheries expansion that had not been seen before.

In Southeast Asia, for example – which today is still one of the most important seafood producing regions in the world – this expansion can be partially linked to a new governance approach in the 1950s, which centred around development. This approach included the promotion of industry and agriculture as a way to attain national food self-sufficiency and alleviate poverty through job creation. The policies implemented by fisheries authorities in the early-1950s aimed to not only restore fish catches to pre-World War II levels, but to strive toward a 500 per cent increase in seafood production in the following few years (Butcher, 2004). Governments in the region believed that this would provide a cheap source of food for fast-growing Southeast Asian populations, while also increasing the well-being of fishing communities and national export income. Many Western bilateral aid agencies (for example, from Germany and the United States) supported this development approach through funding and expertise on how to make fish processing and handling more efficient. By the 1960s, these combined efforts had led to a massive surge in seafood production (Butcher, 2004).

This post-1950s growth in the fishing and seafood processing sectors rapidly became a global trend, leading to significant changes in fisheries. A big part of this growth stemmed from the European invention of large-scale fish factory ships as part of the development strategy for post-World War II recovery. Although the use of these ships was pioneered by Great Britain, by the 1960s they were more broadly adopted by many other prominent fishing countries, namely Norway, Japan, Russia and Spain, which subsequently began replacing their small-scale fishing fleets (Mansfield, 2011; Finley, 2016). By the 1970s, the United States had also introduced large-scale processing ships into its fishing fleet. Today, industrial vessels are found around the world, but are most commonly used by European, North and South American, and East Asian countries. Some of these ships – which can reach lengths of up to 130 meters – not only catch fish, but also process them on board, meaning they can stay out at sea for more

than a year (Mansfield, 2011) (see Figure 3.2). The effect the industrial wave had on all three spheres of the sector (marine capture, inland capture and aquaculture) was huge – with production more than doubling from 41 to 83 million tonnes (live weight) between 1961 and 1984 (Kurien, 2006). Along with the increased demand for fish as food and animal feed (consumption), one of the main reasons behind such rapid growth was corresponding advances in technology used for harvesting (production), processing and transportation (circulation). Countries that were already quite heavily industrialized by the 1960s (for example, Great Britain, Canada) were the dominant players in production, providing around 60 per cent (24 million tonnes) of seafood globally (Kurien, 2006).



**Figure 3.2:** Damanzaihao, the world's largest factory ship (Coast of Belize)  
Source: Maritime Executive (2018)

The industrialization wave allowed the rapid spread of new industrial methods between diverse fisheries sectors worldwide, allowing more links and trade connections between them. Seafood is a unique commodity due to its high perishability when fresh (meaning not dried or salted). Once a fisher has caught three or four fish, the resulting surplus usually requires them to trade what their families cannot eat in a day or two. This makes trade quite intrinsic in fisheries. Around a third of all seafood production is routinely traded in the international market, making it the most globally traded primary food commodity. This level of trade has remained remarkably stable since the mid-1970s – fluctuating slightly between 33 and 37 per cent (Kurien, 2006). Along with the growing demand for industrial boats, high-tech equipment, and seafood itself, research and development in fisheries also expanded rapidly. This contributed to the advancement of several new types of industrial fishing methods – the most commonly



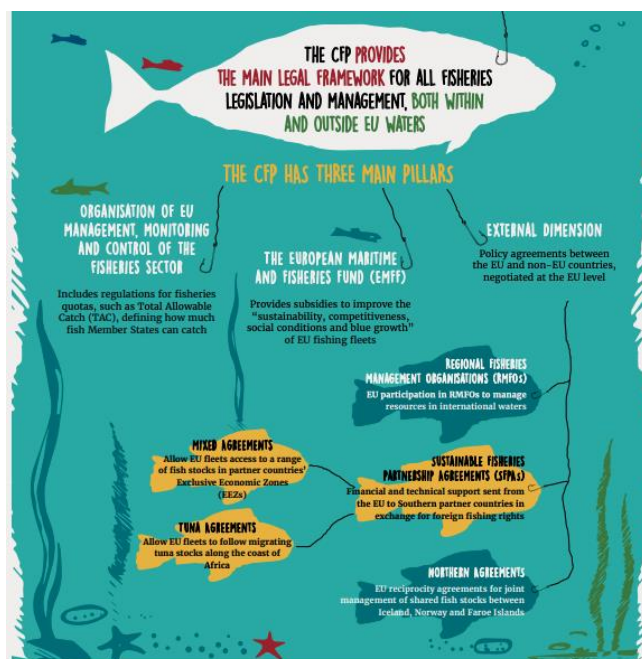
used being trawling, purse-seining and longlining.<sup>13</sup> Such methods have remained at the heart of the commercial seafood market, dominated by a few global firms hailing mainly from Japan, Russia, Norway, Thailand and the United States. Many of these companies also produce fish meal and oil, made of ground up fish parts, which are added to animal feed and fertilizer used in industrial farming (Mansfield, 2011).

### ***3.2.1 Exporting the Industrial Agenda***

Alongside trade and development, fisheries management policies and governance approaches were introduced that, both directly and indirectly, facilitated the mainstreaming and exporting the industrial agenda from the Global North to the South. A prominent example is the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which was initially developed in the 1970s and formally established in 1983. In its earlier form, fisheries governance was still part of the EU's better-known Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Similar to the CAP, the CFP sets out the central legal framework for all fisheries management and regulation – both inside and outside EU waters. A central element of the CFP is government subsidies for large-scale EU fishing fleets, which essentially funds their capacity to sail further into foreign waters (Mills et al., 2017). The CFP also includes several policies and regulations directed toward non-EU governments, aiming to promote the EU's agenda – such as Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) (see Figure 3.3). The establishment of SFPAs was largely due to overfished stocks in European waters, which meant that EU fishing fleets were no longer able to meet domestic seafood demands. SFPAs allow EU-flagged fishing fleets access to foreign EEZs in exchange for financial investment and technical support in the host countries' domestic fisheries sector. Typically, the EU is expected to pay a lump sum for access rights, while also funding the development of more sustainable fisheries in the host country, such as via conservation projects. By 2009, 14 countries in the Global South (mainly in Africa) collectively received almost €150 million for signing SFPAs, meaning the EU's financial contribution is significant, and in some cases the main source of revenue for host countries' fisheries ministries (Mills et al., 2017).

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<sup>13</sup> Trawling involves pulling a net behind a fishing boat, either through the water or along the seafloor. Purse-seining involves a round seine net that hangs vertically in the water from buoys on its top edge, while its bottom edge is held down by weights. The top edge is pulled closed to trap the fish. Longlining involves a long main line with baited hooks attached at branch-like intervals.



**Figure 3.3:** Structure of the CFP and SFPAs

Source: Mills et al. (2017)

Mansfield (2011) argues that the industrialization of fisheries exhibits five prominent features. First, the enormous scale of today's fishing industry, which includes massive seafood companies, ships, nets and lines, and high-tech technologies. Second, global commodity chains provide consumers, particularly in the global North, with a wide variety of fresh fish. Third, government policies have promoted the industrialization of fisheries by prioritizing modernization and development, treating fish primarily as economic resources, and offering incentives to fishers to catch and sell more. Fourth, industrial fisheries have contributed to the wide-spread displacement of small-scale and artisanal fisheries, even though these sectors have generally been organized in a more sustainable and equitable way. And fifth, the capital-intensive fishing industry faces an inherent contradiction, due to its dependence on natural resources and simultaneous avoidance of functioning sustainably or paying environmental protection costs. These five features result in industrial fisheries essentially destroying the natural environment they depend on – as well as small-scale fisheries – in order to continue to be profitable and expand. This contributes to imbalances in fisheries development, in which wealth distribution and consumption of resources within the sector is largely concentrated in the hands of owners of large industrial fishing companies. As the wealth of such companies grows, so too does their power in the fisheries sector, shifting some authority away from the state as the traditional decision-maker in fisheries governance. This allows private interests to

become firmly rooted in the fisheries agenda, shifting attention away from the protection of lives and livelihoods, and accountability to the people working in the sector.

### ***3.2.2 Industrialization in Great Britain, Canada, South Africa and India***

Industrialization of fisheries was certainly not a homogenous process and differed in how it emerged from region to region. It was also a long process that in some cases lasted more than a hundred years. The four national experiences highlighted below offer illustrative examples from Great Britain, Canada, South Africa and India in order to provide a broad overview of how industrialization has played out on different levels in various regions, and in countries where fisheries play different economic roles.

In *Great Britain*, the Industrial Revolution began to affect fisheries just after the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) through the expansion of markets. However, capture methods remained unchanged up until the late 1800s, when some fishing boats became steam driven. Mechanization and standardization of products in fisheries occurred somewhat later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century than in many other sectors, mainly because coal was costly, while using naturally available energy (wind and tides) was free (Cushing, 1988; Thurstan et al., 2010). When mechanization finally did take place, efficiency of fish capture increased by four times, allowing for a sharp increase in fish catches. The initial effect this had on fisheries was that the demand for fish increased, mainly because fish, due to its abundance in the wild, was much cheaper than meat (Cushing, 1998; Knauss, 2005). Fishing companies were able to regain their investment in mechanization, plus a profit. One of the consequences of this increase in demand was the first indications of a stock density decline in the North Sea. Fishing vessels had to steam progressively further from shore in order to maintain high catch rate, meaning fish remained on ice longer before they reached the docks and could be sold in markets. As the stocks continued to decline, many fishers ended up being forced to go out of business. This process continued in Great Britain until its EEZ was established in 1977, meaning there was less competition from foreign fleets in access coastal fish stocks (Cushing, 1988; Thurstan et al., 2010; Knauss, 2005).



**Figure 3.4:** Industrial fishing boats in Aberdeen, Scotland, 1960s  
Source: Fishing News (2016)

Meanwhile, in *Canada*, the process of industrialization began in the late-1800s when modern fish canneries, using mainly indigenous and foreign labour, started to flourish and required a steady flow of fish. The cod fishery, particularly off the coast of Newfoundland, had been the key industry in the Atlantic Canadian region ever since early European settlers had proclaimed that the fish ran so thick, that they blocked ships. By the time Newfoundland joined the Canadian Federation in 1949, the federal government began investing heavily in the Atlantic provinces (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) in order to modernize the fisheries sector, as well as promoting intensified fishing efforts and extended fishing seasons. The American demand for cod meant that Canadian fishers were encouraged to catch as much as possible, after which it was transported across the border using newly-improved refrigeration trains. (Finley, 2016; Hoogensen, 2007). By the 1990s, intense extraction had taken a significant toll on Canadian fish stocks, leading to the infamous collapse and closure of the Atlantic cod fishery in 1992, which put 30,000 people out of work. This collapse did not appear out of nowhere, but rather had been willfully ignored for many years through intensified fishing efforts and improvements in fish finding technologies. Today, despite several decades of targeting other fish species, the cod stocks have still not recovered, with many other species central to Canadian fisheries (for example, Pacific salmon) also becoming threatened (Mansfield, 2011).



**Figure 3.5:** Industrial and small-scale fishing boats in Newfoundland, Canada, 1970s  
Source: Stoodley (1970)

In *South African* fisheries, the industrialization process began slightly later than it had in Europe and North America. Between 1900 and 1920, an influx of British colonial capital financed a major transformation in marine fisheries in the country, influenced by the industrialization process in Britain's own fisheries sector. By the mid-1930s, as the commercial fishing sector expanded rapidly, the national government introduced several new governance mechanisms, such as the individual quota system, which effectively further concentrated valuable marine resources in the hands of a few large (predominantly white-owned) fishing companies (Menon et al., 2018). During the post-World War II economic expansion period (1945-1973), the shift toward export production further facilitated the accumulation of capital by a few companies, fueled by an increase in international interest in the South African fisheries sector. More and more foreign vessels appeared in South Africa's coastal waters, which meant South African fishers had to contend with increased competition, particularly for hake<sup>14</sup>, which was growing in popularity in Europe. Similar to Great Britain, South Africa was only able to restrict access to its waters after its EEZ was established in 1977, which has largely allowed the government to control the fishing activities of foreign boats (Menon et al., 2018).

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<sup>14</sup> Hake is a whitefish found in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.



**Figure 3.6:** Industrial and small-scale fishing boats in Gansbaai, South Africa  
Source: Bromilow-Downing (2010)

The *Indian* fisheries sector underwent a ‘blue revolution’ after its 1947 Independence from the British. One of the stated aims of the industrialization of the sector was the development of small-scale fishers – meaning advancing them from small-scale to industrial fisheries. Through policies in the 1950s, the government focused on rapidly expanding the trawling industry, facilitated by building boatyards and harbors, hiring experienced architects and engineers, and investing in new technologies (Menon et al., 2018). Trade also became a central focus. The post-Independence period was characterized by rapid growth in urban areas, facilitated by the development of trade, industry and business. Infrastructure in and around cities (for example, roads, railways) was also upgraded in order to make them more easily accessible, which had a direct effect on simplifying the trade of seafood. Demand for seafood increased, and so did the prices. State planners saw keeping up with the demand through increasing productivity in fisheries as a key approach for addressing poverty, particularly in the artisanal sector. They pushed for fishers to upgrade from traditional boats to more modern, industrial boats, which at the time were already being widely used in Europe and North America. The use of these new boats led not only to a significant increase in production, but also in input costs, such as fuel and boat and gear repairs. Fishers coming from the artisanal sector were not prepared for such costs, and many did not have the financial capital to absorb them. The focus on modernization also led to the establishment of a new sphere of fisheries research, development and training institutions across India, aiming to lead programmes for the large-scale development of the sector that resembled those underway in countries that already had well-established industrial fisheries (for example, Great Britain, Canada). By the early 1960s, Indian fisheries had grown

into a substantial export sector (Kurien, 1978), and today continues to play a significant role in global fish trade.



**Figure 3.7:** Industrial and small-scale fishing boats in Andhra Pradesh, India  
Source: Murty (2018)

### ***3.2.3 Consequences of Industrialization***

There have been several key social and environmental impacts of the industrial wave highlighted in the examples above – the most prominent being the massive decline of fish stocks and environmental damage in fishing territories. A central feature of this period was the increasingly extractive nature in which fisheries resources were being harvested. Fishing was no longer only about supplying food to the global population, but about extracting fisheries resources for profit. The contradictions inherent in industrial fisheries became increasingly apparent during this wave, as the sector depended more and more on a large supply of natural resources, while simultaneously exploiting these resources and the environment to critical levels (Campling et al., 2012). Such contradictions are reflective of those inherent in the broader capitalist system, in which capital depends on its own continuous expansion into new domains in order to generate profit (O'Connor, 1998). The continuous expansion of fisheries forced many fishers to adopt a 'sink or swim' attitude – become profit-driven or risk being drowned by the competition. This mentality has allowed the industrial capitalist fisheries system to continue to thrive and grow, while overfishing and environmental decline run rampant. This has led to the near extinction of numerous species – such as large predatory fish (for example, sharks, tuna, barracudas), of which 90 per cent are estimated to have been lost globally (Clark and Clausen, 2008).

This obsession with growth at the expense of the natural environment can be described as what O'Connor (1998) calls the 'second contradiction of capitalism'. This builds onto the

first contradiction which, emerging from the demand side, refers to capitalism's inherent tendency to create crisis (both economic and social), particularly by overproducing to meet demand. Profit is both the means and ends of capitalism, it is money in search of more of itself, making the system dependent on the continuous production of both goods and capital (O'Connor, 1998; Fraser, 2021). The second contradiction is between self-expanding capital and self-limiting nature. It emerges from the cost side, stemming from lowering expenditures by externalizing costs associated with conditions of production (for example, nature; labour power;) – for example by not paying for environmental costs or residual damages to nature. O'Connor (1998) argues that 'the simple fact that capitalists fail to price nature's bounty (but rather consider it a "free good") proves that in capitalist practice nature is not regarded as productive of wealth' (3). While the first contradiction focuses on the creation of crises of overproduction and underconsumption caused by the market being flooded with too many goods, the second contradiction highlights another kind of crisis – one of underproduction. This crisis emerges when capital has infiltrated nature so much, both environmental and social health start to decline due to intensive production, extraction of resources, pollution and being overworked. Not only does nature begin to produce less resources, people also get sick and are not able to work as much. Technological and human-made fixes are then introduced to try to remedy this underproduction, such as industrial farming and fishing, genetically modified plants and animals, synthetic fertilizers and livestock growth hormones, and new medicines and medical interventions (O'Connor, 1998; Fraser, 2021).

In global fisheries, both the second contradiction and the crisis of underproduction become starkly apparent. Often referred to as the global fisheries crisis, a hundred years of intense development in the fisheries sector, spurred by technological advancement and rapid growth in demand for seafood, has put many fish stocks well beyond their maximum sustainable yield (Allison, 2001). While 90 per cent of fish stocks were still within biologically sustainable levels in 1974, this dropped to 67 per cent by 2015. This means that in just 40 years, one-third of global fish stocks had become overfished – with the biggest drops in stocks occurring in the late 1970s and 1980s (FAO, 2018b). In addition, sea beds and corals have been dug up by trawlers, large marine animals have been snared by longlines and nets, and aquatic ecosystems have been polluted by oil and exhaust from boats. While large industrial fishing companies continue to fish as usual in the interest of expanding profits, fish stocks continue to plummet. The seas, lakes and rivers are increasingly underproducing, and as a result, new



technological fishing gear is introduced to try to meet growing global demand (Campling et al., 2012).

In addition to the socio-ecological impacts discussed above, which highlight how productive activities in fisheries affect the natural environment, the industrial wave has also had serious socio-economic consequences. These impacts raise questions about the social relations of production, property, power and processes of change, particularly regarding who owns, does, gets and uses which resources in a system of industrial fish production (Bernstein, 2010). Owners of large-scale industrial fishing companies employ several key strategies in order to sustain their drive for profit, including corporate concentration and centralization, using state subsidies to invest in large mechanized ships requiring relatively small crews, and precariously employing labourers, usually from lower-income countries. These strategies allow company owners to increase their profits by fishing on a large scale and hiring a cheap labour force of workers receiving minimal wages (Campling and Colás, 2021).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that there are over 15 million people globally working full-time on board fishing vessels, a large number of which come from South East Asian countries like the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia (ILO, 2021). At the same time, small-scale fisheries are increasingly being pushed out of the sector, due to many governments prioritizing the development of the economically-lucrative industrial sector, while directing little investment toward the small-scale sector. Many fishers who are no longer able to make a living fishing independently end up becoming hired labourers on industrial ships. Intensive industrial production has also oversaturated the market with cheap seafood, making it increasingly difficult for small-scale fishers to compete with prices and sell their catches. This has contributed to a significant rise in poverty among fishers globally and the deterioration of countless small-scale fishing communities, some of which have been completely deserted as people are forced to migrate in search of work (Mansfield, 2011; Béné, 2003).

Despite the serious impacts felt by fishing communities, organized mobilization among fishers had not yet emerged at the international level. It was not until 1984 that fishers' organizations from around the world met for the first time in Rome and began to discuss the importance of forming a collective international organization that represented their common interests (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). This discussion was sparked largely in response to the increasing prevalence of privatization policies and private

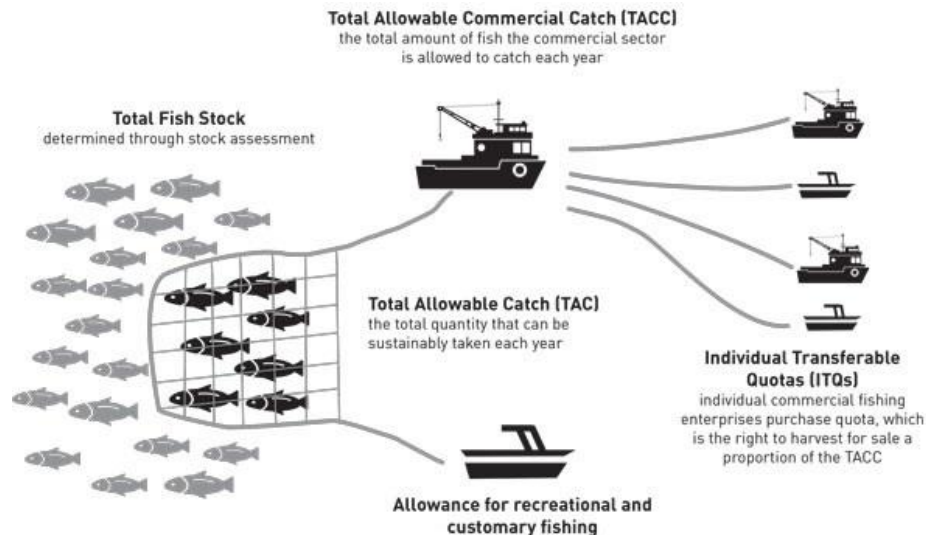
property agendas in the sector, which transformed fishing territories and resources from commonly used to privately owned.

### **3.3 Second Wave: Privatization (post-1970)**

Many fisheries ministries and officials around the world believed the main issue stemming from the industrial wave was widespread, unchecked use of fisheries resources. Their interest in gaining more control over the resources and who had access to them contributed to the emergence of the privatization wave, in which many governments introduced privatization strategies into their fisheries sectors in the form of ‘catch shares’ or quota systems, namely Individual Fisheries Quotas (IFQs) and Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs). IFQs and ITQs are types of catch shares used by many governments to regulate the use of fisheries resources and comply with fish stock limits established through Total Allowable Catch (TAC)<sup>15</sup> (Bromley, 2009). Figure 3.8 (below) shows the structure of and relationship between TAC and ITQs. Governments also asserted ‘ownership’ over their coastal waters through the establishment of EEZs, a core aspect of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). EEZs assert national sovereignty over the 200 nautical miles of sea stretching out from countries’ coastlines, and have enclosed approximately 90 per cent of fishing grounds globally (Sundar, 2012; UN, 1982; Campling and Colás, 2021). These initiatives were presented both to fishers and the general public as mainstream ‘solutions’ for some of the environmental and social issues that emerged from the industrialization of fisheries. The justification was that more control over fisheries resources and territories meant that people would be less likely to abuse and overconsume resources, protecting stocks and ensuring they would remain for future generations of fishers (Longo et al., 2015).

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<sup>15</sup> Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is the total amount of fish that can be caught sustainably each year. Countries set these limits based on advice from fisheries scientists.



**Figure 3.8:** Structure of TAC and ITQs

Source: Ministry for Primary Industries (New Zealand) (2020)

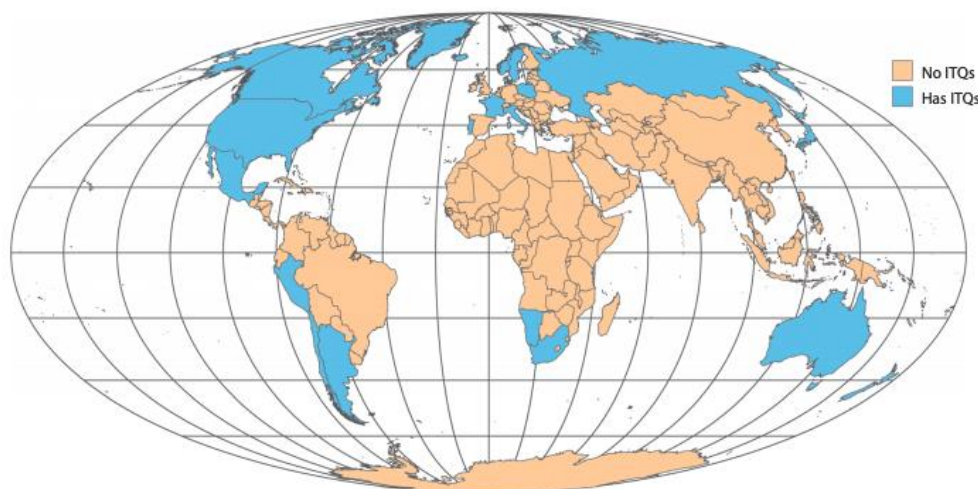
Mainstream explanations for the depletion of fisheries resources typically stem from what Hardin (1968), a staunch defender of private property, calls the ‘tragedy of the commons’. From this perspective, the lack of some form of private property or regulation inevitably leads to overfishing because when left unchecked, fishers will operate recklessly to serve their own self-interest. In other words, ‘freedom in commons brings ruin to all’ (Hardin, 1968, 1248). This argument implies that fishers will always put their individual well-being ahead of that of their community or protecting the environment, and are more likely to regulate the size of their catch if they have some sort of ownership rights (or economic incentive) over fish and fishing areas. The ‘tragedy of the commons’ perspective suggests that as long as natural resources are part of a common pool, they will inevitably be depleted by greed and uncontrolled fishing activities. This argument has limitations, as it ignores important differences between small-scale and industrial fishing methods; the existence of community conservation and commons management strategies; and the numerous political factors that influence fishing decisions. Ostrom’s extensive body of work, for example, famously criticized Hardin’s argument, providing substantial theoretical and empirical evidence of how common pool resources can be successfully managed without falling prey to individual greed. Ostrom argued that this could be done by designing resilient cooperative institutions, involving groups of resource users (such as fishers) ranging in size from 50 to 15,000 people, who organize and govern small-scale common pool resources themselves without top-down government intervention (Ostrom, 1990; Dietz et al., 2003).

Explaining overfishing as a simple case of the ‘tragedy of the commons’ largely depoliticizes fisheries by blaming individuals (namely fishers) for declining fish stocks, rather than looking critically at structural issues and unbalanced power dynamics in the sector (Mansfield, 2011). Applying this perspective to the governance and control of the commons also facilitates particular outcomes and supports certain groups of people over others. The growing concentration of capital and power in the hands of a few large fishing companies is largely ignored, as well as the fact that such companies engage in a capital-intensive, labour un-intensive approach to fishing – meaning less people are able to access stable employment opportunities in the sector (Campling and Havice, 2014). Of the 35 million people worldwide engaged in capture fisheries, the ILO reports that 37 per cent have full-time employment, 23 per cent work part-time, and the remaining 40 per cent have either occasional employment or unspecified status (ILO, 2021).

Longo et al. (2015) argue that Hardin’s theory ‘is an inadequate framework for developing a deep understanding of socio-ecological dynamics and the historical contexts that influence the overexploitation of natural resources’ (28). Honing in on political-economic context, they argue that in oceans, fisheries and aquaculture, the situation can be better understood as a ‘tragedy of the commodity’. Their approach focuses on how political-economic factors shape social organization and public life, addressing the activities and processes driving the commodification of everything. Rooted in materialist conceptions of history and nature, in which the world is viewed as a series of material conditions, natural laws, and phenomena, this approach explores the relationship between processes of production and consumption (socially and historically) and broader ecological conditions. The ‘tragedy of the commodity’ offers a framework for highlighting capitalism’s dependence on continuous growth and the role that commodification has played in shaping the institutional rules that govern ecological systems – often labelled as commons. Contrary to Hardin’s argument, these systems never exist in a state of free-for-all open access, entirely devoid of social organization, but are instead shaped by social conditions such as traditions and norms. The environmental damage caused by open access is a manifestation of the tragedy of the commodity in that it stems from the continuous drive for capital accumulation and the relentless commodification of everything (Longo et al., 2015).

### 3.3.1 Introduction of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs)

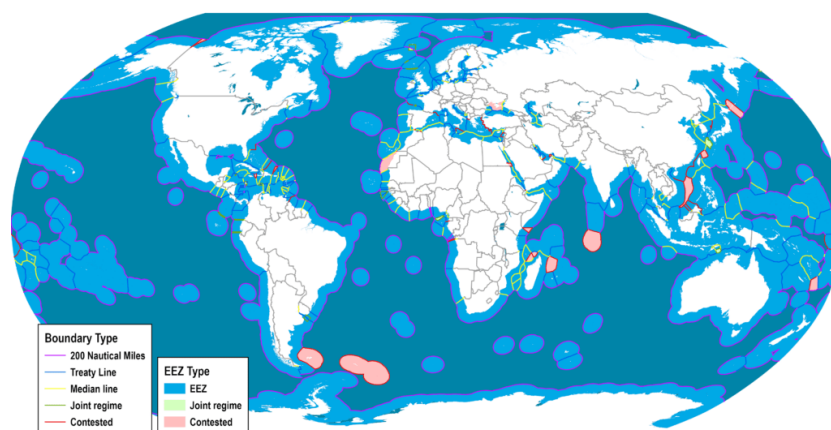
The establishment of fishing quota systems, namely Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) and the lesser-known Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs), was one of the most prominent developments emerging from the post-1970 privatization wave. Many governments and their fisheries departments considered these effective strategies not only for limiting the size of fishers' catches, but also to control who was fishing in their coastal waters. Quota systems, first introduced in the 1970s but mainly popularized in the 1980s, are the most commonly referenced type of private property scheme in global fisheries. They allow fishers to own access rights over a specific share or per centage of their total national fishery, creating property rights to access the fish, and not to the fish themselves, with governments deciding both the total national catch and who gets the quotas (Mansfield, 2011). ITQ systems have been implemented in more than 20 countries globally, and accounting for about 20 per cent of the total marine fish catch, are currently the most popular fisheries management approach (Costello and Ovando, 2019). Map 3.1 (below) shows which countries have implemented ITQ systems. However, there has been no evidence that quota systems have a direct impact on how much fish is being caught (Mansfield, 2011). Furthermore, an ITQ system allows fishers to transfer their quotas (by selling or leasing) to other fishers or fishing companies, creating a competitive quota market in which large-scale industrial fleets are more equipped with the economic means to buy up multiple quotas – granting them access to a significant amount of resources. When these quotas become concentrated in the hands of a few large companies, there is less access and fewer resources left over for small-scale fishers with less economic power (Jones et al., 2017; Levkoe et al., 2017; Longo et al., 2015; Sundar, 2012; Biswas, 2011; Isaacs, 2011).



**Map 3.1:** Countries where ITQ systems are implemented  
Source: Costello and Ovando (2019)

### 3.3.2 Establishment of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)

Another prominent development stemming from the privatization wave was the establishment of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Emerging from the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, EEZs account for about 90 per cent of the marine fish caught globally, with only 10 per cent being caught in international waters further offshore (OECD, 2010). Map 3.2 (below) shows the distribution of EEZs globally. This makes the establishment of EEZs the longest single enclosure of both resources and territory in history (Campling and Havice, 2014). The intention of these zones was that they be used by fishers in the country next to a particular zone, but that foreign fleets could be permitted access to catch the surplus if a country did not have adequate fishing capacity. Many countries quickly expanded their fleets in order to avoid this, which in many places ended up creating the opposite problem – overcapacity. Interestingly, many countries with low capacities have also used ITQs to transfer access to their EEZs to foreign fleets. Only the quota owner in this case benefits economically from what was once broadly considered to be a public good (Pinkerton, 2017). EEZs are thus no longer considered commons or open access fishing grounds, but are transformed into government property. The ratification of UNCLOS gave governments the right to charge ground-rent (via fishing fees) to fishing firms for access to and use of fishing territories, as well as the power to determine the conditions of production (by organizing how resources were managed), and to include or exclude particular groups of fishers (Campling and Havice, 2014; Campling and Colás, 2021). The establishment of quota systems and EEZs have been key turning points in the process of privatization in fisheries, a process which has had long-lasting impacts in global fisheries and continues to evolve and emerge in various forms today.



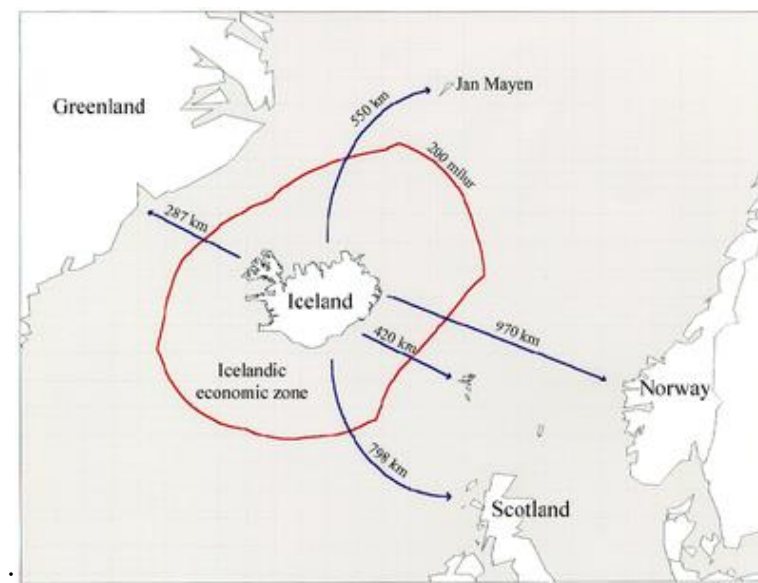
**Map 3.2:** Exclusive Economic Zones globally  
Source: Flanders Marine Institute (2018)

### ***3.3.3 EEZs and ITQs in Iceland, New Zealand, Chile and Namibia***

As was the case during industrialization, privatization has not been a homogenous process from region to region, although the systems that were put in place have many similarities. The four national experiences highlighted below offer illustrative examples from some of the most important fishing nations employing quota systems. In 2019, New Zealand's capture fisheries landed 411,897 tonnes of fish, Namibia landed 467,050, Iceland landed 922,962, and Chile landed 2,376,682 (FAO, 2021a). These examples provide an overview of how privatization has developed in countries where fisheries play a significant role in their economy.

*Iceland* was one of the pioneers in implementing ITQs in its fisheries sector. The system was first introduced on the island in the 1970s, but was significantly expanded in 1984 to encompass more fish species, before being applied across Icelandic fisheries in 1991 via the *Fisheries Management Act*. ITQs and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) are the cornerstone of this *Act*. The fisheries ministry had experimented with many different management systems in the sector since the mid-1960s, of which they had decided none had produced significant economic benefits for the country. Quotas were established as assets with indefinite validity, that could be easily divided or transferred with minimal restrictions. Within a few decades, quota-managed fish, of which 19 species inhabit Iceland's EEZ alone (see Map 3.3), were responsible for 97 per cent of the country's seafood harvest income (Arnason, 2005). The major outcomes of this system have been a reduction in new investment in fishing capital, a significant drop in the number of operating vessels (particularly small boats), and a noticeable drop in fishing effort. During the early 2000s, Icelandic banks also acquired a huge amount of ITQs as collateral for loans, which ended up being a crucial element in the bank speculation that caused the country's economy to crash in 2009. By 2007, ITQs had become such a freely traded hot commodity, with banks readily handing out loans for quota acquisitions, that their total value had risen to 50 times the annual profit of the entire national fisheries sector. Shortly before the 2009 crash, some of the economists behind the establishment of the ITQ system noted that the privatization of the fisheries commons would inevitably have a negative outcome in small fisheries-dependent communities, arguing that their exclusion from the quota system was rational and necessary since they were not actually part of the formal fishing industry. Small-scale fishers in the country have shown strong resistance to privatization in the sector, arguing that it is unethical, immoral and evil because of how the process prioritizes capital

accumulation, individualism and private ownership over fishers' labour, livelihoods and collective well-being (Pinkerton, 2017; Jentoft, 2019).



**Map 3.3:** Iceland's Exclusive Economic Zone  
Source: European Environment Agency (2015)

Meanwhile, in 1986 *New Zealand* established one of the most renowned fisheries privatization strategies, boasting the world's first comprehensive ITQ system. Through quotas, the government has transferred access to 60 per cent of the stocks available in the country's EEZ – the fifth largest in the world (see Map 3.4) – to foreign fleets (Pinkerton, 2017; Bodwitch, 2017). In order to implement the ITQ system, the aboriginal Māori's – who make up 15 per cent of New Zealand's population of four million – would have to agree to give up their aboriginal title rights to small-scale fisheries. In exchange, the government offered them a Fisheries Settlement in 1992, which involved setting up a trust containing 10 per cent of the national quotas and 50 per cent of the shares in New Zealand's largest fishing company, Sealord (the other half of which is Japanese-owned). By 2016, despite owning nearly 50 per cent of the national quotas, few Māori were fishing, processing or selling fish caught under their quota, and faced prosecution if they tried to engage in traditional ceremonial fishing activities. This was due to fisheries managers leasing the quota to high-bidding fishing companies and buying more quotas with the accrued profits. As a result, most of the fish caught by technically Māori-owned quota, is fished, processed and sold by a few powerful processing companies, concentrating the majority of the access and wealth for New Zealand's fisheries in their hands. The prioritization of individual access and quotas has further facilitated existing structural inequalities, power concentration and economic stagnation in fisheries, with small-



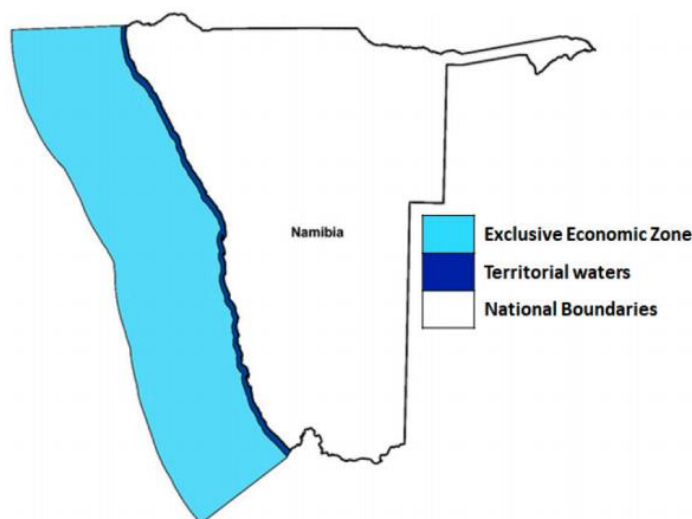
scale, aboriginal fishers continuing to be excluded regardless of their allocations (Bodwitch, 2017).



**Map 3.4:** New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone  
Source: United Fisheries (2019)

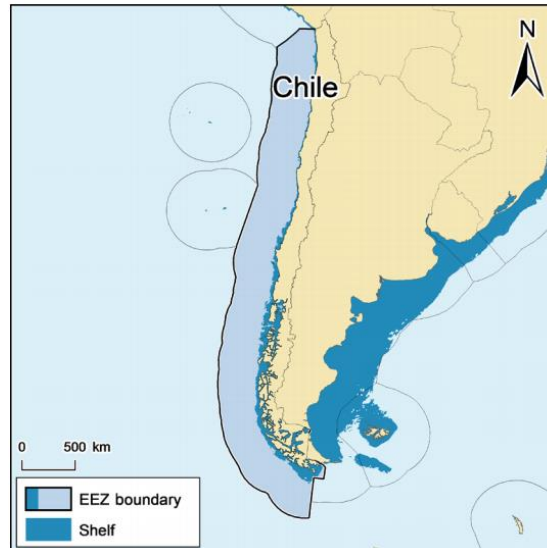
In contrast to New Zealand's free-market based approach, the *Namibian* government introduced catch shares with the intention of establishing a stable fishery in which access for local fishers and processors is prioritized. Since most of the country's fishing industry had been controlled by foreign companies prior to the 1990s, its South Atlantic fishing grounds had long been overfished by boats from Spain, the Soviet Union and elsewhere, leaving its fish stocks significantly depleted. Once the country gained independence from South Africa in 1990, the Namibian government extended its EEZ from 12 to 200 nautical miles (see Map 3.5) in order to close off their coastal waters to unhindered foreign fishing, and enforced a strict TAC system (Levy, 2010; Arnason, 2002). It also began renting out quota shares to individual fishers and companies for limited time periods (4-10 years), offering lower fees to ships employing a larger percentage of Namibian crew. This has led to the employment of nearly 14,000 locals as fishers and fish processors, whereas none had been employed in the sector prior to 1990. Additionally, of the 163 fishing permits available in the country, 162 are held by Namibians, who are closely monitored by fisheries officials and rarely exceed their quotas (Levy, 2010). These quotas are formally non-transferable, but in practice there are possibilities to share or combine quotas, provided approval is received from the fisheries ministry. Despite its relatively small population of roughly 2.4 million, Namibia is among the top 30 fishing nations globally. With

an annual yield that almost doubled between 1990 and 2019, from 268,272 to 467,050 tonnes, fisheries is one of the country's largest income-generating sectors (FAO, 2021a; Arnason, 2002).



**Map 3.5:** Namibia's Exclusive Economic Zone  
Source: Namibia Statistics Agency (2018)

*Chile*, one of the largest seafood producers in the world, has diversified its fisheries to include a large multi-species industrial sector, a small-scale artisanal sector, and a dynamic aquaculture sector. The government began privatizing its key marine fisheries between the 1970s and 80s, which in combination with the demarcation of Chile's 200-mile EEZ (see Map 3.6), facilitated rapid property and wealth concentration in the fisheries sector. The main beneficiary of this concentration has been the Anacleto Angelini group, which is estimated to control around 70 per cent of Chile's northern industry. At first, Chile permitted foreign ships to fish in its southern waters (off the coast of Patagonia) where no Chilean fishers were working, but as the domestic fleet expanded, it gradually took over the southern grounds (Ibarra et al., 2000). The first ITQs were established in the 1990s, with several key species being placed under quota management between 1992 and 1997. Quotas, which typically have a duration of ten years, are initially allocated via auctions, and ownership is restricted to Chilean citizens and companies registered in the country. With an annual catch of 2.3 million tonnes in 2019, the development of the Chilean system represents a major expansion in the scope of fisheries quota management globally (Arnason, 2002). The rapid spread of privatization measures in the sector has put enormous pressure on the fish stocks, leading to the collapse of the mackerel fishery in 1998, and widespread protests by artisanal fishers frustrated by the unbalanced distribution of ITQs (Ibarra et al., 2000).



**Map 3.6:** Chile's Exclusive Economic Zone  
Source: Van der Meer, et al. (2015)

### ***3.3.4 Consequences of Privatization and Fishers' Mobilization***

As the examples above highlight, the main impacts of the privatization wave in national fisheries sectors have been the loss of commonly used fishing territories, the concentration of resources and power in the hands of a few, and the subsequent exclusion of small-scale fishers from accessing those resources. The strategies introduced during the privatization wave failed to address issues of overfishing and environmental destruction that had emerged from industrialization, and only increased the intensity of fishing globally (Longo et al., 2015; Sundar, 2012). Many of these initiatives appeared to be part of a strategy to push the industrial agenda forward even further. This wave also sparked significant controversy among many fishers who were excluded from new initiatives and faced even more obstacles to ensuring secure livelihoods for themselves and their communities (Sundar, 2012; Isaacs and Witbooi, 2019). There was also significant backlash from civil society groups who argued that fisheries resources and territories were being stripped from communities' hands and traditional users' access rights were being denied (Mills, 2018). Fishing territories are not only important sites for producing food, they are also essential for the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and coastal communities (Barbesgaard, 2018). Yet, the privatization of fisheries resources has had similar impacts in coastal communities as processes of dispossession have had in communities whose livelihoods depend on land (see Benjaminsen and Bryceson, 2012). Tensions over how to address private property and fishing fees (rent) have been at the core of debates about the worsening fisheries crisis for decades, but these debates have more recently been reignited by

growing attention to the essential role fisheries plays in food security, the environment and development (Campling and Havice, 2014).

A major reason why fishing communities and small-scale fishers have criticized and resisted privatization and various forms of resource grabbing in fisheries, is because initiatives such as ITQs are usually established by governments, without providing space for communities to participate in their development or to design their own initiatives for dividing or sharing their local resources. This also means that small-scale fishers are typically the first to lose out from such initiatives (Jentoft, 2019; Jones et al., 2017; Levkoe et al., 2017; Isaacs, 2011). ‘Rights-based’ fisheries governance and management revolves around individual private property, granting rights not to the fish themselves, but to *accessing* the fish (Bromley, 2016). There is a striking difference between (private property) rights-based and *human* rights-based approaches – while private property rights allow access to resources for *some individuals* and excludes others, a human rights-based approach is centred around the rights of fishers to access secure livelihoods. Rights-based ‘solutions’ to overfishing focus on market efficiency, meaning... while causing social disruption in fishing communities by excluding many people from accessing resources (Song and Soliman, 2019; TNI, 2016; Ratner et al., 2014). This means that those who depend on fishing to make a living, are sometimes forced to operate outside of the law by fishing without a license or quota because they cannot afford the licensing fees, there are not enough quotas to go around, or all the quotas have been bought up by a few wealthy companies. In South Africa, for example, this has led to an increasing number of small-scale fisher arrests in recent years, which has had negative repercussions in fishing communities, due to fishers not being able to provide for their families, being forced to pay large fines, and this in effect increases inequalities. Many of these arrests have stemmed from growing government attention to controlling illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which has been identified as a central cause of overfishing (Isaacs and Witbooi, 2019).

In response to the increasing pressures being put on fisheries during the privatization wave, many struggling small-scale fishers began to organize and mobilize on a transnational level. While fishing communities had already been organizing at the local and national level for several decades, it was the exclusionary developments of the late-1970s and early-1980s that gave the final push that made the need for transnational coordination more urgent. In July 1984, several regional and national fishers’ organizations, in collaboration with support organizations working with fishing communities, organized the four-day *International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters* in Rome, inviting representatives from

fishers' organizations on every continent.<sup>16</sup> This was a historic event, as it was the first people-led international conference of its kind, bringing together fishers and creating a space to highlight and discuss their experiences and the issues they were facing. One hundred participants from 35 different countries attended the conference, including about 50 small-scale fishers working in coastal and inland waters, and 50 supporters from organizations working with fishers (see Figure 3.9). Most of the participants were meeting for the first time, and came from diverse organizations such as the National Fishermen's Forum in India<sup>17</sup>, the All Indonesian Fisherman Association, the National Association of Artisanal Fishermen in Colombia, and Wood's Harbour Fishermen's Association in Canada, among others. The aim of the conference was to connect beyond national and regional boundaries, and initiate a process of building international collaboration and solidarity among fishers' organizations around the world, particularly those in the Global South. Frustrated by the expanding privatization agenda and continuously being excluded from discussions and decision-making at both the broad policy level and concrete project level, the hope was that such a process could enable fishers' organizations to overcome barriers in in the sector, and shape their own futures in fisheries (Cooperation of People, 1984; Interviews with movement members and allies, 2019).



**Figure 3.9:** International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters (Rome)  
Source: Willmann (1984)

The 1984 conference was an important first step toward establishing a transnational fishers movement, and over the next decade fishers' organizations continued to discuss and develop strategies for coordinating their common struggles and scaling them up to the transnational

<sup>16</sup> The 1984 conference is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation on transnational movements.

<sup>17</sup> This organization is now known as the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF).

level. Several other international conferences and workshops were organized, including the 1986 *International Workshop on Issues in Fisheries Development (Towards an International Collective in Support of Fishworkers)*, which took place in Trivandrum, India and marked the establishment of a collective that has been key in supporting fishers' movements for the last 35 years (ICSF, 1986) (see Figure 3.10).<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 3.10:** Participants at the ICSF 1986 workshop (Trivandrum)  
Source: Morales (1986)

Another important driver for strengthening international solidarity was the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, a key development of globalization which promised to have a huge impact on small-scale food producers' ability to compete in a globalized food system. By 1997, many of the fishers' organizations that had met at the 1984 conference in Rome were able to come back together for an international assembly in New Delhi, India, at which they established the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF) (WFF, 1997; Interviews with movement members and allies, 2017; 2018; 2019).<sup>19</sup> The conference, organized and hosted by the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), brought together 150 representatives from fishers' organizations and 126 observers and advisors from 32 countries around the world. The assembly focused on the needs, structure and membership of

<sup>18</sup> ICSF is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>19</sup> The 1986 workshop and the 1997 international assembly are both discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation on transnational movements.

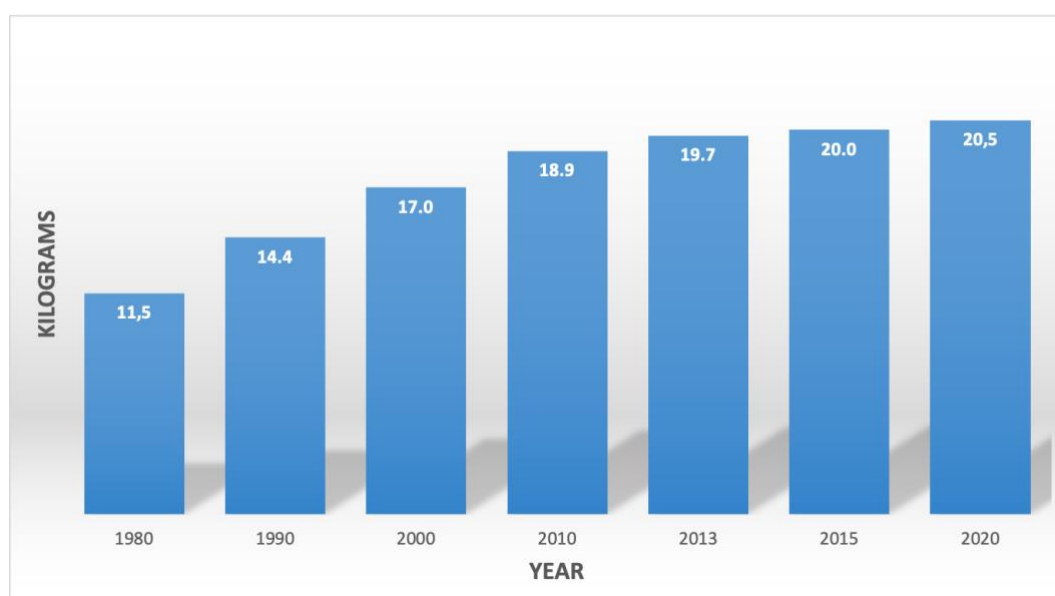
the WFF, taking into account the wide diversity of contexts the fishers' organizations were coming from, and eventually reaching a collective understanding on the formation of a new transnational body to represent their interests in international arenas (Johnston, 1997). This would mark the beginning of an important journey into transnational mobilization for fishers' organizations, which 24 years later continues to evolve.

### **3.4 Third Wave: Conservation (post-2000)**

While fishing continued to intensify and resources steadily declined in the post-1970 privatization wave, it became increasingly apparent that the strategies that had been introduced to conserve resources had been far from effective. Overfishing and environmental degradation were still rampant and were becoming an ever-more pressing issue for the future viability of global fisheries. Framed by a discourse of environmental protection, sustainability, and climate change mitigation, the conservation wave emerged with the new millennium, and intergovernmental promises to tackle global issues head-on. The United Nations eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set an agenda for the 2000-2015 period, focusing on Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger (Goal 1), Ensuring Environmental Sustainability (Goal 7), and Developing a Global Partnership for Development (Goal 8), among other issues (UN, 2000). These goals were criticized for being relatively narrow in scope, focusing mainly on poverty eradication and improving human development (Gasper et al., 2019). They were also largely an initiative propelled by wealthy countries in the Global North, which via institutions like the UN, the World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), acted as donor countries providing development assistance to the Global South. In the early 2000s, this form of donor support was a core element of development cooperation, and an important source of income for many countries; however, by 2012 this importance had dwindled (Gasper, 2019).

The pursuit of the MDGs became significantly complicated by the 'Great Recession' of 2007-2008 and the subsequent convergence of food, feed and fuel crises. In combination with rapid growth and development in countries like China and India, global dynamics of capital accumulation and patterns of food production, consumption and trade have been significantly altered in the last decade. Rapid growth has also facilitated changing dietary preferences, contributing to the steady rise in global demand for animal protein (Weis, 2010;

Weis, 2007). Global demand for seafood grew alongside exponential growth in consumption, almost doubling from 11.5 kilograms per capita in 1980, to 20.5 in 2020 (FAO, 2020e; 2012) (see Figure 3.11). Demand in North America, Europe and Japan has had a particular impact, with consumers consuming the most seafood per capita in the world (Mansfield, 2011). Eating more fish and ‘pescatarianism’ (eating fish as your only source of animal protein) has become particularly popular due to both health warnings and environmental concerns surrounding industrially farmed animals and eating red meat (Ronquest-Ross et al., 2015). As growing demand and consumption have put an increasing strain on available fisheries resources in the last two decades, governments have been ramping up numerous strategies for conserving resources and ensuring fish species are able to continue to reproduce. The goal is not only environmental protection, but also to protect the future viability of the fishing industry, which contributes to national economies, provides employment, and supplies a crucial source of protein for local, national and international food systems. Meanwhile, the 8 MDGs morphed into 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, of which Life Below Water (Goal 14) became a key focal point for marine conservation and fisheries (UN, 2015a).



**Figure 3.11:** Global fish consumption (kilograms per capita)  
Source: Author, using FAO data (2012; 2020e)

### ***3.4.1 Emergence of the ‘Blue Economy’ and ‘Blue Growth’***

A central development of the conservation wave has been the emergence of the concept of ‘blue economy’ and its broadly ambitious agenda for achieving ‘blue growth’, which



developed out of collaborations between several coastal and island states, development banks, environmental NGOs and transnational corporations in the late-2000s. The blue agenda was particularly ramped up during and after the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20) in 2012, where many of these actors met to discuss the future of the oceans. The concept of a blue economy emerged as a way to link the oceans with RIO+20's 'green economy' theme, highlighting the move toward a more sustainable global economy. Post-Rio, many actors working on ocean issues, including many of those who had participated in Rio, further developed the meaning of the blue economy, prioritizing particular problems, solutions and participants working in the ocean realm (Silver et al., 2015). The blue economy, which essentially encompasses all economic activities in the oceans, frames marine resources as key for addressing global challenges such as food security, climate change and the provision of renewable energy. The breadth of its scope has not surprisingly meant that a vast array of actors are driving the blue economy agenda, many of which have competing perspectives. Many others – namely small-scale fishers – find themselves completely excluded from the development of initiatives that promise to have serious impacts on their livelihoods (Mallin et al., 2019).<sup>20</sup>

One initiative emerging from the blue economy agenda involves the purchase of blue carbon credits, referring to the CO<sub>2</sub> stored in coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrass meadows. Blue carbon credits essentially allow countries and companies to offset their emissions by investing in the conservation of coastal areas, which is also promoted as an important initiative for climate change mitigation (Thomas, 2014; Nellemann et al., 2009). This approach has been actively endorsed in the stream of international ocean and climate conferences that have been organized since 2012 (for example, COP climate conferences, World Ocean Summits, Our Ocean conferences). Small-scale fishers have argued that one of the major issues with blue carbon initiatives is that they essentially sell off fishing grounds, enclosing them and restricting access to resources, while offering 'false solutions' for climate change mitigation and conservation (Mallin et al., 2019; Mills, 2018).

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<sup>20</sup> The blue economy and blue growth agendas are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation on contentious fisheries issues.

### 3.4.2 *Enlargement of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)*

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), one of the most prominent initiatives promoted within the blue economy and ocean conservation agendas, has had similar outcomes to blue carbon initiatives. While various forms of protected marine areas have existed for hundreds of years, statutory MPAs are quite recent, with just 118 being established by 1970, 430 by 1985, and 1306 by 1994. By the 1990s there were MPAs on virtually every coast, however, the majority only existed on paper due to a lack of financial and technical resources to ensure they were effectively managed. Most of these were implemented in small coastal areas, where fragile coral reefs and breeding grounds for many aquatic species were the priority (Kelleher et al., 1995). Map 3.7 (below) shows where MPAs have been established globally. The conservation wave fostered a whole new approach to establishing and managing MPAs, with a shift toward Large Marine Protected Areas (LMPAs), including those 250,000 km<sup>2</sup> and larger<sup>21</sup>, and a push toward an international target of protecting 10 per cent of the world's oceans by 2020. This process began in 2000 with the designation of the Northern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, initially a 360,000 km<sup>2</sup> area that was expanded to 1.5 million km<sup>2</sup> in 2006 and re-designated as the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. By 2013, the seven pioneer LMPAs alone accounted for more than 80 per cent of the total area contained in protected areas (Wilhelm et al., 2014). By 2020, despite the 10 per cent goal, around 7.4 per cent (26.9 million km<sup>2</sup>) of the world's oceans are currently protected within 16,928 MPAs – a ten-fold increase since 2000 (Protected Planet, 2020).



**Map 3.7:** Marine Protected Area globally in 2017 (highlighted in yellow)  
Source: Protected Planet (2017)

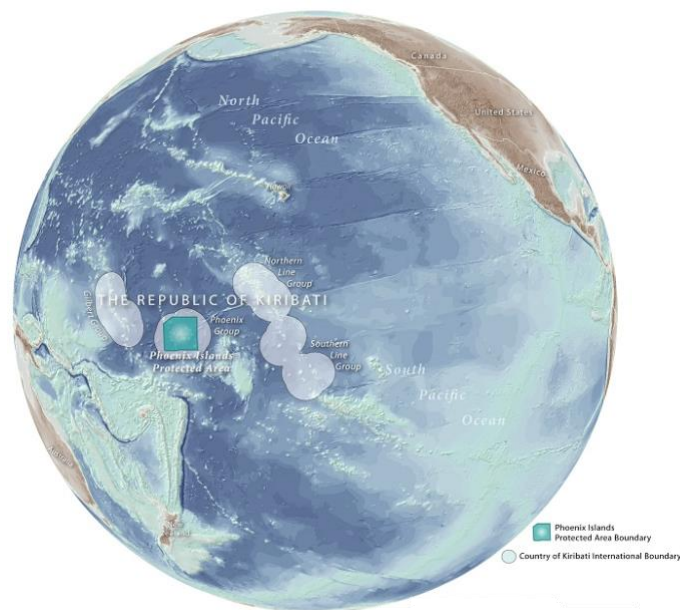
<sup>21</sup> This figure is contested, as Mallin et al. (2019) note that LMPAs include those larger than 30,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

### ***3.4.3 Large Marine Protected Areas (LMPAs) in the Pacific Ocean***

The vast majority of LMPAs have been established in the Pacific Ocean, likely due to the richness and diversity of its ecosystems, particularly surrounding its many small volcanic islands. The Pacific contains 8 out of the 10 largest protected areas, and more than 20 LMPAs have been designated there since 2005 (Protected Planet, 2020; Mallin et al., 2019). The world's largest LMPA, the Ross Sea Region MPA, was established in 2017 in the Southern Pacific, off the coast of Antarctica and covers 1.5 million km<sup>2</sup> – an area larger than Mexico. Initially proposed by New Zealand and the United States in 2012, the two states worked together to gain the agreement of the other members of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) (24 states plus the EU). Several versions of the proposal were blocked by China and Russia, who did not agree with the restrictions imposed on fishing in the area. After 5 years of tense international negotiations, and more than 10 years of scientific research and planning, a compromise was reached that included 72 per cent of the area being off limits to commercial fishing for 35 years (Marine Conservation Institute, 2020; Protected Planet, 2020).

Further North in the Central Pacific, the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), part of the remote island chain of Kiribati, was designated in 2006 and established in 2008, covering an area of 408,250 km<sup>2</sup> (see Map 3.8). One of the early-wave LMPAs, its geographical size and the fact that its islands are threatened by rising sea levels garnered PIPA international publicity and attention from conservationists. As a joint venture negotiated between Conservation International Foundation, New England Aquarium Corporation and the government of Kiribati, the establishment of PIPA required changes to Kiribati's legislation to allow a joint legal-governance structure, and provide a compensatory mechanism to justify the long-term closure of important fishing grounds. Part of the enclosed area included an important source of tuna, a fishery from which the government had received a major source of revenue via licensing fees since its 1979 independence from Great Britain. Initially designating 3.12 per cent of the area as a no-take zone (off limits to fishing), which remained up until the end of 2014, the government announced that this zone would expand to 99.4 per cent of PIPA at the beginning of 2015 (Mallin et al., 2019; Marine Conservation Institute 2020). The scale and the political, economic and environmental complexity of these two LMPAs vividly illustrates how protected areas have evolved during the conservation wave. While the phenomenon of resource enclosure does not always lead to the immediate dispossession of fishing communities, such important shifts in the use and control of large marine areas will likely have

significant impacts on who has access to marine spaces and resources in the near future (Mallin et al., 2019).

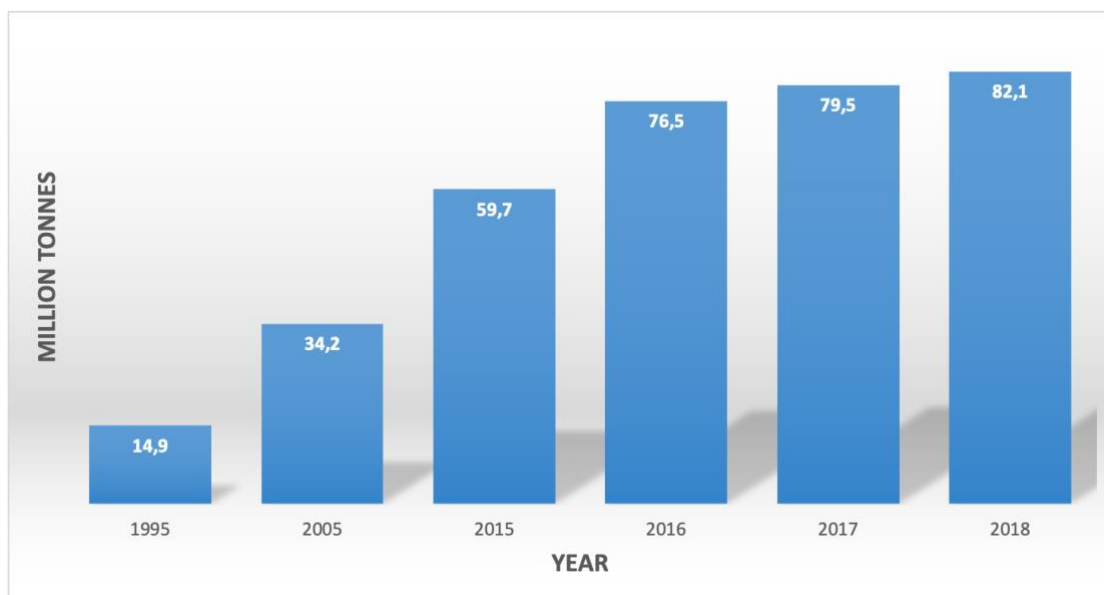


**Map 3.8:** Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA)  
Source: Alluring World (2020)

### ***3.4.4 Expansion and Intensification of Aquaculture***

Another key initiative that has expanded during the conservation wave is the aquaculture industry. This expansion has been propelled by economic interests and investment, which proponents claim are necessary to keep up with the increasing demand for seafood, which has not been matched by growth in capture fisheries. Aquaculture, also referred to as ‘culture fisheries’, represents a new generation of industrialization and technological advancement in fisheries. Although various forms of small-scale traditional and indigenous aquaculture have existed on land and in coastal and freshwater areas for centuries, the recent global expansion of intensive marine aquaculture based on advanced technologies and immense capital investment has led to a significant transformation in seafood production. In the last few decades, aquaculture has become the fastest growing food production industry globally, increasing its production volume by 8.6 per cent per year, and now producing almost half of all fish for human consumption. Between 1995 and 2018, aquaculture production increased almost six-fold, from 14.9 to 82.1 million tonnes of aquatic animals (see Figure 3.12). In 2018, the value of this production was USD 250 billion (FAO, 2020e). Proponents of aquaculture herald it as a catch-all solution for numerous issues plaguing the fisheries sector, arguing that

the intensification of fish production is key to meeting global demand, addresses overfishing by decreasing pressure on wild fish stocks, and supports sustainability and the conservation of marine ecosystems by limiting fishing activity (Ocean Foundation, 2020; World Bank, 2013). As one of the key initiatives being promoted in the blue economy and blue growth agendas, it also promises to contribute to technological advancement and development in fisheries sectors, boosting national income. These claims have contributed to the rapid uptake of aquaculture around the world, from Norway to Myanmar to Chile to Canada. This mainstreaming has even led to the development of the first genetically modified animal for human consumption – referred to as the AquAdvantage Salmon by its promoters, and the ‘frankenfish’ by its critics – which ironically won Time Magazine’s “Best Inventions of 2010” award. The breeding of genetically modified salmon in aquaculture tanks has been promoted as a win-win scenario that provides economic growth while ensuring ecological sustainability – representing the new holy grail of environmental solutions (Longo et al., 2015).

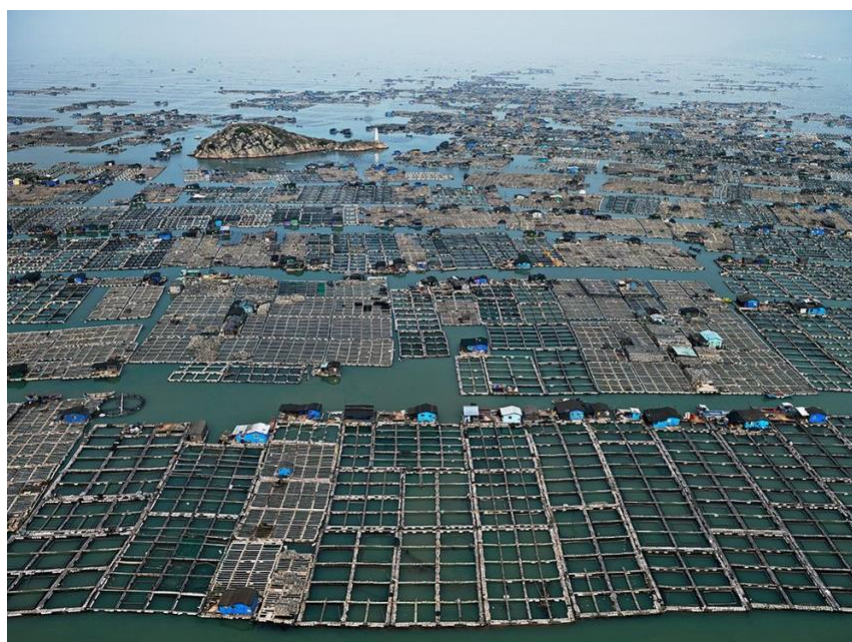


**Figure 3.12:** Global aquaculture production  
Source: Author, using FAO data (2020e)

### ***3.4.5 Aquaculture in China and Norway***

As the world’s largest aquaculture producer, China produces 61.5 per cent of farmed fish globally, producing more than the rest of the world combined since 1991. It has played a key role in the steady increase in aquaculture’s contribution to global fish production in the last three decades. With production increasing from 1.6 to 47.6 million tonnes between 1995 and 2018, the importance of Chinese aquaculture for the total global fish supply and food security

is expected to remain relatively stable, as is its self-sufficiency in feeding its large population with domestically farmed fish (FAO, 2018b; FAO, 2020g). The Chinese industry, which predominantly engages in freshwater production, is in the midst of a transformation from traditional to advanced aquaculture (see Figure 3.13). Since 2016, fisheries officials have intensively promoted this transformation, which includes modern aquaculture technologies and the large-scale expansion of crop-fish production, such as rice-fish culture (farming fish in rice paddies). However, the industry's development is facing many sustainability challenges, and obstacles have arisen due to resource availability, environmental protection measures, limited space available for expansion, old facilities, increasing prevalence of diseases among farmed fish, and food safety issues (Gui et al., 2018; FAO, 2018b).



**Figure 3.13:** Floating fish farms in China  
Source: Alk3r (2017)

As the second biggest fish exporter in the world (after China), Norway's aquaculture production increased by about 500 per cent between 1995 and 2016, from 278,000 to 1.3 million tonnes. In just a few decades, Norway became the world's largest producer of farmed salmon, with an aquaculture sector that brought in €7.4 billion in 2016 and accounts for around 8 per cent of the country's exports. As aquaculture companies outgrew the limits of the Norwegian coast, they began transporting their technologies and practices to other countries, such as Canada (FAO, 2018b; Castle, 2017; Longo et al., 2015). By 2018, about 94 per cent of the Norwegian aquaculture industry was producing farmed salmon, and the government still plans to increase production by a further 500 per cent by 2050. This planned growth, however,

requires public consultation, since coastal communities technically have a say in which potential production sites the industry has access to. There is a noticeable divide in public opinion among Norwegians, and while some are in favour, seeing it as a flourishing industry that can feed a growing global population, others are concerned that multinational companies are pushing smaller family companies out of the fisheries sector, and conflicts have emerged over coastal space where communities have felt the encroachment. Another common fear is that such intensive industrial production is likely to cause irreversible damage to marine ecosystems. One of the biggest environmental issues is the spread of sea lice, a parasite that kills an estimated 50,000 salmon in Norway per year. Sea lice breed rapidly in aquaculture tanks, spreading quickly between farmed fish and being transferred to wild salmon that either swim near the tanks, or pick them up from the more than 200,000 salmon that escape from the tanks every year (Krøvel et al., 2019; Castle, 2017).



**Figure 3.14:** Aquaculture production in Norway  
Source: Aquaculture Magazine (2017)

### ***3.4.6 Consequences of Conservation and Increasing Mobilization***

As the examples above highlight, the main impacts from the conservation wave have been the further exclusion of fishers from fishing territories, the increasing division of fishing spaces for conservation purposes (for example, via MPAs), and the intensification of capital accumulation through intensive seafood production (for example, aquaculture expansion). These impacts can be understood as part of broader processes of resource grabbing, including ocean, coastal, (inland) water and blue grabbing, which in the context of fisheries, can

collectively be understood as the grabbing of fisheries resources. From a fisheries perspective, such processes involve the capturing of control over fisheries resources and spaces by powerful private and state actors, by appropriating the use of or access to fisheries resources and spaces, and dispossessing previous users, rights holders or inhabitants, such as small-scale fishers and coastal communities with less economic and political power. The grabbing of fisheries resources can occur via diverse mechanisms including inappropriate or inadequate: (inter)national governance and management approaches, trade and investment policies, coastal and marine conservation, and expansion of global food and fish industries (for example, aquaculture), in which the rights and livelihoods of small-scale fishers are not sufficiently taken into account (TNI, 2014; Bennett et al., 2015; Bavinck et al., 2017). Despite justifications of environmental protection, resource conservation, climate change mitigation and development, the grabbing of fisheries resources has largely been facilitated by mainstream approaches to fisheries governance that favour capital-intensive industrial capture and culture fisheries, while subsequently excluding and extinguishing small-scale fisheries. Reminiscent of the ongoing global land grab, driven by converging food, finance, climate and energy crises, fishers' movements claim that a global grab of fisheries resources is also underway (TNI, 2014).

In response to the increasing threats the conservation wave posed to small-scale fisheries, fishers' movements also stepped up their organization and mobilization, particularly at the international level. After the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF) was initially formed in 1997, internal political tensions within the movement caused a split in 2000 at an infamous meeting in Loctudy, France.<sup>22</sup> Two organizations emerged: the WFF, made up of the Icelandic, French, and North and South American national members, and the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), made up of Asian, African and New Zealand national members, along with a First Nations member from Canada (Sinha, 2012; Interviews with movement members and allies, 2017; 2018; 2019; Sinha, 2012). Yet, WFFP and WFF still collaborate to address issues in international spaces, such as FAO, and have played a central role in the politics of global fisheries. The FAO has been a key forum where WFFP and WFF have been engaging since the 1980s, but the intensity of this engagement increased in the 2000s. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) has been a key process and space, particularly during the development of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines), which

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<sup>22</sup> The split at the Loctudy meeting is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation on transnational movements.



formally began in 2010 and continued until they were endorsed by the COFI in 2014. Prior to 2010, many years of informal discussions among fishers' organizations (namely WFFP, WFF and ICSF) facilitated the establishment of a formal process at the FAO level (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). The development of the SSF Guidelines is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. The 2014 endorsement is considered by fishers' movements and FAO as one of their most important achievement towards ensuring secure and sustainable small-scale fisheries (FAO, 2015). The SSF Guidelines have become a crucial mobilization tool for fishers' movements partly because the instrument prioritizes and promotes human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which it states are universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent (FAO, 2015).

Since 2014, in addition to promoting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, WFFP has turned its attention to issues such as climate change, ocean grabbing<sup>23</sup> and the blue economy, and alternatives such as climate justice and food sovereignty. These themes were central to the discussions and workshops that took place during the WFFP General Assembly, which occurred in New Delhi in 2017 – exactly 20 years after the transnational fishers' movements had been established in the same city (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members and allies, 2017; 2018; 2019). Understanding the impacts of climate change, resource grabbing and the blue economy on small-scale fisheries is still an ongoing process for the movements, as these issues are in continuous flux, but keeping a critical eye on these developments is a key role that fishers' movements play in the politics of global fisheries. Similarly, it is still too soon to tell whether discourses of climate justice and food sovereignty will garner sufficient international support to guide the way toward viable alternatives to the current mainstream fisheries, food and climate governance agendas, yet fishers' movements will likely continue to find ways to explore and promote these alternatives in their ongoing march toward fisheries justice.

### **3.5 Concluding Discussion**

This chapter has provided the global and historical framing for this study, and situated the research within development studies debates. It has explored the structural and institutional

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<sup>23</sup> Ocean grabbing refers to powerful economic actors capturing control of decision-making in fisheries, including around the use, conservation and management of marine resources (TNI, 2014). This concept is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

developments in global fisheries in three distinct and overlapping waves: the industrialization wave (post-1900), the privatization wave (post-1970), and the conservation wave (post-2000). It first discussed technological transformations in global fisheries during the industrialization wave, highlighting how this impacted fisheries production, aquatic ecosystems, and small-scale fisheries. Second, it turned to the privatization wave, delving into the emergence of private property agendas, EEZs and fisheries quota systems, and the impact this has had in terms of access to fisheries resources and capital accumulation. Third, it explored the conservation wave), focusing on the enlargement of MPAs and the expansion of the aquaculture industry as two key developments during this wave that have had a big impact on the future viability of small-scale fisheries.

In combination, the industrialization, privatization and conservation waves have contributed to overlapping processes of exclusion in the fisheries sector, including: 1) existing processes stemming from decades of industrialization and privatization, and 2) newer processes stemming from conservation and climate change mitigation agendas. Fishers are increasingly confronted with dwindling fish stocks, due to changing patterns of consumption and demand, and intensifying competition for limited fisheries resources (Longo et al., 2015). This is contributing to the exclusion and dispossession of small-scale fishers from traditional fishing territories in the oceans, inland freshwater (rivers, lakes), and brackish areas (estuaries, coastal swamps, mangroves), which is both threatening fishers' livelihoods and intensifying resource conflicts. These processes of exclusion have also contributed to different strategies of resistance and forms of mobilization within transnational fishers' movements. This highlights how mobilization within fishers' movements has not been historically static, shifting in visibility and cohesion depending on the global political and economic context and particular historical moments.

The first process of exclusion stems from the technological advances of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, which were important first steps in the industrialization of the fisheries sector, and opened the doors for the long-distance transportation and storage of seafood products. As a result, production and consumption patterns changed quickly, as people found themselves with more choices and increasing access to exotic foods. By the 1950s, the amount of capital and resources being invested in fisheries had risen dramatically, facilitating the further advancement of technologies and fishing boat capacities. This contributed to a quadrupling of the amount of fish caught globally, from 20 to 90 billion kilograms between 1950 and 2000 (Longo et al., 2015). This advancement also led to the rapid expansion of large-scale industrial

fishing operations, which engage in highly mechanized fishing methods that both disrupt marine ecosystems, and require less human labor. This has meant that many small-scale fishers are unable to compete in the sector, fishworkers became unemployed, and the survival of fishing communities was threatened (Longo et al., 2015). Such industrial expansion has certainly not occurred independently. The global demand for seafood has been growing at an accelerated rate, with fish accounting for approximately 17 per cent of the global population's overall consumption of animal protein (FAO, 2016). Per capita, the annual consumption of seafood (fish and shellfish) has skyrocketed, from less than 3 kilograms in the 1950s, to 20.5 kilograms in 2020 (FAO, 2012; 2020e).

Fish are used not only for direct human consumption, but also as fertilizers and feed for fattening chickens and pigs, which humans end up consuming indirectly (Campling and Havice, 2014). As a result, fisheries (including capture and culture fisheries) has become a huge industry worldwide, supporting the livelihoods of 12 per cent of the global population – including 60 million fishers, and 140 million people engaging in harvesting and distribution (FAO, 2016). Many fishers, however, are losing access to their traditional fishing territories and resources because of the grabbing of fisheries resources (including ocean, coastal, (inland) water and blue grabbing), which involve ambiguous access agreements and contentious industrial fishing tactics. These agreements transform community fishing grounds into private spaces, often allowing foreign vessels into waters previously reserved for domestic use, diverting resources away from local populations, and threatening both small-scale fishers' livelihoods and food security. As long as unsustainable practices continue, the critical role that fisheries plays in securing the right to food to millions is under threat, particularly as intense pressure on industrial agriculture forces us to increasingly depend on rivers, lakes and oceans to provide animal protein (De Schutter, 2012).

The second process of exclusion, stemming from conservation and climate change mitigation agendas, exacerbates existing exclusion and tensions around accessing fisheries resources that emerged during the industrialization and privatization waves. Fishing territories are increasingly being enclosed through the implementation of MPAs, in which governments enforce restrictions on fishing activities in places considered ecologically important or delicate, which often means the coastal areas used by small-scale fishers (Campling et al., 2012). Similarly, the growing global popularity of the blue economy agenda, which includes protecting mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrass meadows in order to sell blue carbon credits, has contributed to the emergence of a 'carbon complex', which encloses oceans, mangroves,

farmlands and forests in the name of conservation (Barbesgaard, 2018; Borrás, 2016; Thomas, 2014; Nellemann et al., 2009). There has also been a rapid expansion of aquaculture, partly due to its promotion as a ‘solution’ for addressing the overexploitation of fish stocks. This has led to such a widespread increase in aquaculture production that it currently provides half of all seafood for human consumption – more than double what it contributed in 1994 (FAO 2016). Aquaculture’s high mechanization means that it has enormous operating costs, and yet requires minimal human labour, while also threatening the livelihoods of small-scale fishers by flooding the seafood market with intensively produced products (Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2017).

Due to the impacts of conservation and climate change mitigation on small-scale fishers and coastal communities, these initiatives are increasingly being called (fisheries) resource grabs, due to their restriction of access to the coastal areas where they live and work (Silver and Campbell, 2018; TNI, 2014) – similar to the way forest-dwelling communities have been impacted by land-based conservation and climate change mitigation (Hunsberger et al., 2017). The loss of livelihoods that could increasingly stem from fisheries resource grabs is not only a threat to the fishers themselves, but also to the economies of countries with large fishing populations, since it is likely to contribute to increased unemployment and poverty. Fishing communities, especially in Africa, Asia and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are already some of the most vulnerable to climate change-induced environmental disasters (for example, sea level rise, tsunamis, hurricanes, droughts). Thus, countries with large fishing populations face intensified socio-economic problems when climate change impacts are compounded by the side-effects of conservation and mitigation initiatives – resulting in critical development challenges, both now and in the future (Allison et al., 2009).

The combined consequences of the industrialization, privatization, conservation waves have led to overlapping processes of exclusion in global fisheries, which in turn is facilitating significant transformations. These transformations involve rapid changes in the socio-economic relations of production that exist between fishers, markets, and consumers, as large groups of fishers are excluded (from markets) and dispossessed of their means of production (fishing territories and resources) (Campling et al., 2012). Partly in response to these changes, fishers and coastal communities too are transforming, as they find new ways to adapt to and survive within the sector. This has led to the emergence of transnational fishers’ movements, calling for alternatives to the dominant approaches currently used to govern fisheries. Such approaches focus too narrowly on managing fisheries resources, glossing over the complex

socio-political relations and dynamics that shape the fisheries system, and tend to treat fishing communities as development subjects (Campling et al., 2012), rather than as powerful agents of change. Yet, fishers' movements have contributed to important victories in (inter)national fisheries governance, such as the SSF Guidelines, by mobilizing and directly challenging the mainstream norms that neglect small-scale fishers' rights. In a changing global context, in which the politics around the production, circulation and consumption of (sea)food are becoming increasingly complex and contentious, this highlights the continuing importance of the role of fishers' movements in raising their critical voices and challenging the status quo.



## 4

## **Transnational Fishers' Movements: Birth, Consolidation, Evolution and Contestation**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Like most transnational social movements, fishers' movements have a history marked by both periods of politically-charged, lively mobilization, and quieter moments, plagued by a lack of capacity and organization. It is a history full of inspiring events, general assemblies, protests, alliance-building, convergences, internal and external tensions, conflict and agreements, and political and social gains. Despite being an exciting journey, it is a history that is not easy to piece together, due to the lack of a complete or organized archive. There are fragments of archival documentation here and there, mainly in the private collections of individuals who have been part of the movements, or organizations who have worked closely with the movements. There are also vivid stories shared between long-term and newer members and allies, and differing perspectives on how things played out in various meetings and processes. Much of the movements' historical fabric and organizational memory is preserved within the minds of the founding and early members of the movements, and those from allied organizations who have worked with the movements for many years. Sadly, some of this history has also been lost along with members who have passed away. For the long-term future viability of the movements, it is therefore even more important to ensure that the history that can still be shared and preserved, is not lost.

When I first began this research in December 2016, I quickly discovered the lack of written historical information about transnational fishers' movements. There was no central movement archive, no published histories, and little trackable online presence. However, I also quickly learned that everyone I talked to about the movements had stories to tell and perspectives to share about what had happened at different moments in the movements' history. I began to collect these stories and put the historical pieces together, through both formal and informal conversational interviews, as well as by gathering archival documentation, videos and photos from different sources. In combination, these archival, virtual and in-person (AVI) methods, which I discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, allowed me to gain

important insights into the evolution and trajectory of transnational fishers' movements that would have been difficult to discover otherwise.

The WFFP and WFF, also understood as 'fisheries justice' movements, are collective struggles involving local, national and transnational alliances of small-scale fishers, fishing communities, and their allies, who are concerned with issues of inclusion, equity, human rights, democratizing access to and control of natural resources, and the politics of climate change (Mills, 2018). As highlighted in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the small-scale fishers represented by these movements are people that fish to meet food and basic livelihood needs, and/or are directly involved in harvesting, processing or marketing fish. They typically work for themselves, without hiring outside labour; operate in near shore areas; employ traditional, low-technology or passive fishing gear; undertake single day fishing trips; and are engaged in the sale or trade of their catches. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, the exclusionary impacts of globalization and capitalist development in fisheries have contributed to the expansion of transnational fishers' movements, as they continuously seek out new ways to strengthen their global linkages and find spaces and platforms for engagement. As more platforms emerge for addressing international concerns, intergovernmental bodies have also become increasingly implicated in trying to navigate the political integration of diverse global actors, such as transnational fishers' movements (Tarrow, 2005; Smith and Guarnizo, 2006). The relationships between fishers' movements and intergovernmental bodies, such as the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), are introduced and partially analysed in this chapter, and further expanded upon in Chapters 5 and 6.

Although little is publicly known about the particularities and significance of the role of transnational fishers' movements in the politics of global fisheries, this chapter argues that this can be partially analysed and understood by tracking the historical evolution of the movements in the context of structural and institutional transformations in the fisheries sector. As discussed in Chapter 3, these transformations have emerged from the combined consequences of the industrialization, privatization and conservation waves in global fisheries, resulting in uneven and combined processes of development in the sector, which benefit large-scale industrial companies while excluding countless small-scale fishers. Stemming from the central question guiding this study, in which I seek to understand why and how transnational fishers' movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries, this chapter addresses the first sub-question introduced in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. This multi-part



question asks: What transnational fishers' movements exist, how have they evolved over time, and what are their political agendas and strategies? Answering this question involves delving into the particular political and historical developments which contributed to the build-up and emergence of the fishers' movements in the 1990s, and why and how they forged transnational alliances with fishers, farmers and intergovernmental organizations around the world.

In the rest of this chapter, the following section explores and analyses the steps that were taken toward building an international fishers network, beginning with a 1984 movement-led conference in Rome, followed by the birth of a world fishers forum in 1997, and the internal split that divided the movement in 2000. The second section discusses the evolution of two transnational fishers' movements between 2000 and 2020, which involved the central process of developing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines between 2009-2014, as well as the post-Guidelines endorsement period between 2014 and 2020. In the third section, I turn to three pivotal developments, emerging out of my analysis of the structural and institutional history and evolution of the fishers' movements. These developments have been crucial in shaping fishers' movements' political agendas, and for building alliances with other movements and intergovernmental organizations in order to scale up and strengthen their work and advocacy. They include fishers' movements' internalization of overlapping fisheries, food and climate crises; transnational agrarian movements (TAMs) and the international platforms they participate in increasingly engaging with the fisheries aspect of converging food and climate crises; and intergovernmental UN bodies, such as the FAO and IPCC, broadening their attention to fisheries issues in their work and analysis. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion on implications of broader dynamics of politics, leadership and capacity in the fishers' movements.

## **4.2 Building an International Fishers' Network**

The following discussion provides an historical account of transnational fishers' movements, pieced together through archival document collection, conversations, interviews and participant observation. Since historical accounts are told and understood differently by different actors based on their personal experiences, this historical account will likely miss some moments or interactions which others may see as important. Therefore, the history that is told here is not presented as the definitive story of the transnational fishers' movements, but rather presents a story that has been carefully assembled and woven together during the past

four years (2017-2021) of this research process. Furthermore, not all of the fascinating stories that have been collected throughout this research process could be included in this account. Choices had to be made about what to include and what not, in order to offer some coherence and direction in the story being told and connect to the arguments being presented in this study. I hope that those I spoke to and interviewed will feel adequately reflected in and represented by the history that emerges here. This is a story of the two transnational movements representing small-scale fishers, the WFF and WFFP – which began as one and later split into two – and the events leading up to and subsequently emerging from their establishment.

### ***4.2.1 The 1984 Conference***

The story begins in Rome in July 1984, at the *International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters*,<sup>24</sup> which became a famous first step toward establishing a transnational movement (see Figure 4.1). In many of the interviews I conducted with fishers movement members and supporters who have been involved since the early-1980s, ‘the 1984 Conference’, as it was often referred to, was highlighted as the conference where it all began (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019; WFF, 2000). The 1984 Conference was conceived as a first step toward building solidarity between fishers’ organizations from around the world, particularly in the Global South. It was self-organized by fishers’ organizations and supporters working with fishing communities from 4-8 July, involving 100 participants from 34 countries, including 50 fishworkers (small-scale fishers, fishing crew workers, processors and sellers) and 50 supporters (individuals and representatives of organizations working with fishworkers) from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania. The conference report notes that it was an historical event, since fishworkers had continuously been excluded from discussions and decision-making processes, at both the concrete project level and broader policy level. The report, which was written by a group of the organizers calling themselves The Cooperation of People in Asia, Latin America and Africa, highlights:

At this conference they [fishworkers] decided to initiate a process of building international collaboration and solidarity. This process will enable them to overcome the barriers to shaping

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<sup>24</sup> The term ‘fishworker’ was commonly used among these organizations in the 1980s in order to include different types of workers in the small-scale fisheries sector, namely fishers, fishing crew, processors and sellers. The emergence of WFF and WFFP also added ‘fish harvesters’ and ‘fisher peoples’ to the terms used within the network. However, in spoken language today, the terms ‘fishers’ and ‘fisherfolk’ are most commonly used as a way to encapsulate the range of actors represented by the movements. I use the term ‘fishers’ throughout this dissertation in the interest of consistency, unless I am referring to quotes or specific reports.

their own future. It was a people's initiative. Not waiting for an international governmental bodies invitation, they decided to meet on their own initiative, with their own style, own agenda and own working methods. This conference was not conceived as an intellectual experience. It became a living human experience in which spontaneity, life-sharing and self-expression at all levels played a major role. It was a committed encounter. It carried an emotional meaning and an existential weight which added to its seriousness. It was a direct result of the fact that the participants live through the problems which they discuss and hence become dramatically concerned with solutions. It was a state in an ongoing process of struggles and collective action. Rooted in direct experience at local level, this was an attempt to relate beyond national and regional boundaries (Cooperation of People, 1984, 5).



**Figure 4.1:** International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters (Rome)  
Source: Willmann (1984)

The aim of the conference was to share concrete life experiences; gain insights into the problems faced by fishers' organizations and the solutions they proposed; reach a better understanding of political and economic mechanisms operating at the global level; develop alternatives that ensure the reappropriation of the sea and the future survival of fishworkers; and to devise ways to build up national, regional and international solidarity and coordinate activities. The conference proceedings included country reports by participants; plenary sessions on key issues and collective discussions; inter-regional group meetings; audio-visual displays on participant concerns; an exhibition of newsletters, photographs, pedagogical materials and models of fishing crafts expressing peoples experiences and struggles; a field

visit to an Italian fishing cooperative; and a demonstration of song, dance and storytelling in the centre of Rome (Cooperation of People, 1984) (see Figure 4.2). While much of the funding for the conference came from fundraising by the participating organizations, some participants, who also joined the *FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development* a few days prior (27 June to 6 July), were able to access travel funds from FAO. The FAO conference, which focused on developing an international strategy for fisheries management and development, included 147 national delegates, 62 fisheries ministers, representatives from 14 United Nations bodies and 3 African Liberation Movements, and observers from 24 intergovernmental organizations and 29 international NGOs (FAO, 1984). Rolf Willmann, a German economist who joined FAO's Indian office in 1979, and then the Rome-based Fisheries Department in 1982 to prepare for the 1984 events, played an active role in both conferences. During his thirty-year career at FAO, he proved to be a crucial ally for fishers' organizations and movements in gaining access to formal FAO spaces (FAO, 2013; Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). He is also the source of several of the photos in this chapter. One interviewee highlighted:

Rolf would host us [during meetings] in Rome. We were all in negotiations together during the day, and then in the evening we'd meet him to continue discussions over dinner. He was genuinely committed to supporting the fishers and fishworker movement. There was this feeling that we're all in this together. Especially in the early days of developing submissions that later fed into the SSF Guidelines<sup>25</sup>, it was always 'well let's check with Rolf to see what he thinks' and to see if the wording we were using would float with FAO (Interview with an ally from a civil society organization, November, 2019).

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<sup>25</sup> This SSF Guidelines process is discussed in section 4.3.1 of this chapter.



**Figure 4.2:** Demonstration in the centre of Rome during the 1984 Conference  
Source: Willmann (1984)

The participants in the 1984 Conference established two overarching conclusions: first, despite geographical, political, social and economic differences at the national level, common factors cause the same problems in fisheries globally. They recognized that national boundaries and polarization between Third World and First World interests must be overcome, and that ‘unless the problems are analysed in the framework of a world capitalist system which integrates the economic sectors of all countries, no effective solution can be found to improve the predicament of fishworkers’ (Cooperation of People, 1984, 8). Second, although numerous positive lessons can be drawn from country-level experiences, workers’ organizations and collective actions must acknowledge the concrete socio-political context that they operate within. The crucial outcome of the conference was to begin building up a solidarity network of national level fishers’ organizations, by directing efforts toward creating a solid mass-based organization. This included facilitating communication between sub-regional groups of fishers, establishing a Coordination Committee of regional network representatives, and taking steps to ensure that small-scale fishers’ organizations got representative status in the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Cooperation of People, 1984).

### ***4.2.2 An International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (1986)***

Two years later, the sparks that were ignited at the 1984 Conference also led to the establishment of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), by many of the supporters who participated in and helped organize the conference. This was a second crucial step toward establishing a transnational movement. ICSF, a long-standing support organization of the transnational fishers' movements, was officially established at the *International Workshop on Issues in Fisheries Development: Towards an International Collective in Support of Fishworkers*, held in Trivandrum, India from 20-25 November 1986 (see Figure 4.3). This workshop, which was organized and hosted by the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) and the Centre for Development Studies, brought together 40 participants from 18 countries, including activists, social scientists, marine biologists, economists and engineers who work with fishers and traditional fisheries. The aim of the workshop was to review the outcomes of, and organize concrete follow-up to, the 1984 Conference. The participants concluded that an official Collective would be established, based on informal contact between its members, and in which trust, understanding and good working relationships were key. The Collective would not claim to represent fishers, but would be a group of individuals committed to supporting them, focused on tackling issues at the international level and maintaining critical working relationships with technical assistance agencies (such as the FAO) on a consultative basis. This marked the beginning of ICSF, which more than three decades later still plays a crucial role in providing research, technical and project support to the transnational fishers' movements in numerous processes and political spaces (ICSF, 1986; WFF, 2000).



**Figure 4.3:** International Workshop on Issues in Fisheries Development (Trivandrum)  
Source: ICSF (1986)

ICSF is an international NGO, which draws its mandates from the 1984 Conference, supporting, collaborating with and empowering fishing communities and organizations, and working toward establishing ‘equitable, gender-just, self-reliant and sustainable fisheries, particularly in the small-scale artisanal sector’ (ICSF, 2021). As a support organization, ICSF focuses on influencing national, regional and international decision-making processes in fisheries, highlighting the importance of small-scale fisheries and fishing communities. Its structure includes an elected Board, which steers the agenda and programmes, a General Assembly of members, which contributes to and takes decisions on campaigns and activities, and a Secretariat, which handles programme coordination, organizational functions and administration.

ICSF and its members are propelled by a vision in which fishers and fishing communities live a dignified life, in which their rights and livelihoods are protected, and they are organized in a way that supports the democratic, equitable, sustainable and responsible use of natural resources. Its main aims are to: monitor issues related to the lives, livelihoods and living conditions of fishworkers around the world; disseminate information on these issues, particularly to fishers; prepare policy guidelines focusing on just, participatory and sustainable fisheries development and management; and help create space and momentum to develop alternatives in the small-scale fisheries sector (ICSF, 2021). ICSF has played a crucial role in fostering collaboration between transnational fishers’ movements and the FAO Fisheries

Department; building partnerships between the movements and research and technical institutions through involvement in projects; and contributing to the development and endorsement of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines.<sup>26</sup> A few interviewees noted that without the support of ICSF, the fishers' movements may not have had the capacity to analyse and engage with complex fisheries politics and processes, or gained access to important FAO spaces, such as the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019).<sup>27</sup>

### ***4.2.3 The Quebec City Meeting and Anti-WTO Protests (1995)***

A little over a decade after the 1984 Conference and the establishment of ICSF, a third crucial step in the establishment of a transnational fishers movement would take place. During a meeting of fishers' organizations from Africa, Asia, North America and Latin America in Quebec City, Canada in October 1995, a decision was made to organize a *World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers*. This decision emerged out of the recognition that fishing was largely absent from the agenda of the FAO Symposium on World Food Security, which fishers' organizations were attending in Quebec at the time. The founding of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in January of that year, and the increasing neoliberal globalization of fish trade, were also pinpointed as central threats to small-scale fisheries. The fisher representatives that were present at the Symposium agreed that the discussions that were taking place at the international level, about issues such as exploitation of fishworkers, threats to sustainability, and the management of fisheries resources, were meaningless without fisher participation. They recognized that this participation could only be made possible through political organization at the international level and representation in a global forum of fisher peoples, in order to propose alternatives that would protect small-scale fishers' livelihoods and ways of life (WFF, 1997; 2000).

The unfolding process of neoliberal globalization, which had begun in the 1970s and continued to escalate, leading to the founding of the WTO in 1995, were crucial catalysts in

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<sup>26</sup> ICSF's role in the SSF Guidelines process is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was established in 1965 as a body of the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO). It is the only intergovernmental forum where issues and challenges related to fisheries and aquaculture are discussed at the global level, and which provides recommendations and policy advice to governments, regional fisheries bodies, civil society organizations and private sector actors.



the emergence of transnational movements of small-scale food producers, like the WFF and LVC (Smith, 2013). As Gaventa and Tandon note:

With globalization have come changing forms of power and new realms of authority, and with these, new spaces for public action. From local to global, fields of power and landscapes of authority are being reconfigured, affecting the lives and futures of citizens across the planet, while simultaneously reshaping where and how citizens engage to make their voices heard. (2010, 3).

The WTO and the neoliberal policies it promoted, further intensified the international trade of food to the benefit of large-scale industrial fishing and agricultural companies with the capacity, and economic interest in, expanding their markets. This system poses a direct threat to small-scale fishers and farmers, who do not have the same capacities, nor do they – in many cases – have an interest in selling their products internationally. In response to the corporate takeover of the global food system, many small-scale producers, who were challenging the predominant neoliberal model of globalization, decided to link their struggles and form transnational movements like LVC (in 1993) and WFF (in 1997) (Edelman and Borras, 2016; Levkoe, 2014; Smith, 2013). Certainly, those who established these movements were connected in various ways through global justice work since well before the 1990s, steadily building up networks in an era without internet and cell phones, using fax machines and landlines to connect internationally. This seems like a nearly impossible feat, especially reflecting on this from a time when WhatsApp conversations, emails and Zoom calls are part of our daily routines, and communication within social movements is still riddled with challenges. Yet, the developments of the 1990s, and particularly protests that erupted over the founding of the WTO and subsequent ministerial negotiations, contributed to a significant scaling up of transnational activism (Smith, 2013). The activists who were present at the Quebec City fishers' meeting in 1995, and went on to form the WFF two years later, were also deeply involved in the anti-WTO protests, even organizing a dramatic boat protest in Lake Geneva in the summer of 1995 (see Figure 4.4).



**Figure 4.4:** Fishers protest against the establishment of the WTO (Geneva)  
Source: Johnston (1995)

#### ***4.2.4 The Birth of a World Fishers' Forum (1997)***

The World Forum, also known as the 1<sup>st</sup> WFF General Assembly, was organized from 17-21 November 1997 in New Delhi, and hosted by the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) of India. The 21<sup>st</sup> of November was also the celebration of the first World Fisheries Day, an event focusing on the crucial contributions of fishers and fishing communities, and which continues to be celebrated annually. The aim was to bring together fish harvesters and fishworkers from around the world to discuss 'how to preserve the world's fish resources through an appropriate conservation and management regime, which includes the regulated common property rights of coastal communities to the coastal sea and its resources' (WFF, 1997, 5). With 150 fisher delegates from 32 countries, and 126 observers and advisors participating in the Forum, this would be the first time that fishers' organizations from the Global North and South would come together *en masse* to develop a strategy for tackling the global fisheries crisis (Johnston, 1997) (see Figure 4.5). There were four main objectives for the first meeting of the World Forum (WFF, 1997, 6):

- 1) To continue the discussion on sustainable fishing among fish harvester and fishworker organizations that began in Quebec City;
- 2) To work towards the formulation of a resource management regime that incorporates the common property rights of coastal communities to the coastal sea and its resources;

- 3) To work to halt the world wide depletion of fish stocks by industrial fleets; and
- 4) To develop a worldwide solidarity organization of fish harvesters and fishworkers as a natural corollary to the globalization of exploitation, in order to propose alternatives that would preserve and nurture the fish resources and the fishing communities that depend on them for their livelihood.



**Figure 4.5:** 1<sup>st</sup> World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers General Assembly (New Delhi)  
Source: Johnston (1997)

Andy Johnston, a South African fisher from the Artisanal Fishers Association, and founding member of the WFF, noted that:

Discussions at the conference centred around the need, structure and membership of the proposed WFF. The wide diversity in the contexts of the different fishworker organizations led to differing perceptions on many of these questions, but considerable progress was made in identifying the issues and at working out the options. The delegates eventually reached an understanding on the formation of a new world body to represent their interests at the international level, after much debate and discussion. Given the great differences between countries, it was plain that it required an organization of great flexibility to accommodate the fishers and their organizations from all over the world (Johnston, 1997).

By the end of the meeting, the WFF was officially inaugurated, a Charter was drafted, included an organizational structure, and an interim Steering Committee and head coordinator were elected to guide the process. The elected coordinator was Thomas Kocherry, an Indian activist

and priest, who was a prominent leader in fishing communities in India, and was also chairman of NFF at the time (WFF, 1997; Sall et al., 2002). The Steering Committee, which would later become a larger Coordination Committee (CC), would be responsible for carrying out all regular coordinating duties or tasks of an international organization; facilitating the formation of regional councils; drafting a constitution, including guidelines for certification of voting and non-voting membership; and holding a constituent assembly (including all WFF members) within three years of the 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly. The future structure of the WFF was also proposed, which included a General Assembly involving all member organizations, and a CC formed through regional representation. The CC would be larger than the interim Steering Committee, and would include one male and one female representative from each of the five participating regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America) in order to ensure gender balance. Members from each region could also create councils for coordination and consultation at the regional level, but their membership would be directly in the WFF, and not in the regional council (WFF, 1997; WFF, 2000).

The Steering Committee proposed a Charter including 14 objectives for the World Forum's work (WFF, 1997, 61-62):

- 1) Protect and enhance the coastal communities that depend on the fishery for their livelihood.
- 2) Create and understanding of the resources as a collective heritage and ensure, through sustainable fishing, conservation and regeneration of the resources and the marine ecosystem, that it is passed on to future generations.
- 3) Protect fishing communities and fish resources from both land based and sea based threats (for example, displacement by tourism, pollution, aquaculture, overfishing and destructive fishing practices.
- 4) Maintain and promote a regime that will ensure the traditional and customary rights of coastal communities to the fishery.
- 5) Promote the primary role of fish harvesters and fishworkers' organizations in managing fisheries and oceans, nationally and internationally.
- 6) Ensure food security both locally and worldwide through sustaining stocks for the future.
- 7) Represent fish harvesters and fishworkers in all appropriate international and regional for a and advocate for their recognition in such organizations (for example, ILO, FAO, UN).
- 8) Serve as a watchdog to ensure compliance by states with international agreements and to prevent the export of the fishery crisis and of technologies that lead to this crisis.
- 9) Provide mutual support for national and international struggles.
- 10) Encourage fish harvesters and fishworkers to organize where such organizations do not exist.

- 11) Recognize, preserve and enhance the role of women in the fishing economy and in the sustenance of the community.
- 12) Secure and develop the economic viability and quality of life of fish harvesters, fishworkers and their communities.
- 13) Preserve and enhance the unique culture of fishing communities.
- 14) Affirm a culture of the sea as mother and source of life.

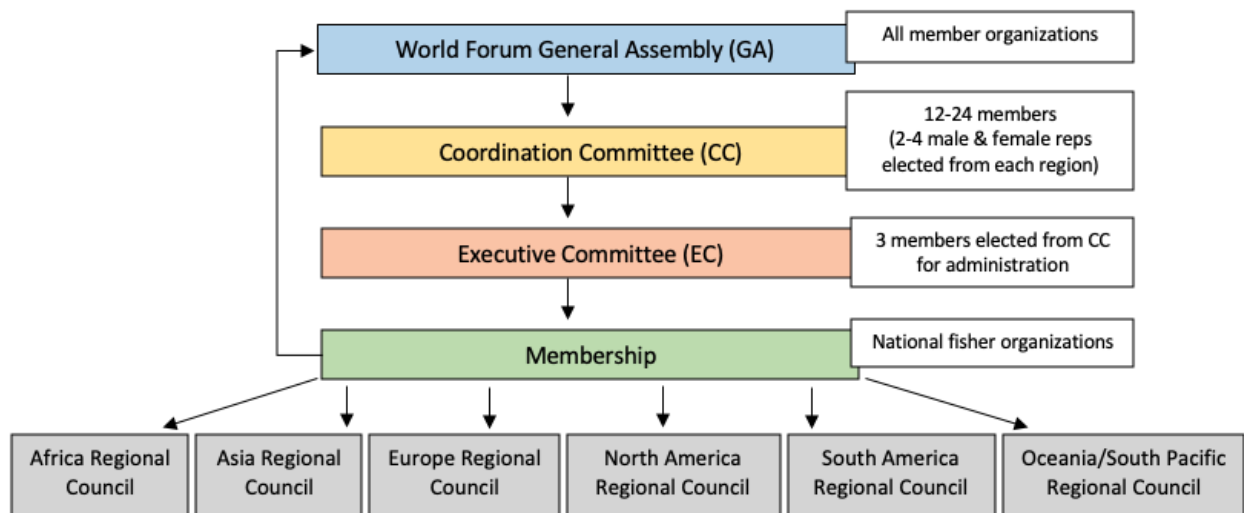
The initial intention of the WFF was to be registered as an international organization, however during the 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly some participants felt that organizational status would make membership too strict. The *Acts of WFF* (1997) state that WFF members include organizations such as trade unions, associations, federations of cooperatives that are democratically constituted, and aboriginal nations dependent upon the fishery for their livelihood. There should preferably only be one member organization per country, and if there are more than one, organizations seeking membership should be able to prove that they are representative of the majority of the constituencies listed above (WFF, 1997). The terminology used in the membership rules became quite problematic, with terms like fishworker, owner/operator, artisanal, indigenous and traditional implying different meanings in the context of different national fisheries (Johnston, 1997). Interestingly, during the General Assembly, several members suggested that instead of an organization, it would be better for WFF to be considered a movement in order for membership criteria to be broader and more inclusive. This would allow the membership statement to simply state that members must be legitimate fishers' organizations that agree with the WFF objectives, and are approved by the regional review committees (WFF, 1997; WFF, 2000). This debate about the organizational-versus-movement status of WFF, membership criteria (who is in and who is out), and the politics surrounding these issues were important signals of internal friction bubbling up within the movement. This friction ended up being important precursors for the political divisions that would later emerge, and the organizational split that would transpire three years later at the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly in Loctudy, France.

In the three years following the 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in Delhi, the WFF worked toward building its network and strengthening coordination, communication and connections between the member organizations. The interim Steering Committee shifted into a CC, as planned in the WFF organizational structure (see Figure 4.6), and held their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meetings in Namur, Belgium from 5-8 October 1998, and in San Francisco, United States from 4-8 October 1999.

The aim of these meetings was for the CC to finalize the logistical and administrative requirements of establishing an international organization, including the organizational structure (see image below), as well as the Constitution and the various policies within. During discussions about the Constitution in San Francisco, the CC agreed that membership would be simplified to ‘independent owner-operators’, and the WFF objectives would be finalized as:

To protect fishing communities, fish resources and fish habitats, such as coastal zones, watersheds, and mangroves, from both land-based and sea-based threats. These include displacement by tourism, pollution (including the use of the sea as a dumping ground for toxic waste), destructive industrial aquaculture, overfishing and destructive fishing practices (WFF, 1999, 3).

The CC was designated as the only body that could admit new active members, as well as to suspend or expel members (through a two-thirds vote) for non-payment of fees, or actions deemed detrimental to the objectives of WFF. During the San Francisco Meeting, it was also decided that the next CC Meeting would be organized from 24-26 April 2000 in Loctudy, France, in preparation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> WFF General Assembly, which would also be held in Loctudy, in October of the same year (WFF, 1999; WFF, 2000).



**Figure 4.6:** WFF Organizational Structure  
Source: Author, based on WFF information (1997; 1999).

#### ***4.2.5 Internal Splits and New Beginnings in Loctudy (2000)***

Following two years of extensive and complicated preparations, 200 delegates from 34 countries came together from 2-6 October 2000 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> WFF General Assembly. The French

WFF members who were hosting the meeting in Loctudy – a small fishing village with only a few thousand inhabitants in southwestern France – worked hard to ensure that every detail had been attended to, including soliciting support from the French authorities and the European Union. The participating delegates included a broad spectrum of fisheries actors, such as national fishers' organizations and committees, large and small-scale fishers from the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, and women's groups. While the Assembly began relatively smoothly and constructively, three days in, tensions began to bubble over between the members (O'Riordan, 2000).

There are many different perspectives on the details of what transpired during the infamous Loctudy meeting. Both written accounts and the people I interviewed – some of whom participated in the GA, while others recounted second-hand stories about the event – reflected on slightly different aspects of what happened. Yet, the result was that half of the WFF members walked out of the meeting to form a second movement – the WFFP. A common theme in many accounts of the split was that there was a clash between members from Europe and North America (particularly Canada), and those from Africa and Asia (particularly India) about how the organization should operate and the criteria for membership. One big point of contention was what is considered 'small-scale fisheries' in the North and South, in terms of boat size and gear and methods used, with some southern members accusing northern members of being too commercialized to understand the struggles of a real fishworker. A fieldtrip to a French fishing community also sparked heated debate, when some of the Indian members commented on the large-scale of France's small-scale fisheries (Sall et al., 2002; Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). One of the Canadian WFF members from the Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU), Michael Belliveau, who passed away in 2002, not long after the Loctudy meeting, wrote:

The World Forum was the first attempt ever of small-scale fishermen and fishworkers to formally associate at the global level. After four days of debate and workshops directed to adopting a constitution, half the delegates walked out to form a second forum. The leader of the walkout [*Thomas Kocherry, see Figure 4.7*] is said to have stated that the split was inevitable and that he was satisfied to be free from the 'harvesters' to get on with his 'fishworker' concerns. An MFO type of organization is an easy mark for persons who build their fight around identity or race or numbers. Our members could be termed 'harvesters', although I always knew them as inshore fishermen... Most of the crew members on our inshore boats are not in the MFU... the Afro-Asian bloc that walked out at Loctudy appeared to be oblivious to the nature of our type of organization (Sall et al., 2002, 164).



**Figure 4.7:** Thomas Kocherry, WFF Coordinator, addresses the General Assembly (Loctudy)  
Source: Johnston (2000)

A South African member who participated in the GA and joined the newly-formed WFFP, noted:

We from the South, and they from the North, had a difference of opinion. There are two things I realize now: One, it was a power struggle, people didn't want to give up positions. And secondly, it was a different ideology completely. There were NGOs and there were fisherfolks. And those from the East had a bit of a problem with NGOs, so that came to the fore, and then there was a split (Interview with WFFP member, November, 2019).

In another account, Brian O'Riordan, a long-time ICSF member from the United Kingdom who was also present at the GA, wrote:

On Thursday afternoon, as the Indians and Canadians struggled to wrest control of the WFF, heated and emotional exchanges ensued. This culminated in a bizarre debate over the number of continents, following which voting took place. As the tide turned against the Indians, chaos ensued, and half of the assembly walked out [*see Figure 4.8*]. Unity was on the rocks (2000, 4).

In a response to O'Riordan's article, Savarimuthu Santiago, a former member of the WFF Secretariat and subsequently of the newly-formed WFFP Secretariat, wrote:



A few facts amply demonstrate that while the lobby led by the Canadian delegation struggled for power, the lobby led by the Indian delegation was forced to join the struggle, not to wield power, but for freedom, equality and survival (Santiago, 2001, 1).



**Figure 4.8:** Delegates walk out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> WFF General Assembly to form the WFFP (Loctudy)  
Source: Johnston (2000)

The common thread running through all of these accounts was that the split was caused by internal power struggles and differences of opinion over how the organization should be structured and led. This was largely the result of ideological, personal and political tensions that exist within all social organizations or movements, whether it be at the local, national or transnational level. The dynamics that exist within transnational movements are particularly complex, due to the diversity of the membership within these groups in terms of national, political, economic, social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, while transnational movements typically require a high level of cohesion, shared collective identity and regular horizontal communication between members (Fox, 2010), a strong feeling of connection is often very difficult to maintain. This becomes even more difficult when there is little direct contact between members, aside from a triennial general assembly and occasional meetings for coordination or international events, which do not involve all members. Many of the people I interviewed, highlighted how crucial it is for movement members to regularly meet each other in person in order to build up trust and rapport, and without that, relationships quickly become strained. In Table 4.1, I expand upon Fox's (2010) characteristics of transnational movements (introduced in Chapter 2), in order to

show some of the challenges faced by WFF in its first three years of existence which may have been catalysts in the split.

**Table 4.1: Challenges to Unity in WFF (1997-2000)**

Characteristics	Transnational Movements	WFF
Exchange of information and experiences	Shared	Occurred mainly through a triennial General Assembly, and occasional meetings for coordination and international events, which do not involve all members. Otherwise dependent on telephone and fax communication which many members did not have regular access to. Substantial exchanges became infrequent and difficult.
Organized social base	Counterparts have bases	Some member organizations were much stronger, more vocal and more mobilized than others, which can cause an imbalance in perspectives contributing to agenda-setting and political direction. Members also came from very different contexts and approaches to organization which can conflict with each other.
Mutual support	Shared	Members need to feel a sense of support from each other and that they have shared struggles that bind them together. Solidarity actions addressing national issues are also important, and without this members may not see the value of their participation in a transnational movement. In the pre-internet era, communication around international solidarity was much more difficult. Access to international news was also much more limited.
Material interests	Sometimes shared	While many members faced similar issues of exclusion and marginalization in the fisheries sector, on the surface there was a noticeable difference between the material conditions of fishers from the North and South. This was reflected in the debate around who should be considered a small-scale fisher and membership criteria.
Joint actions and campaigns	Shared, based on shared long-term strategy	Many members participated in joint actions prior to 1997, with a lot of energy put into the anti-WTO protests. However, in the early years of WFF there had not yet been a clear strategy or campaigns established, which meant that members may not have found enough common activities to collaborate on and build connections within the movement.
Ideologies	Usually shared	Members engage in diverse approaches to fishing, have different roles in their national fisheries contexts, and different economic positions, so ideologies also differed in how to challenge the dominant neoliberal model. Some members had a more radical agenda to directly challenge the capitalist system, while others were embedded in the system and focused on ways to improve their position in the system. This presented a crucial obstacle to agenda-setting within the movement.
Collective identities and political cultures	Shared political values, repertoires and identities	Members came from very different political, social, economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds which impacted the ability to develop a collective identity and values. Developing a shared identity is a complicated and long process which can take years of internal discussion.

Source: Author, expanded from Fox (2010)

Thus, in a 'movement of movements' such as the WFF, which is constituted of many national fishers' organizations, group dynamics are bound to be fraught with tensions. When analysing what transpired at the Loctudy meeting, you cannot help but wonder whether things could have been worked out over time if the decision was not taken to leave WFF and form a second movement. Perhaps members could have found more common ground and ideological synergy if there was more willingness to discuss fundamental internal issues and find a compromise. Personal tensions and leadership dynamics also play an important role here, particularly considering there were several very strong leaders in WFF, such as Kocherry, who as a trained priest, had powerful public speaking and mobilization skills. There are also emotional dynamics between leaders and supporters, involving ongoing exchanges between the two which often foster hierarchies of power and status, and determine expectations for how interactions will play out. In situations of conflict, some leaders may also try to minimize loyalties to anyone outside the group (or even others within the same group) in order to maximize loyalties to the group or to themselves (Jasper, 2011). The leaders on the two sides of the split in Loctudy were, as several interviewees highlighted, dominant men coming from strong WFF member organizations, who were used to working in a certain way and not having to share power. Similarly, Edelman and Borrás (2016) highlight how transnational agrarian movements have historically had largely or entirely male leadership. In the fishers movement, these leaders had decades of experience mobilizing fishers at the national level, were extremely skilled at building solidarity within a familiar social and political context, and were being confronted with the complications of building a movement with a diverse group from very different contexts. These factors certainly played a role in how the conflict unfolded, and why Kocherry reportedly claimed that a split was inevitable (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2019; Sall et al., 2002).

Interestingly, many of the women who participated in the Loctudy meeting, and who had played an active role in building up the fishers network since the 1980s, were the ones who tried to smooth out the tensions and reunite the two organizations when the African and Asian members walked out of the meeting (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2019). This raises the question of whether the split would have happened if there were different individuals in leadership positions, particularly some of the peacekeeping women. More broadly, it also highlights gender dynamics in social movements, and the roles that different individuals take on, particularly at times of conflict. These dynamics are not the focus here, but

have been explored in great detail by various scholars (see for example Kuumba, 2001; Einwohner et al., 2000; Hurwitz and Crossley, 2018). A further point of interest is that while the WFF and WFFP coordinators in the early years were always men, both movements now have women holding the General Secretary position. Whether this has had any impact on internal or external movement dynamics would be an interesting question to explore in future research.

Regardless which perspective is the most accurate in terms of who said or did what in Loctudy, the outcome is the same: the WFF split in half with formation of a second transnational movement, the WFFP. While the North and South American, Icelandic and French members chose to remain in the WFF, the newly-formed WFFP included members from Africa, Asia, New Zealand, Spain and a Canadian First Nations community (Bear River) (Sinha, 2012). Reflecting on this outcome, O’Riordan raises an important point about the similarity of the principles both movements maintained:

People are struggling to understand what happened and why. Did it mean that work on building global unity and solidarity amongst fishing communities had to start again from scratch? Had this set back more than 15 years of work (since Rome in 1984)? Who and what were to blame? Such questions will, and can, never be answered. They may even be counterproductive, hiding a basic reality. True, a division had occurred, but apart from the French and others who had invested so much time and effort, and apart from anger, hurt feelings and pride, what were the real casualties? While some had chosen to remain on the WFF boat, the new vessel that emerged was founded on the same basic principles that had launched the venture in the first place (2000, 4).

Both WFF and WFFP have maintained important commonalities in the overarching issues they focus on, such as fishers’ human rights, and encroachment on small-scale fishing territories. In both movements’ constitutions, the commitment to challenging the dominant model of industrial development, globalized markets, and concentration of ownership over fisheries resources and property in the hands of the powerful also remained (O’Riordan, 2000). These commonalities are arguably the main reason why both movements have continued to collaborate in various ways over the years, particularly since 2012 when WFF re-emerged after a period of relative inactivity, and many of the people who had been centrally involved in the split had either passed away, or were no longer actively involved with the movements. This collaboration will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In addition to their many commonalities, the two movements have also had different historical trajectories, evolving into somewhat different movements in terms of their political character, level of mobilization, and activities. As highlighted earlier, important tensions had emerged between those who believed WFF should be registered as an international organization – which would offer more political legitimacy and access to external funding – or as a social movement – which would allow more autonomy and flexibility. Interestingly, many of those who ended up joining WFFP had been the ones calling for the latter option, and this ideology is still very evident in the movement today. While WFF considers itself:

... an international organization that brings together small-scale fishers' organizations for the establishment and upholding of fundamental human rights, social justice and culture of artisanal /small-scale fish harvesters and fish workers, affirming the sea as source of all life and committing themselves to sustain fisheries and aquatic resources for the present and future generations to protect their livelihoods (WFF, 2020a).

WFFP states that it is:

... a mass-based social movement of small-scale fisher people from across the world, founded by a number of mass-based organisations from the Global South. WFFP was established in response to the increasing pressure being placed on small-scale fisheries, including habitat destruction, anthropogenic pollution, encroachment on small-scale fishing territories by the large scale fishing fleets, illegal fishing and overfishing. Years later, climate change was added to the list of threats that WFFP addresses in its work... WFFP supports its members to strengthen their organisational capacities, and it advocates for the rights of fisher people to access and manage fisheries resources, for human rights and for the protection of natural biodiversity. WFFP also represents the interests of its constituencies at regional and international levels (WFFP, 2020a).

In its public profile, WFFP also highlights the issues it seeks to resist, the ways in which it represents and supports the capacities of its members, and engagement in collaboration and international advocacy, stating that it has:

[B]uilt strong alliances and solidarity between fisher peoples across the world (both internally and with other organizations) and succeeded in placing the rights of fisher peoples on the agenda of UN Conferences of the Parties (Climate Change and Convention on Biological Diversity), Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and at the level of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). Through alliances with other organisations, WFFP was instrumental in advocating for and securing the implementation of the First Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries [in 2008] (WFFP, 2020a).

In terms of membership, public lists show that WFF currently has 44 member organizations, (WFF, 2020b), while WFFP has 75 member organizations and claims to represent 10 million fisher people around the world (WFFP, 2020a; 2020b) (see Table 4.2). Yet, as one WFFP interviewee noted, ‘in many countries, even today, we have dual membership’ (Interview with WFFP member, July, 2018). Interestingly, both WFFP (2020c) and WFF (2020c) list the same criteria for membership, which reflects on O’Riordan’s (2000) point that the Constitutions of both movements have remained largely similar since the split. The criteria include:

- 1) Fish harvesters (including subsistence, artisanal and traditional coastal and inland fishers; aboriginal or indigenous peoples who are customary fish harvesters; independent small-scale owner-operators; crew members in this sector);
- 2) Crew members of fishing units other than those mentioned above and who are presently members of organizations listed above;
- 3) Broadly based (mass-based) organizations of fishing communities and women engaged in work in support of the fishery;
- 4) Fish workers who are engaged in activities related to the processing, direct sale (excluding merchants) or transport of fish.

**Table 4.2: WFF and WFFP Members and Countries**

WFF	WFFP
<b>Total Members: 44</b> <b>Countries: 41</b>	<b>Total Members: 75</b> <b>Countries: 48</b>
<b>Africa (16):</b> Algeria, Burundi, Chad, Djibouti, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia	<b>Africa (16):</b> Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Martinique, Mauritania, Mauritius, Reunion, Seychelles, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, DR Congo
<b>Asia (2):</b> China, India	<b>Asia (10):</b> Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Palestine, Turkey
<b>Europe (6):</b> Greenland, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, France	<b>Europe (3):</b> Spain, France, Russia
<b>North America (3):</b> Canada, Mexico, United States	<b>North America (1):</b> Canada
<b>Latin America (14):</b> Belize, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Venezuela	<b>Oceania (1):</b> New Zealand
	<b>Latin America (16):</b> Guadeloupe, Honduras, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Brazil

Source: Author, using WFF (2020b) and WFFP (2020b) information

### 4.3 The Evolution of Two Transnational Movements

In the years following the split, WFF and WFFP both went through their own processes of growth, developing distinct advocacy strategies and approaches to collaboration and resistance. In an interview, one WFFP member highlighted that there have been four distinct periods of growth for the global movement, in which certain characteristics, similarities and challenges can be identified:

- 1) 2000 to 2004, when the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami occurred;
- 2) 2005 to 2008, when the *Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries* took place in Bangkok;
- 3) 2009 to 2014, Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines negotiations and endorsement;
- 4) 2014 to 2020, post-Guidelines endorsement

The interviewee further noted that in the early years, the focus was on the WFFP itself, so in planning events, everything was centred around when a Coordination Committee (CC) meeting was going to be held, and when a General Assembly would be organized. In each General Assembly, plans would then have to already begin for the next two CC meetings and next General Assembly, and if there happened to be a COFI session in between, then participation in that also had to be planned (Interview with WFFP member, 2019).

In March 2001, the newly formed WFFP CC held its first meeting in Mumbai, India. The main aim of the meeting was to develop a concrete plan of action for the next three years of WFFP's international work, and establish ways to carry it out. The opening paragraphs of the meeting report highlight that the first General Body meeting of WFFP, which took place in Loctudy after the split, 'had unanimously accepted a new constitution', in which they excluded 'corporations, transnational companies and allied affiliates owning fishing vessels and engaged in harvesting, processing and distribution of fish and those carrying out destructive fishing or industrial aquaculture' from joining the movement (WFFP, 2001, 3). The report also points out that while it was an important achievement for WFFP, as a young organization, to have already become visible at the international level, that it still had 'miles more to go in building up international fish workers solidarity and also to devise effective means of resistance to the rapid economic changes happening in the name of globalization and open markets' (WFFP, 2001, 5). The report further notes that another major decision that was taken by the General Body in Loctudy was to continue to observe World Fisheries Day on 21 November each year, as a day

‘to establish the right of fishing communities to own water bodies, fishing implements and to manage the distribution of their catch’ (WFFP, 2001, 4). The annual celebration of World Fisheries Day represents another commonality which both WFF and WFFP maintained, and which would continue to provide a unifying event for years to come.

For WFFP, the period between 2000 and 2004 was the first distinct phase in the movement’s history, in which its strength was largely situated in Asia, particularly among movement leaders in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka who had long-standing experience organizing fishers nationally.



**Figure 4.9:** WFFP CC Meeting in Sri Lanka (Nainamadama)  
Source: Johnston (2003)

### ***4.3.1 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami (2004)***

This first phase ended abruptly due to the disastrous aftermath of the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, which killed more than 225,000 people. The vast majority of those effected by this disaster were coastal and fishing communities in Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, some of which WFFP members were part of or worked with directly (Britannica, 2004). In Sri Lanka, where fisheries is a crucial contributor to rural livelihoods and income, 162,500 people were dependent upon the sector prior to the tsunami. The socioeconomic impacts in fishing communities were devastating, particularly in the southern part of the country where approximately 19,110 fishing boats, or 65 per cent of the



fleet, were either damaged or completely destroyed. Ten of the twelve main fishing harbours across the country were devastated, including millions of dollars of infrastructure and gear, such as fish markets, jetties, ice storage, nets, motors, and mechanical equipment. Fishers' inability to fish meant vendors had to import dried and canned products, which were significantly more expensive than fresh fish. Since fish is a staple of Sri Lankan diets, with an average annual per capita fish consumption of around 21 kilograms, this had a huge impact on people's everyday lives. In some areas, entire fishing communities were also displaced due to the destruction of thousands of homes and community buildings, with many forced to relocate to other parts of the country. (De Silva and Yamao, 2007).

The socioeconomic impacts in Malaysian fisheries were also significant, with thousands of fishing boats being washed ashore, causing significant damage to both boats and on-board equipment, including 2951 small outboard motor boats, and 675 larger inboard engine boats. The Fisheries Development Authority reported 41 damaged jetties, valuing more than USD 400,000, as well as more than USD 3 million in damage to marina and harbour infrastructure. Small-scale inshore fishers in Perlis in northern Malaysia reporting that their daily fish landings had decreased by 50 per cent due to the environmental impacts of the tsunami. Due to financial necessity, about 80 per cent of fishers working around Penang resumed work about a week after the tsunami, while the remaining 20 per cent were unable to do so due to damage to their boats. However, in other areas, such as Balik Pulau, only 17 per cent of small-scale fishers were able to return to sea. Approximately 7721 fishers across Malaysia were affected by the tsunami, with the Fisheries Development Authority estimating that local fishers suffered losses of up to USD 7.7 million (Ahmadun et al., 2020).

Reflecting on the tsunami, one WFFP member highlighted that the aftermath of this disaster changed the life and character of the movement, further noting:

The leadership that we had in WFFP from the late 1990s, stood through until 2004. It was the same kind of people to a large degree, very little new thinking, very little new people other than those who were there when it all started. So they did things pretty much the same way. But when the tsunami hit, it impacted quite hard on WFFP... The impact it had on WFFP activists outside of the tsunami areas was great, because the consciousness was there, the ideology was there, the solidarity was there, but the organization wasn't there. So, the first thing that people were inclined to do was say there are hundreds of fishing communities under severe stress, we've got to find a way to help (Interview, December, 2019).

The WFFP activists came up with three ways to help, including sending money to help with recovery and burial processes; contributing to rehabilitation in the fishing communities that had been destroyed; and rebuilding fishing vessels and fisheries. This triggered a sense of organization:

It was organization around support, organization around solidarity, nationally in India, Sri Lanka and Asia in general, but also globally, because WFFP had existed but not that efficiently or effectively as a global network, but certainly present. The first thing that people like Tom Kocherry and Harekrishna [Indian WFFP leaders at the time] would do was to send out messages to allies, friends and contacts across the world. And that brought all the WFFP people together, it gave a sense of purpose globally, of belonging to a solidarity movement, because this was something that we could do... The tsunami, as bad as it was, triggered a new energy in the WFFP movement. It was an important moment (Interview with WFFP member, December, 2019).

### ***4.3.2 The Bangkok Conference and Statement (2008)***

In the post-tsunami period between 2004 and 2008, solidarity and mobilization continued to grow in the fishers' movements, and the network expanded. The second distinct phase for WFFP began in October 2008 when the FAO and the Thai Government organized a *Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries* in Bangkok (Interview with WFFP member, 2019). This conference was held in response to a request emerging from the 27<sup>th</sup> COFI Session in 2007, for FAO to convene an international conference on small-scale fisheries. It focused on developing a strategy for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries by bringing together responsible fisheries and social development. More than 280 participants from 65 countries attended the conference, including fisheries managers, fishworkers, scientists, government officials, and representatives from professional associations, NGOs, civil society and private sector. The format centred around presentations, panel statements and working group discussion, covering a wide range of issues, including social and economic development, human rights, fisheries management, governance and policy processes, and access to post-harvest markets. Special emphasis was also placed on securing access and user rights to coastal and inland fisheries resources for small-scale fisheries, fishing communities, and indigenous peoples (FAO, 2008).

Interestingly, while some fisher community representatives and members of ICSF had been invited to the conference, one WFFP member highlighted that the fishers' movements had not been. When I asked them why, the response was:

It just wasn't in their mindset. They did not think that social movements or fishers' organizations ought to be there. They didn't know that such an organization existed, or even if it existed, they didn't know how to reach us. They could reach NGOs, they could reach SDF in Thailand, they could reach ICSF, which was known globally. But that's about all they knew... What I am critical of is, for them to have even thought about small-scale fishing without thinking about small-scale fishers' organizations tells me that they were even further removed from the reality of the fishery... Their first port of call is governments, next to governments should be technical experts, and that was it. So fishers and fishing communities didn't cross their minds. So that Bangkok moment was a changing moment (Interview, December, 2019).

In response to the lack of invite, WFFP, together with ICSF and several Thai CSOs, decided to organize their own civil society workshop, as well as a WFFP CC meeting, in Bangkok a few days before the conference. When WFFP's Thai member was unable to find an available venue to host the WFFP CC meeting, a local fisher offered the hull of his boat for the meeting. One WFFP member recalled this meeting with a laugh:

So we went over to his boat, and there were about 50 of us crammed into this sort of enclosed boat, but it was the only space that we could be together and speak and meet. I remember that moment so, so clearly. Not all of us could even fit in because it was just way too small. And we battled with interpretation because we had no interpreters with us there, just a few people who were able to do it on the side (Interview, December, 2019).



**Figure 4.10:** Participants at the WFFP CC Meeting in Thailand (Bangkok)  
Source: Johnston (2008)

However haphazard this meeting felt at the time, it would turn out to be one of the most important in WFFP's history. It was in that meeting that the *Bangkok Statement* was drafted, in which the global demands of small-scale fishing communities were set out. Several interviewees mentioned that this statement was extremely important for making WFFP's demands visible at the international level, particularly within the FAO (Pictou, 2015; Interviews with WFFP members and allies, 2019). The Statement, a collaboration between 106 representatives from small-scale fishing and indigenous communities and their supporters from 36 countries, notes that it builds upon prior preparatory processes and workshops organized by the WFFP, ICSF, and allied organizations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The full Statement, which can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this dissertation, presents 36 specific demands, calling upon the FAO and other UN agencies, regional fisheries bodies and national governments to secure the access rights, post-harvest rights, and human rights of small-scale fishers. The opening of the Statement sets the tone for the demands:

Recognizing the principle of food sovereignty outlined in the Nyelini Declaration. Declaring that the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and that the development of responsible and sustainable small-scale and indigenous fisheries is possible only if their political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights are addressed in an integrated manner. Recognizing that all rights and freedoms apply equally to all men and women in fishing communities and recognizing the continued contribution of women in maintaining the resilience of small-scale fishing communities. Declaring that the dependence of fishing communities on aquatic and coastal living natural resources is shaped by the need to meet life and livelihood in their struggle to eradicate poverty and to secure their well-being as well as to express their cultural and spiritual values. Recognizing the complementarity and interdependency of fisheries-related activities within fishing communities. Recognizing the interconnectedness between the health and well-being of coastal communities and of aquatic ecosystems (WFFP, 2008, 1).

After drafting the Statement, those participating in the civil society workshop decided that they needed to voice their demands inside the FAO's conference:

We took a decision, there in the hull of the boat, that we're actually going to go into the conference and we're going to make noise and we're going to get ourselves heard. So we did, we just barged into the conference, took over, didn't register, we just took over. And we shouted from the floor and we interjected, and we clearly made the conference ungovernable, unspeakable. It couldn't happen. And the organizers had to register the fact that there's a bunch of people that kept on asking questions and making comments that were real comments about

small-scale fishing, but that nobody throughout the conference proceedings had ever raised. And we were making it impossible for them to have their meeting. So they decided that okay, they'll give two or three of us a space to speak from the table in front, so that's where we went, and we tabled the *Bangkok Statement*, laying out what our demands and issues and concerns were (Interview with WFFP member, December, 2019).

The FAO conference organizers made space in the schedule to allow several WFFP and WFF members to speak in plenary sessions, particularly Naseegh Jaffer, from the South African organization Masifundise, and Sherry Pictou, from Bear River First Nations in Canada, who were both co-chairs of WFFP's CC at the time. Jaffer and Pictou, who both went on to play key roles representing the fishers' movements in FAO spaces in the following years, challenged the conference participants to actually implement human rights in fisheries, rather than just talking about it, and highlighted the importance of addressing human rights issues at both the national and international level. Interestingly, the FAO's official report refers to the civil society workshop as a pre-conference preparatory event, and includes 22 WFFP and WFF members in the list of conference participants. The entire Bangkok Statement is also included as an appendix to the report (FAO, 2008). Regarding the participation of fishers movement representatives in the conference, the report notes:

At the request of the CSOs which had organized the pre-conference workshop, a panel [including 4 WFFP members] presented the background and main contents of the CSO Statement. The Statement originates from a long process of consultations and earlier workshops on the issue of rights and responsibilities – in Cambodia, Chile and Thailand. It reflects the fishers' voices from all around the world. The Statement stresses that human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and that development of responsible and sustainable small-scale and indigenous fisheries is possible only if their political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights are addressed in an integrated manner. It calls for a guarantee of access rights of small-scale and indigenous fishing communities to territories, lands and water on which they have traditionally depended for their life and livelihoods. It opposes the privatization of fishery resources through use of ITQs, and calls for binding involvement of local and indigenous communities in the declaration and establishment of MPAs (FAO, 2008, 21).

Despite the rocky start, the events that took place in Bangkok gave the fishers' movements a new impetus, and were critical for increasing the international visibility of the fishers' movements for two reasons. First, the *Bangkok Statement* served as the foundation for the development of a set of international guidelines on small-scale fisheries (SSF Guidelines), which were envisioned by fishers' organizations themselves. The demands articulated in the

Statement presented a unifying vision and a mobilizing force, and provided a basis upon which the movement members could collaborate at the international level, and ensure their voices and perspectives were at the core of the guidelines. Second, the convergence of the fishers' movements and the FAO in the Bangkok conference was the beginning of a new chapter in the relationship between the two, in which they had a common goal to engage on, beginning a five-year collaboration toward the development and international endorsement of the guidelines. These two developments in internal capacity-building and alliance-building with the FAO were pivotal to the future longevity of the fishers' movements, and which continue to be crucial factors for maintaining movement participation in intergovernmental spaces contributing to the politics of global fisheries.

#### **4.4 Developing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines (2009-2014)**

The year following the Bangkok meetings, WFFP, WFF, ICSF and FAO entered into a period of extensive discussions around developing a set of international guidelines on small-scale fisheries, which would later become the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) (Pictou, 2017). The intention was to present the completed Guidelines for endorsement by the FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI), which as noted earlier is an intergovernmental forum made up UN Member States where fisheries issues are discussed at the global level and recommendations and policy advice are given to national governments. While some fishers movement members had participated marginally in COFI sessions since the early-2000s, such direct engagement with this space was a relatively new experience for the fishers' movements. The development of the Guidelines marked a turning point for the movements in both the COFI space and broader FAO spaces, due to their recognition as central actors in the Guidelines process with relevant knowledge and perspectives to contribute. The COFI space had historically been a space primarily for discussion between national government delegations, with minimal recognition of social movements (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019).

Sherry Pictou, who together with Naseegh Jaffer were the co-chairs of the WFFP CC at the time, and played key roles in the negotiation of the Guidelines, highlighted:

Over a period of several years, [WFFP, WFF and ICSF], with the assistance of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)<sup>28</sup> struggled to develop and have COFI approve a set of guidelines that would protect the rights of SSF [*small-scale fishers*]. These guidelines were strategically drafted using a human rights based approach (HRBA) and principles of food security as outlined in the International Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, adherence to UNDRIP and to other related international instruments – all in efforts to reprioritize broader community approaches to fishing over neoliberal corporate models or RBA [*rights-based approaches*] (2017, 3).<sup>29</sup>



**Figure 4.11:** Developing the SSF Guidelines (FAO, Rome), including (back row, left to right) Naseegh Jaffer and Sherry Pictou (WFFP), Margaret Nakato (WFF), Vivienne Solis Rivera and (middle row, centre) Chandrika Sharma (ICSF)  
Source: Johnston (2012)

It is important to highlight that processes for negotiating UN declarations and guidelines have historically been long and arduous – particularly for the social movements that have led civil society efforts toward approval or endorsement. While the UN system, with its efforts to establish global frameworks for the protection of human rights, is the leading institution in universal rights-making, such efforts are also plagued by the voluntary and non-binding nature of many of its instruments (Edelman and James, 2011). This means that while government

<sup>28</sup> As introduced in Chapter 1, the IPC for Food Sovereignty is an international network of CSOs, established in 1996, which both WFFP and WFF are members of. Their participation in this platform is discussed later in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA) and Rights-Based Approaches (RBA) to fisheries management, and fishers' movements' engagement with HRBA, are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

members of the COFI can endorse instruments like the SSF Guidelines, their implementation at national level is still voluntary and can essentially be carried out as governments see fit. Implementation may also be co-opted by private sector interests in order to achieve particular goals that benefit companies or generate profits. The process of negotiation is also typically a long-term struggle which often forces participants – particularly social movements – to compromise on many of the details and demands set out in the document. There is a delicate balance that must be reached between doing justice to civil society perspectives, and reflecting a language that is not too radical, and therefore acceptable to the many participating and diverse governments.

After several years of difficult international negotiations between 2009 and 2014, the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) were endorsed in June 2014 by UN Member States during the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the COFI. This endorsement marks a pivotal moment and a historical achievement for fishers' movements at both the international and national levels, since the SSF Guidelines are the first international instrument dedicated completely to the small-scale fisheries sector. There had long been a critical need for such an instrument, which provides guidance and principles for addressing the challenges faced by small-scale fisheries (WFFP, 2014; FAO, 2015). The endorsement also 'created a new "space" in the international fora, where the protection of rights of small-scale fisheries (SSF) people is promoted, and where indifference, unfairness and injustice within and against SSF are placed under the world's purview' (Nakamura et al., 2021, 1).

The SSF Guidelines bring together the 2008 *Bangkok Statement's* calls for securing the access rights, post-harvest rights and human rights of small-scale fishers, and recommendations emerging from the 29<sup>th</sup> (2011) and 30<sup>th</sup> (2012) Sessions of the COFI. According to the FAO, the Guidelines were developed through a participatory and consultative process, facilitated by regional FAO bodies, involving over 4,000 participants from governments, small-scale fishers and fish workers organizations, researchers, and development practitioners from over 120 countries. The participants contributed to the process via 6 regional discussions and more than 20 consultative meetings organized by civil society organizations (CSOs). The FAO Technical Consultation then used the outcome of these meetings to draft the text of the SSF Guidelines between May 2013 and February 2014 (FAO, 2014a; 2015). The Guidelines have two central themes with several sub-themes:

- 1) Responsible fisheries and sustainable development, including:



- a. Responsible governance of tenure in small-scale fisheries and sustainable resource management.
  - b. Social development, employment and decent work
  - c. Value chains, post-harvest and trade
  - d. Gender equality
  - e. Disaster risks and climate change
- 2) Ensuring an enabling environment and supporting implementation, including:
- a. Policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration.
  - b. Information, research and communication.
  - c. Capacity development.
  - d. Implementation support and monitoring.

#### ***4.4.1 Transnational Movements shaping UN Human Rights Instruments***

There are several other UN instruments of relevance to small-scale fishing communities and fishers' movements, such as the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), as highlighted above by Pictou (2017), which sets out the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, including to cultural expression, identity, language, health and education. It was approved by the UN General Assembly in 2007 after three decades of efforts and negotiations, which indigenous peoples' movements were at the forefront of (Edelman and James, 2011). A similar *UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas* (UNDROP) was adopted in 2018 after a seventeen-year struggle led by transnational movements such as La Via Campesina (LVC). It emphasizes the dignity of rural peoples, their crucial contributions to global food production and food systems, their role as stewards of land, water and other natural resources, and their heightened vulnerability to eviction from land and water spaces, dangerous working conditions and political repression. It also highlights the importance of other instruments established to protect human rights and sets a new precedent for both individual and collective rights land, natural resources, biodiversity and food sovereignty (Claeys and Edelman, 2019). In collaboration with LVC and others, representatives from WFFP and WFF participated in the development of UNDROP, focusing on how the declaration could contribute to securing small-scale fisheries livelihoods. Margaret Nakato, a Ugandan member of WFF from Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), who

participated actively in this process as well as the SSF Guidelines development, highlighted the key issues and importance of the Declaration for small-scale fishers:

There is an increasing interest in sea and coastal land, land close to lakes, and rivers, for non-fishery activities such as tourism development, oil and gas exploration, aquaculture, and agricultural activities. These developments have negative impacts on small-scale fisheries, as they are linked to restricted access to fishing grounds. All this is happening at the backdrop of privatization of fishing rights, access agreements, pollution, climate change and production for export, which have increased the vulnerability of people working in rural areas calling for their urgent protection (Claeys and Edelman, 2019, 52).

Perhaps the most similar and complementary instrument to the SSF Guidelines is the *Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests* (Tenure Guidelines), which was adopted by the UN's Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2012. The Tenure Guidelines, which are promoted by many civil society organizations in combination with the SSF Guidelines, provide practical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to accessing land and water. They were proposed by civil society groups as an alternative to neoliberalism and corporate-driven agriculture, much like the SSF Guidelines challenge privatization and corporate-capture of the fisheries sector. The Tenure Guidelines were initially developed as a tool to assist countries in the development of formal policy to address weak land governance and corruption (Brent et al., 2018; Franco et al., 2015; McKeon, 2013). Given the similarities between the Tenure and SSF Guidelines in terms of their human rights approach and focus on fisheries, this also sparks the question of whether the CFS' 2012 adoption of the Tenure Guidelines may have had some positive influence on the COFI adopting the SSF Guidelines in the same FAO plenary hall just two years later?

Civil society participation in the Tenure Guidelines process, which was facilitated by FIAN (Food First Information and Action Network)<sup>30</sup> as the coordinator of the IPC Working Group on Land, was based on principles of autonomy and self-organization, and ensuring resources were made available (by FAO and others) for effective regional consultations. The consultations were far-reaching, involving active participation and a huge amount of effort from CSOs, which meant their endorsement by the CFS was felt as an important victory for civil society (McKeon, 2013; Künnemann and Monsalve Suárez, 2013). Yet, subsequent

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<sup>30</sup> FIAN is an international human rights organization that focuses on promoting and protecting the right to food and nutrition through advocacy and research, and works closely with many agrarian and peasant movements (FIAN, 2021).

developments, such as the responsible agricultural investment (RAI) principles intended to mitigate land grabbing, were a disappointment to many CSOs. They felt they had been overly influenced and watered-down by agribusinesses and corporate actors participating in the CFS via the Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) – the counter-part to the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSM)<sup>31</sup> (McKeon, 2013; Edelman and Borrás, 2016). This is a good example of how, as mentioned above, the good intentions of such guidelines can often be weakened or negatively influenced by the UN's multistakeholder approach, involving a wide range of sometimes competing actors in guidelines development and implementation, and the challenges and limitations of such an approach (McKeon, 2017b).

#### ***4.4.2 The Challenges of the SSF Guidelines Process***

The road to the SSF Guidelines endorsement was also a complicated one. Even in its final phase, after tough and intense negotiations in the 2014 COFI session, the Guidelines were almost rejected at the end of the final day due to disagreement between governments over some specific formulations in the drafted text. Decisions in COFI are taken through a process of consensus, so government members must unanimously agree to endorse a particular position or a set of guidelines in order for the decision to be passed. A particular point of contention was reference to the rights of fishers in 'situations of occupation', which was included in support of WFFP members from Palestine. Governments allied with Israel took issue with this. The Canadian government delegation, for example, stated:

Canada wishes to indicate our concern regarding the singling out of small-scale fisheries stakeholders "in situations of occupation" and notes that in Canada's view, including this language in the Voluntary Guidelines serves only to unhelpfully politicize the process. A specialized body such as the FAO should instead rely on the strength of technical and professional arguments. Canada also wishes to note that this text was proposed late in the process on a topic that had not been previously discussed nor aimed to resolve an outstanding issue. While Canada joins the consensus, this represents a significant compromise on Canada's behalf and we wish to have this position noted (FAO, 2014a, 105).

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<sup>31</sup> As introduced in Chapter 1, the CSM is the mechanism through which civil society actors can participate in the formal CFS process, although they do not have the power to make decisions like the government delegations. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Many of the fishers movement representatives had already left Rome earlier that day, believing that the Guidelines would be accepted. Fortunately, a few had stayed behind and one WFFP representative was permitted by the COFI chair to make a final intervention in the plenary. WFFP chose Naseegh Jaffer to make this intervention, in which he addressed the governments directly, saying:

This is the chance that you have to support millions of small-scale fishers who've never had the chance of UN support ever before in the way that this presents itself. And if you lose this, if you don't take this opportunity, it's not likely to come back with the same strength. Given the momentum, and the build-up that we've had over the last few years, the workshops at continental level, the workshops at global level, the country level workshops, the social movement support, you've had all of that. This is the moment you must recognize (Interview with WFFP member, December, 2019).

After a few more government interventions from the plenary floor, and several tense minutes later, the Guidelines were finally accepted unanimously by the COFI members. The official COFI report highlights:

The Committee noted the critical role of the adopted SSF Guidelines in improving the social, economic and cultural status of small-scale fisheries, which are often particularly vulnerable to disasters and climate change. The Committee highlighted the need of the sector, which played a crucial role in contributing to the promotion of livelihoods, as well as food security and nutrition in many countries. It also reiterated the importance of the guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines, in particular the human rights-based approach (FAO, 2014a, 3).

WFFP, together with ICSF, were key forces driving the development of the Guidelines, and played central roles in the negotiations and advocacy work that took place in the years leading up to the endorsement. One interviewee from WFFP noted that this was extremely hard work and involved putting a lot of pressure on FAO to make sure the demands of the fishers' movements were not watered-down too much (Interview, 2019). The fishers' movements spent a lot of time strategizing and preparing themselves for the four COFI sessions that took place between 2009 and 2014, and lobbying governments for their support on the side-lines and during breaks from the COFI plenaries (WFFP, 2014). At the 2011 COFI, WFFP was finally able to organize a side event to promote the SSF Guidelines, in collaboration with ICSF, as these events could previously only be organized by the FAO, governments and NGOs. In 2012, after being largely inactive since 2004 due to a lack of coordination capacity, WFFP re-emerged and began collaborating with WFFP and ICSF on the Guidelines negotiations, which also

added extra movement power to the process (WFF, 2010; Interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019). One WFFP member noted:

WFF were a lot less visible than WFFP. I think they were in a state of flux. They were not active. I think it was only in 2012 that they were able to resurrect themselves, and it was largely because of recognition. When they resurrected themselves, they were able to approach the FAO and say, we are a global movement, this is who we are and this is who we represent. And WFFP, they are not the only ones, which is correct. I mean in many countries, even today, we have dual membership. But at the centre, at the coordination level, they were not able to hold themselves together. So whilst we were very visible, very active and out there, we were the ones who were making the noise. But the moment FAO came to us, because we didn't know what they [WFF] did and how they functioned, but the moment that we were told, we've been approached by these guys and the claim is that you're not the only one, we accepted them and there was never any issue (Interview, December, 2019).

Several interviewees further commented on how the process of collaboration between WFFP, WFF and ICSF around the SSF Guidelines was key to building strength and solidarity, both within and between the organizations. As one WFFP member highlighted:

We spent a lot of time on that. I think what we did together with the other groups was quite good. We know it's a guideline, it's not a law, but I'm proud of what we did, to actually have brought it from nothing to what it eventually became... I think bringing in the small-scale where it was previously only about big business, bringing in the small-scale was a victory for us. And I think WFF, WFFP and ICSF should be proud of that. We should be proud of what we did there (Interview, November, 2019).

In the context of ICSF's role, several interviewees also highlighted the indispensable role of Chandrika Sharma throughout the Guidelines process, who was a passionate and dedicated organizer working with fishing communities in India and globally, and was the Executive Secretary of ICSF at the time. She was a driving force, facilitator and mobilizer who had been advocating for the Guidelines since the beginning. Tragically, Sharma was aboard Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, which disappeared in March 2014 – just three months before the Guidelines she had fought so hard for were endorsed. At the time, she was traveling to Mongolia to represent ICSF at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific. Sharma's disappearance had an immeasurable impact on the transnational fishers movement and the fishing communities she worked with, and this impact continues to be felt within the network today. Importantly, the loss of Sharma had a noticeably negative effect on the unity between ICSF and the fishers' movements, since she had been a central link between

the three organizations. A few interviewees questioned whether the same level of unity could ever be achieved again, since Sharma had a unique combination of passion, devotion and the ability to bring people together that is crucial in building and maintaining organizational relationships (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). In recognition of Sharma's central and invaluable role, both the fishers' movements and the Norwegian government proposed that the Guidelines be adopted in Chandrika's name. The dedication of the SSF Guidelines reads: 'In honour of Chandrika Sharma, who worked tirelessly for the betterment of the lives of fish workers all over the world and who contributed invaluable to the formulation of the Guidelines' (FAO, 2015, iii).



**Figure 4.12:** Small-scale fisheries side event at COFI (Rome), including (left to right) Brian O’Riordan (ICSF), Herman Kumara (WFFP), Rolf Willmann (FAO), Chandrika Sharma (ICSF), Naseegh Jaffer (WFFP) and Margaret Nakato (WFF)  
Source: Johnston (2012)

#### **4.5 Post-Guidelines Endorsement and Movements Today (2014-2020)**

Although the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines was considered a crucial victory for the fishers' movements – as the Tenure Guidelines had been for the agrarian movements – following five years of intensive work and difficult negotiations, the next big challenge would be international implementation. As mentioned above, despite their approval of the SSF Guidelines in COFI, many governments do not prioritize the implementation of voluntary instruments, or end up implementing them in a way that is moulded to their own interests. Co-

option also becomes a risk once guidelines reach a certain amount of international prominence and various actors see involvement in their implementation as a potential vehicle for promoting their own interests, or receiving government funding or private sector investment. In fact, all of the UN instruments mentioned above have faced complicated implementation challenges. Reflecting on the complexities of implementation in the context of the UNDROP, Margaret Nakato (WFF) highlights:

Challenges for implementation will probably include how the instrument is interpreted by various governments, as well as failure to incorporate the Declaration's provisions into national laws. Additionally, the multiplicity of instruments that are adopted at the international level, such as the Tenure Guidelines and the SSF Guidelines, makes their implementation complex at the local level, as it is difficult to assess how these instruments should complement each other. It is still challenging for many to comprehend the content of the SSF Guidelines, so introducing yet another instrument requires double effort, particularly at the local level where resources for awareness and capacity building are limited (Claeys and Edelman, 2019, 54).

The continuation of the collaborative effort that began during the Guidelines development, and the participation of small-scale fishers' organizations in particular, are crucial in order for the Guidelines to be successfully implemented and retain their relevance (Singleton et al., 2017). Yet, maintaining the same level of collaboration is no easy feat, particularly within transnational fishers' movements, as the development of the Guidelines involved a clear common task and goal of endorsement, while implementation must take different forms depending on the regional and national context. This means it is more difficult to build a common international vision around which to mobilize transnationally, making the implementation process more of a national project which has to be taken up by movements at the national level. This diverts attention and already limited organizational funds, as highlighted by Nakato above, away from international advocacy and capacity-building, toward national fisheries policy and local empowerment to understand and engage with the Guidelines. In the post-2014 period, this would prove to be a key challenge for maintaining energy in the transnational fishers movement.

Propelled by the momentum that was built around developing the SSF Guidelines and its successful endorsement, energy and mobilization remained relatively high in the fishers' movements in the years immediately following the endorsement. Between 2014 and 2016 in particular, many events and meetings were organized, and WFFP and WFF continued working toward strengthening a collaborative relationship between them. However, the endorsement of

the SSF Guidelines was only the first step toward having a functioning international instrument that would prioritize and uphold the rights of small-scale fishing communities. In the first three years after their endorsement, while there were some efforts to exchange knowledge and success stories between communities, most of the implementation activities revolved around incorporating the Guidelines into regional and national legislation. While this is certainly important for FAO's intergovernmental mandate and the long-term enforceability of the Guidelines, it also fails to address the issue that small-scale fishing communities have historically been overlooked by national governments and laws (Singleton et al., 2017). As Singleton et al. further highlight:

[I]f the SSF-Guidelines are to have relevance to and material impact on the lives of small-scale fishers, it is vital that more attention is urgently paid to implementation from the ground up, and to linking national, international and regional efforts with such efforts in small-scale fishing communities. The question then arises: How can this be achieved with any expediency, when national Governments (especially in developing countries, where most small-scale fisheries are located) are unlikely to be able to divert time and resources, and may not have the necessary relationships of trust, to start working with small-scale fishing communities overnight? (2017, 22).

#### ***4.5.1 Ebbs and Flows in Transnational Mobilization***

After the excitement of the Guidelines endorsement started to wear off, and attention shifted toward national-level implementation, proactiveness and mobilization in the transnational fishers' movements began to wane. Some interviewees noted that they felt that after the Guidelines were endorsed, there was a kind of 'now what?' moment, in which movements felt they no longer had a common goal to work toward at the international level. Many movement members felt it was a good time to scale back and focus on SSF Guidelines implementation in their own countries, national-level work, and local fisheries issues (Interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019). This shift in the intensity of international mobilization is reflective of what social movement scholars describe as protest cycles or the ebb and flow of social movements over time (Tarrow, 2011; McAdam, 1995). As Tarrow explains, this can make it more difficult to maintain steady or constant mobilization within a movement:

The solutions to the problem of mobilizing people into campaigns and coalitions of collective action depend on shared understandings, social networks, and connective structures and the use



of culturally resonant forms of action. But above all... they are triggered by the ebb and flow of political struggle (2011, 16).

Ebbs and flows are a regular part of social movement dynamics which may be influenced by external global politics, internal member dynamics, organizational capacities, available time, and funding cycles, among other things (Tarrow, 2011). In the context of fishers' movements, which are relatively small in comparison to agrarian movements like LVC, the core group of active members that were involved in the development of the SSF Guidelines had expended a significant amount of their time, energy and organizational resources on the process and some understandably needed to regroup and refocus their attention to issues closer to home. A few members, however, used the internal strength and capacity of their organizations to maintain some momentum and keep tabs on fisheries governance processes and debates taking place at the international level after the Guidelines endorsement. One key initiative several WFF and WFFP members started working on with FAO in 2016 was the establishment of a Global Strategic Framework (SSF-GSF), a mechanism that would support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at all levels, and which movements members would guide as part of the Advisory Group (AG) (FAO, 2018c).<sup>32</sup> From WFF, two member organizations that participated in this initiative, and remained visibly active in international spaces, were the Tanzanian Environment Management and Economic Development Organisation (EMEDO), and the Ugandan Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT). These members were both part of the WFF's Executive Committee at the time (2012-2017), represented by Editrudith Lukanga (EMEDO) as the Co-President, and Margaret Nakato (KWDT) as the Executive Director. Both Lukanga and Nakato had also began collaborating with WFFP and ICSF to develop the Guidelines in 2012 when WFF joined the process (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members, 2017; 2018; 2019).<sup>33</sup>

From WFFP, a member that continued to play a fundamental role in international spaces and developing the SSF-GSF was Masifundise, a South African organization of which Naseegh Jaffer is the Director. As discussed earlier, Jaffer had been centrally involved in the development of the SSF Guidelines from their initial inception in the 2008 Bangkok meeting, and had become very skilled in understanding and engaging with international processes, particularly within the FAO. Masifundise also served as WFFP's General Secretary from 2014

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<sup>32</sup> The SSF-GSF is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>33</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in the WFFP General Assembly (2017), COFI (2018) and CFS (2019), as well as several smaller meetings involving WFF and WFFP members and allied organizations.

to 2017, and devoted a lot of time and energy to ensuring that there were representatives present in important international fisheries spaces, creating strong communication channels between the members, and developing a strategy for capacity-building within other member organizations. They also strengthened existing relationships with allied organizations, established new alliances, and organized two WFFP General Assemblies in 2014 and 2017, both of which included participation from WFF and a large number of allied groups (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members and allies, 2017; 2018; 2019).<sup>34</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> WFFP General Assembly was hosted by Masifundise in Cape Town, South Africa in September 2014, bringing together 100 delegates from over 30 countries, as well as many representatives from local South African fishers' organizations. In the General Assembly report, Jaffer highlighted the tremendous benefits that belonging to WFFP holds for local organizations: "It provides solidarity, we can take similar positions on issues, we can learn from each other's struggles, build a strong social movement and together learn to bring about change that will benefit fishing communities locally and internationally" (WFFP, 2014, p. 4).

Despite some ebbs in transnational mobilization that occurred within the fishers' movements, both in the pre- and post-Guidelines endorsement periods, there were still numerous important meetings organized. WFFP consistently held annual CC meetings and triennial General Assemblies, including in Kisumu, Kenya (2004), Negombo, Sri Lanka (2007), Karachi, Pakistan (2011), Cape Town, South Africa (2014), with the most recent one in New Delhi, India (2017), celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in the same city. Due to the complications stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 General Assembly, which was to take place in Brazil, had to be postponed until a later date (WFFP, 2020d). In contrast, WFF, had been largely inactive until 2012 when it joined the SSF Guidelines process, and noted in its 2010 Annual Report that it had been focusing on strengthening its secretariat, since the organization had 'been loosely networked for the past 6 years since its last General Assembly in 2004,' with only a few of its members actively representing fisher folk in small-scale fisheries arenas (WFF, 2010, 3). However, around 2012, WFF became more active, holding General Assemblies in Kampala, Uganda (2012) and Salinas, Ecuador (2017) and planned regular CC and Executive Committee meetings (WFF, 2020d).

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<sup>34</sup> Fieldnotes refer to the same events as in footnote 33.

The preceding sections have explored the history of the transnational fishers' movements since the 1980s, highlighting some of the key similarities and differences that have emerged between WFF and WFFP as they have evolved into the movements they are today. There have been important overlaps in their activities, particularly leading up to and shortly after the SSF Guidelines endorsement, as well as convergences with other allies and resource justice struggles at local, national and international levels, namely agrarian movements and FAO. Transnational fishers' movements have also been visible actors in the politics of global fisheries, a role which is partially illuminated by their historical evolution and the movement-building processes they have engaged in. Building from the preceding discussion, I argue that three pivotal developments help us to understand fishers' movements' political agendas and alliance-building strategies, which have had important implications for their contributions to global fisheries politics in the last two decades. These include: 1) fishers' movements' internalization of overlapping fisheries, food and climate crises; 2) transnational agrarian movements increasingly engaging with the fisheries aspects of converging food and climate crises; and 3) intergovernmental UN bodies broadening their attention to fisheries issues. These three developments are discussed below.

#### **4.6 Pivotal Developments for Political Agendas and Alliance-Building**

The emergence and evolution of WFF and WFFP has involved ebbs and flows in their level of mobilization, internal capacity and international visibility, influenced by structural and institutional transformations in global fisheries. Such transformations, closely linked with processes of uneven and combined development both in the fisheries sector and more broadly, which reward powerful actors while marginalizing the less powerful, have also contributed to the transnational expansion of fishers' movements. They have responded to the marginalization of small-scale fishers by developing new ways to amplify their voices, build their international networks, strengthen their alliances, and engage in strategic spaces and platforms. In the context of the rapidly globalizing world of the 1990s and early-2000s and the increasing prominence of UN bodies, such as the FAO and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), such organizations became increasingly involved in integrating a wide range of global actors, such as fishers' movements, in political processes (Tarrow, 2005; Smith and Guarnizo, 2006). In this context, transnational citizenship becomes a useful concept for those concerned with extending human rights and political and social equality beyond nation-state

borders (Fox, 2005). For fishers' movements and their human rights agenda, they recognized transnational citizenship as a strategic avenue for scaling up their struggles for fisheries justice and linking up with like-minded resource justice allies and sympathetic international organizations. As Fox argues, 'the rise of transnational civil society and an associated public sphere is extending claims to membership in cross-border civic and political communities grounded in rights-based worldviews, such as feminism, environmentalism, indigenous rights, and human rights' (2005, 173).

Gaventa and Tandon offer several important questions about the implications of this sort of transnational engagement and why we need to learn more about the experiences of specific groups:

If we believe in the ideals of democracy, in which citizens have the right to participate in decisions and deliberations affecting their lives, what are the implications when these extend beyond traditionally understood national and local boundaries? If we are interested in the possibilities of citizen action to claim and ensure rights, and to bring about social change, how do citizens navigate this new, more complicated terrain? What are the consequences for an emerging sense and experience of global citizenship, and for holding governments and powerful supranational institutions and authorities to account? While a great deal of attention has been paid in the literature to these changing patterns of global governance, we know remarkably little about how they play out, or their consequences and implications for ordinary citizens (2010, 3).

Important insights can be gained from the experiences of fishers' movements and their transnational experiences. Therefore, I now turn to three pivotal developments which have emerged involving the fishers' movements internalizing overlapping crises, converging and collaborating with allies in strategic platforms, and strengthening their engagement with intergovernmental bodies.

#### ***4.6.1 Fishers' Movements Internalizing Overlapping Global Crises***

The first pivotal development is that fishers' movements have increasingly internalized the overlap of the fisheries, food and climate crises, and are aligning their activities and demands accordingly, by putting food and climate issues forward as central pillars of their agendas. Food sovereignty for instance, which strives for food and climate justice, has become an important

mobilization tool, analytical guide, and alternative that fishers' movements have been increasingly engaging with since the 2008 *Bangkok Statement*. As highlighted in Chapter 1, food sovereignty involves peoples' right to both healthy and culturally appropriate food, which is produced using ecological and sustainable methods, as well as to define their own food production systems. In the context of food systems and policies, food sovereignty also prioritizes the needs and aspirations of the food producers, distributors and consumers over the demands of markets and corporations (Nyéléni, 2007). As a counter-narrative, food sovereignty challenges the corporate-controlled food system, and is a response to late-1970s neoliberal globalization that contributed to fragmenting rural labour, weakening workers' unions, privatizing industries, and intensifying international competition (Edelman and Borras, 2016; Smith, 2013; Scholte, 2011). The concept of food sovereignty was first introduced by LVC in 1996 at the World Food Summit in Rome – the year before the official establishment of WFF – and within a few years gained traction with a wide range of rural food producers (Claeys and Duncan, 2019). In the context of fisheries, Levkoe et al. argue:

Food sovereignty helps to explore the complexities embodied in a fish as food approach, including the interconnections between social, ecological and economic wellbeing as well as governance structures. Using this perspective draws attention to the way that fishers are power laden and subject to the neoliberal logics of the corporate, industrial food system. Food sovereignty demands that fisheries be conceived as part of complex social and ecological systems and that there must be a more central role for community-based, small scale fishers in decision-making surrounding management (Levkoe et al., 2017, 66).

Transnational fishers' movements, which are concerned about the broad impacts of neoliberalism and climate change on fishing communities, have mobilized around food sovereignty as what they argue is an effective long-term solution and away forward (WFFP, 2020a; Barbesgaard, 2018). For the past decade, fishers' movements have engaged with food sovereignty through their participation in the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), by establishing a food sovereignty working group in 2015, and publishing a report on *Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in Small-Scale Fisheries* in 2017. This report defines food sovereignty as “a political agenda of small-scale food producers in defence of our rivers, lakes, oceans and land. It is a response to the encroachment of our food system by multinational corporations who, in the context of fisheries, seek to privatize and consolidate fishing rights in the hands of a few” (KNTI and WFFP, 2017, 4). The report further highlights:

For more than a decade, WFFP has engaged in dialogues with other social movements and ally NGOs through the International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty and other spaces. Those conversations were vital to the learning and reflection of fishing communities around the themes of Food Sovereignty and Agroecology. Also, WFFP was able to influence the debate and include the voices and experiences of fisher people in exchanges and related policies. As a global social movement, WFFP is committed to sharing information and nourishing the debate around these two important topics in fishing communities. This report reflects part of this decade-long process of documenting and formulating new questions about Food Sovereignty and Agroecology that will inform WFFP's analysis and strategies (KNTI and WFFP, 2017, 17).

During the WFFP's 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in India in November 2017, where WFF members also participated, a workshop was organized to discuss the report and unpack how small-scale fishers relate to food sovereignty. Participants reflected on their own local contexts and experiences with food sovereignty, with one participant highlighting:

We have always understood food production is our right, and it is about not destroying our fish stocks and our natural environment. It is also about how to control and manage that production and make sure destructive practices stay out. It is about how we take joint and collaborative decisions about production. It is about our culture and belief systems. It is about how particular species or marine life interact with our daily lives. This is what we have always known, but we just never called it food sovereignty before – we always had the same principles but just used different language” (Fieldnotes, General Assembly, 2017).<sup>35</sup>

Yet, the food sovereignty discussion within fisheries is not without its challenges, particularly when scaling it down from the level of international debate to tangible activities at the national level. WFFP has noted that:

In the context of national organizations, members of WFFP, more time is needed to deepen and build the understanding of Agroecology and Food Sovereignty. We would like to encourage the organization of learning exchanges between and led by fishing communities, documentation of best practices and debates among WFFP members, and communication strategies to disseminate information about Food Sovereignty and Agroecology to fishing families. A good communication strategy is also important to support the organizing of local communities so they can advocate for their rights in the face of threats created by multinational corporations.

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<sup>35</sup> Fieldnotes refer to verbatim typed notes taken during participant observation in the WFFP General Assembly in New Delhi, India (2017).

To this end, we hope this report will guide our work in WFFP for years to come (KNTI and WFFP, 2017, 17).

The issue of international trade also complicates food sovereignty discussions in fisheries, considering many fishers around the world depend on selling their catches to the international market – an element which some fishers movement members do not feel is adequately addressed in food sovereignty debates. Several participants at the 2017 food sovereignty workshop highlighted that their livelihoods depend on catching species which are not eaten locally (for example, octopus), and they felt that food sovereignty is too focused on the localization of food (Fieldnotes, 2017).<sup>36</sup> This localization issue does not only emerge in the context of fisheries, but represents a contradiction in agrarian food systems as well. Robbins (2015) explores this dilemma, highlighting that local food systems alone are not enough to challenge the global industrial food system, and even local food systems that fit an ideal food sovereignty type, do not constitute food sovereignty in and of itself. Therefore, it is important that the food sovereignty discussion continues to evolve, both within fishers' movements and more broadly, with more attention to which aspects are useful in the context of fisheries and which are not, if the concept is to have long-term, wide-reaching mobilization power among fishers' movements.

Fishers' movements' internalization of overlapping fisheries, food and climate crises, and mobilization around food sovereignty, demonstrates their commitment to participating in, and shaping, the future of the fisheries sector and its socio-political context in a way that addresses their specific concerns. Through their trajectories of resistance, fishers' movements are becoming both increasingly intertwined with other resource justice movements, particularly agrarian movements, and implicated in debates around food and climate politics. This has facilitated a convergence of strategies for achieving both structural and tactical change, by building new societal models and alternative food systems (Claeys and Duncan, 2019). These alliances, particularly at the transnational level, are crucial for movements in navigating multiple levels of social organization (global, national, local), developing stronger and more efficient negotiation tools, and learning from each other's experiences (Rivera-Ferre et al., 2014).

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<sup>36</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in the WFFP General Assembly (2017).

### ***4.6.2 Convergence of Fishers' and Agrarian Movements and Platforms***

The second pivotal development, which provides insights into fishers' movements' political agendas and alliance-building strategies, is that transnational agrarian movements, such as LVC, and the international platforms they participate in, namely the IPC and the CSM<sup>37</sup>, are increasingly engaging with fisheries issues. This is reflected in the issues they raise and the demands they make, and the convergence of fishers and agrarian movements in various events and spaces. At the centre of this convergence is a focus on building food systems that are based on food sovereignty and agroecology models, centred on small-scale food producers' access to and control over land and natural resources (Tramel, 2018; Water Grabbing, 2015). The convergence of fishers and agrarian movements is therefore strongly linked to the global food sovereignty movement, which as Claeys and Duncan argue, has 'over the last three decades, created and in different ways enforced, systems of categorization to build unity and convergence between different participant movements, while negotiating and maintaining differences' (2019, 1). Convergence between movements illuminates a common thread linking agrarian and fisheries justice issues, and marks an important moment for collaboration between these movements. Together they call into question current modes of production, distribution and consumption in the global food system as central threats to the health of the global environment and climate (Tramel, 2018).

Concrete examples of convergences between agrarian and fishers' movements include the participation of WFFP members in LVC's 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference in July 2017, the participation of LVC members in the WFFP's 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in November 2017, and the increasing number of fisher-related stories, statements or reports posted on LVC's website – which rose steadily from 3 to 56 between 2000 and 2021 (WFFP, 2018; LVC, 2021; Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members and allies, 2017).<sup>38</sup> This coordinated effort to enhance the alliance between agrarian and fishers' movements is highlighted by the launch of the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles during the March 2015 World Social Forum in Tunisia. The joint declaration emerging from this convergence demonstrates that collaborations between social movements and organizations engaged in defending land and water rights contributed to the recognition of the vital link between land and water struggles, particularly when faced with the increasing and overlapping threat of land and water grabbing globally (see LVC, 2015a).

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<sup>37</sup> The IPC and CSM are explained below, and discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>38</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in the WFFP General Assembly (2017).



The convergence of agrarian and fishers' movements is also evident within the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), which is an international CSO network established in 1996 that LVC, WFFP and WFF are all member of. The IPC brings together organizations representing farmers, fishers, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, and NGOs, and provides a common space for mobilization that links local struggles and global debate. Since 2002, the IPC has also been the official platform charged with coordinating civil society participation in some of the FAO processes, such as the CFS and COFI (IPC, 2017). In March 2018, Masifundise, a member of WFFP and its 2014-2017 Secretariat, hosted the biennial IPC General Meeting in South Africa. LVC members who participated in the meeting noted that they were 'very impressed with the organization of the meeting and with the strong voices and presence of WFFP members', also highlighting that 'the exchanges that happened there have helped to strengthen the alliance between WFFP and LVC' (Interview with LVC members, July, 2018). Several social movement allies further pointed out that the role of fishers' movements in the IPC space has also contributed to increasing the visibility of fisheries issues in the IPC and FAO processes and spaces. Despite these important gains in alliance-building between fishers and agrarian movements in recent years, there is still work to be done in strengthening modes of communication and collaboration between them, and as one WFFP member noted, for fishers' movements to 'really learn from the experiences of farmers movements in scaling up our struggles more visibly at the global level' (Interview with WFFP member, July, 2018). Such alliances may contribute to important victories in the fisheries sector, and in the global food system more broadly, in which small-scale producers are increasingly able to demand recognition of their rights, secure access to resources, and participation in decision-making processes at the local, national and transnational levels.

Transnational movements offer spaces to address threats stemming from converging fisheries, food and climate crises, among diverse groups of people from different cultures and epistemologies, from every corner of the globe. They offer the possibility of uniting representatives from diverse social groups to 'debate, analyze, strategize, build consensus around collective readings of reality, and agree on collective actions and campaigns with national, regional, continental, or global scope' (Rosset and Martinez-Torres, 2014, 138). Transnational movements and the alliances they build have also contributed to:

... reframing the terms and parameters of a wide range of debates and practices in the field of international development, including environmental sustainability and climate change, land rights and redistributive agrarian reform, food sovereignty, neoliberal economics and global trade rules, corporate control of crop genetic material and other agricultural technology, the

human rights of peasants and gender equity. For policymakers, scholars, activists and development practitioners concerned with these issues, an understanding of [transnational movements] and their impact is essential for grasping interconnections between these thematic areas and between these and the “big picture” as well (Edelman and Borras, 2016, 1).

In the context of the global food sovereignty movement, and more specifically within the IPC, Claeys and Duncan argue that two tools have been particularly useful for movement actors:

They have used constituency categories (for example, pastoralists, fishers, Indigenous Peoples, agricultural workers, small-holder farmers, women and youth) to identify, protect, foster and guarantee autonomy of movements and organizations representing different groups of people with distinct identities and lives realities. They have also used quotas (for example, gender, age, constituency and/or geography) to protect diversity, prevent the consolidation of power, and ensure the prioritized participation of affected or marginalized groups within the Movement, notably over NGOs. The use of constituencies and quotas has supported two distinct but related objectives of the movement: alliances building and effective direct representation in global policy-making spaces (Claeys and Duncan, 2019, 1).

These tools have been particularly useful in intergovernmental spaces at the UN level, namely within the FAO, which in the last decade has increasingly created space for civil society participation. Intergovernmental processes are complex, involving a diverse range of actors and knowledge, and movement participation in these spaces certainly involves tensions. Yet, despite the divergences and conflicts that can emerge between movements, global convergence around particular processes and goals has become an important unifying and mobilizing strategy that is increasingly linking agrarian and fishers’ movements.

### ***4.6.3 Intergovernmental Bodies Addressing Fisheries Issues***

The third pivotal development that provides insights into fishers’ movements’ political agendas and alliance-building strategies, is that key intergovernmental bodies within the UN, such as FAO and the IPCC, have increased attention to fisheries in their analysis and activities. UN bodies have become important spaces for transnational movement engagement since they began opening up to civil society participation in the midst of 1990s globalization and the shift towards global governance. The UN system, which had been somewhat of a government fortress since its founding in 1945, began to recognize that there was a need to move away from secretive, closed-door intergovernmental processes and involve a more diverse range of

actors. In 1992, a Commission on Global Governance was established, and the 1990s became the decade of UN global summits, which provided an opportunity to rethink strict intergovernmental approaches and extend an unprecedented invitation to CSOs. While the closed-door negotiation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was a disappointment to CSOs, the global food and agriculture agenda centred in FAO offered a promising channel of engagement for food producers' organizations (McKeon, 2017a; Scholte, 2011).<sup>39</sup>

Another key factor in movements' participation in UN spaces was their increasing recognition of the transnational value of the human rights framework which is at the core of much of the UN's discourse. Smith (1998) highlights how when comparing the key issues that transnational movements engaged with between the 1970s and 1990s, such as human rights, environment, women's rights, peace, and development, human rights was a focal point for more than a quarter of movements (1998, 47). By the 2000s, CSOs working on food issues, and agrarian and fishers' movements increasingly engaged with this framework, particularly when highlighting the impacts of neoliberal processes on small-scale food producers and framing their demands for secure livelihoods and food security. This approach allowed them to gain space and legitimacy in the international system, and extend their participation beyond the scope of traditional state-based representation (Marchetti, 2017).

Situated within this context, several examples illustrate increasing engagement between intergovernmental bodies and fisheries issues. The increased participation of fishers' movements in certain intergovernmental spaces has arguably contributed to this increased engagement by raising the profile of small-scale fisheries and drawing attention to the demands of the movements. For example, members of both the WFFP and WFF have been participating in the CFS via the CSM since its establishment in 2010. WFFP and WFF each have one member participating in the Coordination Committee of the CSM, which is the largest international space of CSOs working to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition (FAO, 2020).<sup>40</sup> There has also been greater attention to the protection of fisheries resources and territories in UN agendas. The most prominent example of this is the inclusion of *Goal 14: Life Below Water* in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, and are a central pillar guiding the IPCC assessments (see IPCC, 2018). More importantly, Goal 14 also includes Target 14.B to 'provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets', and countries' progress will be indicated by

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<sup>39</sup> These FAO channels are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, particularly in relation to the CFS and the COFI.

<sup>40</sup> Fishers' movements' participation in the CSM is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

the application of legal, regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks that recognize and protect small-scale fishers access rights (UN, 2019). In terms of some of the human rights-based UN instruments discussed earlier in this chapter, the 2014 endorsement of the SSF Guidelines was a major achievement for fishers' movements because it demonstrated national governments' recognition of the importance of the small-scale sector. The subsequent 2018 adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), as a high-level international governance instrument that was written by and for small-scale producers, was a historical event and a landmark achievement for both agrarian and fishers' movements (FAO, 2018a; Claeys and Edelman, 2019).

Ratner et al. (2014) highlight three important antecedents for the human rights framing in the SSF Guidelines: First, the institutionalization of human rights approaches to development in the UN system, which gives particular attention the Right to Food. Second, the recognition that small-scale fishers, including indigenous groups, are typically socially, economically and politically marginalized and face numerous obstacles to participating in decision-making processes. And third, the rise of social movements that recognize and secure the traditional and communal tenure systems of small-scale producers and indigenous peoples, in opposition to initiatives aiming to expand state ownership and private property rights over land, water and other resources. Fishers' movements have recognized that a human rights-based approach provides a means of tackling the social, economic and political marginalization of small-scale fishers by 'addressing the root causes of these inequities, which lie in unequal power relations and the failure of states and other powerful non-state actors to respect and uphold the rights of all citizens' (Ratner et al., 2014, 121). WFFP et al. (2016) further define the three main criteria of a human rights-based approach to fisheries: First, it must be multi-dimensional and holistic, meaning all human rights are interrelated, interdependent and indivisible and must be respected and upheld equally. Second, it must have a pro-poor stance on decision-making and impact, meaning the most marginalized communities and individuals within communities must receive extra attention to ensure their rights are respected. Third, it must involve an accountability structure in which the state is the key duty bearer, meaning nation states play a central role in respecting and protecting human rights, particularly due to their membership in the UN and related international treaties and obligations.

While participation in intergovernmental spaces has not always been an easy or positive experience for fishers' movements, such spaces have been critical to both the development of their political agendas, as well as strengthening their alliances with particular UN bodies –

especially the FAO. As Smith (1998) argues, transnational movements' structures and activities help activists to familiarize themselves with the ways that intergovernmental institutions function and develop skills to be able to work effectively within them. Movement participation in their own regional and international meetings allows members to gain experience engaging with global political processes and strengthen their ability to make strategic connections between national and international issues and agendas. In relation to fishers' movements, their engagement in intergovernmental spaces certainly has become stronger over time, as they hone their political strategies and knowledge of global processes. The ways in which movements are engaging with intergovernmental bodies, participating in political spaces, and the challenges they are encountering are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

#### **4.7 Concluding Discussion**

The road to establishing a transnational movement and maintaining its unity and momentum over time is one replete with bumps, crossroads, ebbs and flows. This chapter has traced this journey in the context of processes of uneven and combined capitalist development and neoliberal globalization that sparked it, which changed forms of power, spaces of public action and reshaped how civil society engaged in global politics (Olin Wright, 2019; Gaventa and Tandon, 2010; Scholte, 2011; O'Connor, 1998). Stemming from the central question guiding this study, which asks why and how transnational fishers' movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries, this chapter addresses the first sub-question: What transnational fishers' movements exist, how have they evolved over time, and what are their political agendas and strategies? To answer this question, this chapter has discussed the first steps that were taken toward building an international fishers network and the famous 1984 Rome Conference, leading up to the birth of the world fishers forum in 1997, and the subsequent split that ended up dividing the movement in half just three years later.

Considering the diversity of members comprising transnational movements, the split, which occurred largely due to political and personal clashes and disagreement about the movement's structure and membership base, may even have been considered inevitable by some members. Tensions around movement boundaries and who or what has the privilege of being included in a movement – or rather who is in and who is out – presents a dilemma that has been consistently analysed in social movement literature for decades. Members within a

movement often have conflicting ideas about political strategy, how inclusive to be, and what criteria should determine membership. Understanding cohesion and shared identity within a movement, and the construction of membership bases, involves critical reflection on what this means in practice, particularly in relation to intersecting inequalities stemming from class, gender, generation and ethnicity (Bernstein, 2014). This becomes even more complicated by the range of direct and indirect social and political relationships that connect individual activists, local organizations and national movements (Diani, 2015). While this chapter has not focused on a systematic analysis of the numerous intersecting characteristics of the members of the fishers' movements, it has offered a nuanced discussion that touches upon many of them.

Leadership dynamics and the mobilizing strengths of particular individuals, which are present in all movements, also played an important role in determining the divisive split. Such dynamics become particularly apparent in situations of conflict when leaders often shift their energy to ensuring loyalties are maintained among their key supporters (Jesper, 2011). The key questions that emerge from this critical moment in fishers movement history is whether there may have been a different outcome had there been different actors in leadership roles? Similarly, would a split still have occurred if there were more members with neutral positions in the conflict, meaning without strong loyalties to particular individuals, or more members playing peacekeeping roles? And perhaps more importantly, did the split have any long-term impacts on the transnational strength of the two emerging movements? If WFF and WFFP members had remained united, could the movement have evolved into one with a broader membership base and a wider international reach – similar to its agrarian ally, LVC? These are of course retrospective questions often emerging from historical processes and events which can only be answered speculatively, but are interesting to reflect upon nonetheless.

This chapter has also explored how both WFFP and WFF evolved in the years that followed the 2000 split, which was punctuated by a great deal of mobilization and energy leading up to and during the development of the SSF Guidelines. There were also key individuals propelling this process from both the fishers' movements and support organizations, without which the Guidelines may never have reached the level of endorsement, or may have ended up taking a form that was much less reflective of the movement perspective. Centring the Guidelines on a human rights-based approach was an important strategic direction which further strengthened fishers' movements' relationship with UN bodies like the FAO, and enhanced their capacities to engage with and negotiate in intergovernmental spaces. Fishers' movements also developed a critical level of analysis of global issues of structural inequality, unequal power relations, and the failure of states to uphold the rights of all citizens.

This contributed to their recognition that a human rights-based approach provided a useful pathway for addressing the social, economic and political marginalization of small-scale fishers (Ratner et al., 2014). Important antecedents to the success of the Guidelines process included the progressive opening-up of UN spaces to civil society participation beginning in the 1990s (McKeon, 2017a); the UN's institutionalization of human rights-centred development approaches; the recognition that small-scale fishers were facing multiple social, economic and political obstacles to participating in decision-making processes; and the rise of social movement opposition to private property rights and promotion of communal tenure systems (Ratner et al., 2014). This series of influences reminds us that historical events are always relational and interactive, continuously building on and influencing each other (Schiavoni, 2017; Jackson, 2006).

The post-guidelines endorsement period beginning in 2014 has raised a lot of questions for fishers' movements about how to maintain the momentum they built around the Guidelines development, while ensuring they are implemented at the national level in a way that truly reflects the holistic human rights principles they are built upon. While the process of developing the Guidelines involved a clear common goal which fostered unity within and between WFFP, WFF, ICSEF, FAO and others, the implementation process takes many different forms in diverse national contexts. This makes it difficult to maintain the same level of transnational mobilization within the movements, firstly because it is harder to pinpoint a clear common pathway toward implementation that such a diverse membership can rally around, and secondly because many members are busy working with local fishers' organizations and governments in the national implementation process. These challenges are part of the natural ebbs and flows that emerge at different political moments and determine how active a movement is over time (Tarrow, 2011). Considering the high level of cohesion, shared collective identity, and regular communication between members that is required to maintain a strong sense of unity in transnational movements (Fox, 2010), the ebbing moments in some ways require the most amount of work in order to ensure gains from flows of mobilization are not lost. This means, for example, organizing more online and in-person meetings to foster the feeling of connection between members – which is certainly much more effective when members are able to meet face-to-face.

This chapter has also argued that three pivotal developments, emerging out of the structural and institutional history of the fishers' movements, offer important insights into their political agendas and alliance-building strategies, which also help us to understand their role in broader politics of global fisheries. These developments include an internal process

involving movement engagement with overlapping fisheries, food and climate crises; as well as two external processes involving allies, namely agrarian movements and intergovernmental UN bodies. Together, these three developments have been crucial in sharpening fishers' movements' political agendas, as well as building and expanding alliances with other movements and organizations, which has been key to scaling up and strengthening their analysis and advocacy work. Their agendas and alliances are explored and analysed further in the following chapters, particularly in relation to the processes, spaces, events, techniques used, and virtual interactions that are also important contributing factors in the evolution of a movement (Diani, 2015; Jackson, 2006). Considering the rarity of extensive archives on movements, especially at the transnational level, there is also a need for more information to be collected on their evolution over time, and how this evolution influences their engagement in collective action and the issues that they prioritize and highlight (Diani, 2015).

For fishers' movements, the need to collect and preserve historical and archival data is critical. This is not only important as a publicly available resource which researchers and other interested actors can access, but is also a critical tool for movement building among the members themselves. Many of the people who were involved in the early days of building and establishing the fishers' movements have either retired from movement life, or have passed away. This makes the transfer of knowledge between old and new members increasingly difficult, and increasingly urgent in order to prevent the loss of important organizational and institutional knowledge. The evolution of the fishers' movements, as with all social movements, has been full of lessons learned, political agendas and strategies developed, tensions and obstacles overcome, and victories won. All of these elements have been woven together to create the historical, social and political fabric of the movements, a fabric unique to the WFF and WFFP. In order for current or new members to truly understand what the movement is built upon and what it stands for, it is critical that these historical intricacies be shared more widely and openly between members. While it is certainly important for movements not to dwell too much on the past, and to continue to move forward, the movement-building process itself can also provide valuable fuel to keep the momentum going well into the future.



## 5

## International Political Spaces: Movements as Actors in Fisheries, Food and Climate Governance

### 5.1 Introduction

A key element of understanding why and how transnational fishers' movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries, is analysing the spaces in which they are participating. This chapter maps three international political spaces (and several events within), which have emerged as key spaces of interaction for fishers' movements, and have been highlighted in Chapter 4 in relation to important historical markers in the fishers' movements' evolution. This chapter addresses the second sub-question introduced in Chapter 1: Which international political spaces are movements prioritizing, what is their historical significance, and how are movements participating in them? The analysis in this chapter involves an exploration of the intergovernmental UN spaces the movements have been prioritizing for the last two decades; the development of these spaces over time; and the role they play in global fisheries, food and climate politics. It also analyses the significance of these spaces for the movement-building process; and collaborations which have emerged and been strengthened in these spaces with other social movements, support NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations. These three spaces all include participation by civil society organizations (CSOs) representing fishers, farmers, agricultural workers and indigenous peoples; NGOs; social scientists and non-academic researchers; governments' United Nations delegations; and private sector representatives. They include:

- 1) *Fisheries Governance Space*: Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the United Nations' FAO, an international intergovernmental forum that examines fisheries and aquaculture issues, negotiates global agreements and instruments, and makes recommendations to governments, regional fisheries bodies, NGOs, fish workers, and the international community.
- 2) *Food Governance Space*: Committee on World Food Security (CFS) of the United Nations, which reviews and follows up on world security policies, such as those addressing production and access to food.

- 3) *Climate Governance Space*: Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is the principal global decision-making body on national emission limits and climate change mitigation and adaptation goals.

The focus in this chapter, and throughout the dissertation, on global politics and governance arenas, rather than national politics and the role of the nation-state, is a necessary choice stemming from the particular globalized context from which transnational movements have emerged. As Bauböck (2003) highlights, this context challenges political theory ‘to go beyond a narrow state-centered approach by considering political communities and systems of rights that emerge at levels of governance above or below those of independent states or that cut across international borders’ (704). While some approaches to understanding movements focus on local situations and actions, the shift of power from nation-states to more globalized actors and international institutions, particularly since the 1990s, has required struggles for participation to also engage at the global level (Gaventa, 2006; Edelman, 1999). The shift of both governance and movement engagement toward global arenas also sparked widespread academic interest in trying to understand the consequences of this shift alongside the rapid expansion of neoliberal globalization. As Marchetti (2017) argues, three key things contributed to the growing interest in global governance processes: the increased flow of capital, goods, services and people that globalization had allowed; expectations that international organizations would become more prominent in the post-Cold War era; and the growing recognition that a coordinated approach would be needed to address global environmental and climate issues. In the past few decades, there has been an unprecedented expansion of global governance arenas, such as the UN, and agencies, such as the World Bank and WTO, which have also become increasingly implicated in social struggles in every corner of the globe. As Scholte argues:

[T]hese proliferating and growing global-scale regimes have not replaced nation-state and local authorities, which on the whole remain as vibrant as ever. However, global governance has become highly significant in contemporary history, even if the various institutional frameworks show no signs of coalescing to form a world government, in the sense of a sovereign state scaled up to planetary proportions (2011, 1).

A central element in global governance processes is the political spaces in which diverse actors engage. In the context of citizen action and participation, as highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2, Gaventa notes that political ‘spaces are seen as opportunities, moments and channels where

citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships that affect their lives and interests' (2006, 26). He differentiates spaces for participation as 1) *closed spaces*, involving decisions being made by powerful actors behind closed doors without any intention of 'broadening the boundaries for inclusion'; 2) *invited spaces*, involving people being invited to participate by more powerful actors, such as governments, intergovernmental agencies, or NGOs; and 3) *claimed/created spaces*, involving less powerful actors claiming spaces from or against powerful actors, or creating autonomous spaces of their own (Gaventa, 2006). I return to these three spatial categories later in this chapter as part of the analysis of fishers' movements' engagement in the COFI, CFS and COP. These three political spaces have not only been strategically targeted by fishers' movements, they have also been able to gain access to them – which is not always easy or possible. While there are many other international spaces that play an important role in fisheries politics which are not discussed in this chapter, such as Our Oceans Summits, World Ocean Summits, Sustainable Development Goals Summits, Blue Economy Conferences, fishers' movements have typically not participated directly in these. This is either because the movements have not had the capacity to engage, because they have chosen not to engage, or they are closed spaces that movements have been excluded from.

Particular individuals, including members of fishers' movements and supporters working closely with the movements, also play an important role in navigating and facilitating engagement in international spaces, such as the COFI and CFS. Tarrow (2005) refers to these actors as 'rooted cosmopolitans', including, for example, civil servants engaging in intergovernmental committees, and transnational advocates and activists engaging in a wide range of transnational politics. He argues that while cosmopolitanism is not new, it 'has been accelerated by growing connections across borders and the increased capacities of citizens to mobilize both within and outside their societies' (Tarrow, 2005, 36). In addition to these individual actors, Diani (2015) argues that our conception of movements must be expanded to recognize that moments, spaces and in-person and virtual interactions are all key components of what makes a movement. Virtual interactions have become an increasingly important part of the movement-building process in the context of COVID-19 era online meetings, webinars and events, particularly for members of transnational fishers' movements that are no longer able to rely on international travel to meet face-to-face with each other or allies in different parts of the world. In 2021, for example, fishers' movement members participated virtually in both the COFI and CFS official sessions, livestreamed from Rome. Constantly changing global

contexts challenge us to look at movements as dynamic entities that are constantly evolving, with boundaries that may shrink and expand in scope alongside ebbs and flows in political mobilization (Tarrow, 2011). Transnational spaces and events, such as UN conferences and social movement meetings, make important contributions to both changing boundaries and strengthening movement connections, with the increased frequency of these interactions in recent decades helping to explain the parallel rise of transnational movements (Smith, 2013). Mapping the political spaces and events that emerge as important moments of interaction for movements is therefore a crucial part of understanding their politics (Diani, 2015; Jackson, 2006).

Conducting research in large international spaces and events is a difficult process, particularly because they involve complex processes and multiple layers of interaction which can be difficult to keep track of or understand. However, research in these spaces can also help us to understand the relationship between discourse, policy and practice, as well as insights into how governance institutions and agendas evolve over time (Brosius and Campbell, 2010; Jackson, 2006). Brosius and Campbell further highlight the importance of ‘studying up’, arguing that while there has been a significant amount of ethnographic field work done on the politics of conservation projects in particular locations, observations from such research is rarely empirically connected to the ‘politics of decision-making that shape the ideological and practical orientation of institutions for global environment governance’ (2010, 247). A similar disconnect exists in much of the research on fisheries governance, which typically focuses on issues affecting fishers at the local level and how national policy can better address these. A significant gap in this body of work is an understanding of fisheries governance processes at the global level, and how movements have contributed their perspectives and demands to these processes (Sundar, 2012). This chapter contributes toward addressing this gap.

Some international political spaces also include convergence spaces for transnational movements to interact with other like-minded groups, discuss common issues and obstacles they are facing, develop collective strategies to address these, and build alliances. Two important convergence spaces for fishers’ movements, which are discussed in this chapter, are the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), through which they engage in the COFI; and the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSM), through which they engage in the CFS. In relation to the CSM, Claeys and Duncan highlight that the idea of convergence spaces allows us to ‘interpret the operational and spatial dynamics, strategies, practices and governance arrangements of place-based movements and groups involved in

extending their reach' (2019, 3). Such spaces typically involve movements that are place-based, but not necessarily place-bound; allow actors to develop collective visions and identify unifying values; and require relational solidarity politics that link movement actors (Claeys and Duncan, 2019). For fishers' movements, their participation in the IPC and CSM has arguably been a crucial factor in connecting their struggles with those of agrarian, environmental and climate justice movements, amplifying their voices on issues affecting small-scale fishers, and increased the legitimacy of their demands in the eyes of the intergovernmental organizations.

In this chapter, I first discuss the COFI and the fishers' movements' participation in this space during the past decade via their membership in the IPC. This discussion highlights the movements' strategies for understanding and negotiating this space, important moments that have emerged in COFI biennial sessions, as well as some of the challenges the movements face in ensuring the continued importance of their contributions to COFI. Second, I examine the CFS and fishers' movements' engagement in this process via the CSM. This includes fishers' movements' contributions to the CSM, the importance of the CSM as a convergence space, and how the marginalization of fisheries vis-à-vis agriculture in these food governance spaces poses challenges for fishers' participation. Third, I discuss the COP of the UNFCCC, focusing on fishers' movements' participation in civil society spaces parallel to COPs. This discussion reflects on obstacles to civil society participation in official COPs, the importance of parallel spaces for convergences between fishers and agrarian movements, and their collective criticisms of UNFCCC climate solutions and agendas. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the broader implications of fishers' movements' participation in these three political spaces.

## **5.2 Fisheries Governance Space: Committee on Fisheries (COFI)**

In the sphere of fisheries governance, a key space for engagement by fishers' movements is the Committee on Fisheries (COFI). The COFI was established in 1965 as a subsidiary body of the FAO, and is currently the only international intergovernmental forum that examines fisheries and aquaculture issues at the global level, negotiates agreements and instruments, and makes recommendations to governments, regional fisheries bodies, NGOs, fishworkers, and the international community. The COFI seeks to supplement, rather than replace, the work of other organizations in the fisheries and aquaculture field. COFI membership is open to all UN

Member States; and other international and regional organizations involved in the FAO can participate as observers without voting rights (FAO, 2021c). The COFI biennial meetings, which take place at the FAO headquarters in Rome, as well as the numerous preparatory and sub-committee meetings that take place in between, are exemplary of fisheries governance events in which food security, fish production, and climate change mitigation and adaptation are discussed, and transnational fishers' movements (WFFP and WFF) are present. Alongside the formal COFI sessions, there are typically a variety of side events that take place during the plenary breaks, organized by government delegates in collaboration with FAO, other UN organizations, and sometimes fishers' movements (FAO, 2021c).

As of 2021, the COFI has held 34 official sessions since its first meeting in 1966. Between 1966 and 1975, these sessions were held annually, but were switched to biennial sessions in 1977. The COFI has also established two Sub-Committees, which any COFI member can join, to deal with particular issues of importance requiring additional technical attention, and which meet in the intersessional period between meetings of the full Committee. A Sub-Committee on fish trade was established in 1985 to provide a forum to discuss the technical and economic elements of international fish trade, as well as relevant elements of production and consumption. This Sub-Committee held seventeen official sessions between 1986 and 2019. Similarly, a Sub-Committee on Aquaculture was established in 2001 as a forum to discuss, consult upon, and advise the COFI on technical and policy issues related to the aquaculture sector. This Sub-Committee held ten sessions between 2002 and 2019. The COFI has two main functions: First, to review FAO's fisheries and aquaculture work programmes and their implementation, conduct periodic reviews of international fisheries and aquaculture issues, and appraise possible solutions to these issues involving nations, FAO, other intergovernmental bodies and civil society. Second, it can also review specific fisheries and aquaculture issues at the request of the Committee, FAO's Director-General, or the UN General Assembly (FAO, 2021c).



**Figure 5.1:** Plenary Session of the COFI 33<sup>rd</sup> Session at FAO (Rome)  
Source: Author (2018)

### ***5.2.1 FAO Fisheries Department and Internal Allies***

During the last two decades, fishers' movements have built up a long-term relationship with FAO and its Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. The last decade, particularly since the 2008 Bangkok meeting<sup>41</sup> and the subsequent SSF Guidelines development process, has been an especially important period for strengthening this relationship. The Department defines its vision as 'a world in which responsible and sustainable use of fisheries and aquaculture resources makes an appreciable contribution to human well-being, food security and poverty alleviation.' It further highlights that its mission is 'to strengthen global governance and the managerial and technical capacities of members and to lead consensus building towards improved conservation and utilization of aquatic resources' (FAO, 2020d). There have been a few key staff members within the FAO Department who have facilitated close collaboration with the fishers' movements. One in particular, was Rolf Willmann, who as highlighted in Chapter 4, was a Senior Fishery Planning Officer who first joined FAO in 1979 and retired in 2013 after 34 years working on small-scale fisheries issues. In a 2013 interview, he highlights

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<sup>41</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, FAO organized a *Global Conference on Small-Scale Fisheries* in Bangkok in 2008. The fishers' movements organized a parallel meeting in Bangkok a few days prior and decided to join the FAO conference uninvited. This meeting ended up being an important moment for building an alliance between FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Department and the fishers' movements, as well as for sparking the process of developing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines.

some of the early steps that were taken to build collaboration between FAO and fishers' organizations:

My first [FAO] work experience in India, I spent two years in India from 1979 to 1981, and this is where I learned most of what I know about small-scale fisheries. As a foreigner you always have the issue of language... What I realized is that for us as FAO staff, if we are foreigners to a country, it is a challenge to work directly with the communities. Our work depends on intermediaries, and this is why I felt our relationship to civil society organizations is really critical. After I joined [FAO] headquarters in 1982, one of my first tasks was to prepare for a *World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development*, which was held in 1984. And my concern in the preparations for this conference was always whether small-scale fishing communities and their organizations would be adequately represented in a conference of that nature. So I expressed this concern also to my friends in India, the friends I made during my stay there, and they also saw it in this way. So then in 1986, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers was formed, a global international NGO but made up of at least two-thirds of the members from developing countries, with its headquarters based in Madras [India], where I actually lived from '79 to '81. And the purpose of this organization was really to raise awareness of the role of small-scale fisheries and to support their representatives in decision-making processes and to get wider recognition of this sector (FAO, 2013).

Willmann, together with Nicole Franz, who joined FAO in 2011 as a Fishery Planning Analyst and coordinates FAO's support to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, were central to the Guidelines development process and have been crucial allies to the fishers' movements (FAO, 2014b; TBTI, 2015). Working within FAO, they have been able to support the movements by facilitating access to international spaces and discussions, as well as sharing knowledge on the functioning of intergovernmental UN processes, and how to effectively negotiate these processes. In addition to the SSF Guidelines process, Willmann and Franz have worked closely with fishers' movements and ICSF to ensure small-scale fisheries issues are addressed in COFI agendas and negotiations, and have collaborated on countless national and regional projects and workshops focusing on the small-scale sector, addressing issues like secure livelihoods, food security and national level policy (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019; FAO, 2014b; FAO, 2013). In a 2014 interview, Franz highlighted the crucial role of WFFP and other fishers' organizations in collaborations with FAO:

In the [SSF Guidelines] implementation process we're looking forward to further supporting organizations like WFFP to work directly with the fishing communities to ensure that the



principles that have been integrated and endorsed in the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines will actually be transferred to the ground and trigger change on the ground. So we will continue to ensure that WFFP has a chance to gather the voices and the needs of the communities and to bring those views and perspectives and needs up to higher level foras, including for instance the Committee on Food Security in the FAO... We also see that WFFP can play an important role in the implementation guidelines themselves, so for instance, we will rely on organizations like WFFP to continue the work at the country level with governments, because we have the commitment of governments, through the endorsement of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines in COFI, to implement these Guidelines, but we do need WFFP and other organizations on the ground to engage with the governments to take up that commitment, to hold them accountable to implement the Guidelines on the ground. Also, in the implementation process, to directly involve the fishing communities, to directly involve the different players as is set out in the principles of the Guidelines. And to play a role in the monitoring of the implementation of these Guidelines, so we see a strong role that WFFP can play on the ground (FAO, 2014b).

### ***5.2.2 COFI as an Invited and Claimed Space***

The COFI can be described as an invited space, in which civil society actors are invited to participate by more powerful actors, which in this case includes intergovernmental bodies and governments (Gaventa, 2006). As Cornwall and Coelho (2007) remind us, invited spaces are not simply neutral spaces for participation, but are shaped by complex power relations involving relatively powerful and powerless actors. In some ways, the COFI is also a claimed space, which fishers' movements gained access to partially due to their own initiative and recognition of the importance of having their voices heard in a prominent fisheries governance space. Their initiative contributed to strengthening their relationships with key allies within FAO, who recognized the importance of engaging directly with fishers' movements and organizations, and who invited them into the COFI space. As discussed in Chapter 4, while critical steps had been taken in the 1980s and 90s to build up an alliance between the fishers' movements and FAO, in which Willmann played an important role, this relationship became notably stronger and more consistent after the 2008 Bangkok meeting. Through their strategic engagement in this meeting, the fishers' movements demonstrated why their perspectives are crucially needed in decision-making processes around global fisheries.

Fishers' movements also recognized the advantage of framing their demands in the *Bangkok Statement* in human rights-based language, a language which has allowed UN

organizations like FAO, as well as a wide range of civil society, private sector and governmental organizations, to connect their discourses and find common ground for international collaboration (see Gasper, 2007).<sup>42</sup> As a result, they claimed a seat at the table among FAO fisheries officers and fisheries researchers from around the world, which contributed to kickstarting the development of the SSF Guidelines, and subsequently opened doors for them to participate in the COFI. The role of ICSF, was also crucial in forging this claimed/invited space, as an organization that worked closely with both FAO and the movements, and served as an intermediary bringing them together. At the same time, allies within FAO, such as Willmann, who already had a long-standing relationship with fishers' movements, supported their participation in FAO's fisheries work and facilitated the opening of institutional doors. All of these factors in combination have contributed to fishers' movements' active participation in the COFI, particularly in the last decade, and this participation promises to continue due to their role in the ongoing SSF Guidelines implementation process.

### ***5.2.3 Bringing Fishers' Voices to COFI via the IPC Fisheries Working Group***

While some fishers movement members had been attending COFI sessions in Rome since the early-2000s, movement participation in this space became noticeably more organized, active and visible between 2009 and 2014 during the development of the SSF Guidelines. Since the Guidelines endorsement in 2014, WFFP and WFF have continued to be active in the Guidelines implementation process, both at national and international levels, and in collaboration with FAO and ICSF, have organized numerous side events on the Guidelines process alongside COFI sessions (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019).<sup>43</sup> This was an important shift, since as one movement member noted, prior to 2010 side events could only be organized by government delegates and international organizations:

[I]t was only around the 2010 period where we were able to, together with ICSF, get the space to organize a side event. Prior to that, side events were between FAO, ICSF and then

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<sup>42</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the role of human rights language in allowing diverse actors across civil society, private sector and governmental spheres to link their discourses and find common ground for collaboration, see Gasper, 2016 and 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation at COFI (2018).

governments. We were never in any side event, and it was only closer to when the idea of the Guidelines was adopted that we got there (Interview with WFFP member, December, 2019).

WFFP and WFF participate in the official COFI sessions as members of the IPC and coordinators of the IPC Working Group on Fisheries (Fisheries WG), which is considered the official representative of fishers and fishing communities in the COFI space. The IPC is a CSO network, established in 1996, which provides a platform for collaboration between four prominent transnational movements representing constituencies of fishers, farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, fish and agricultural workers, namely WFFP, WFF, LVC, and International Indian Treaty Council (IITC).<sup>44</sup> It provides a common space for mobilization around food sovereignty, linking local and national struggles to global spheres of debate, and facilitates food producer constituencies' participation in transnational food policy processes (Brem-Wilson, 2015). The IPC also includes five active Working Groups focusing on agricultural biodiversity; agroecology; fisheries; indigenous peoples; and land, forests, water and territory. Since 2002, the IPC has been the official platform for coordinating civil society participation in some FAO processes, such as the COFI (IPC, 2017; 2019a).

The IPC is an example of a created autonomous space, emerging from the initiative of social movements that were seeking a way to have their voices heard at the global level, and were dissatisfied with the institutionally permitted channels available in the 1990s to participate in global food governance processes. Through the establishment of the IPC, movements were able to define their own structure for participation based on autonomy and self-organization, with representatives from food producing constituencies steering the process, rather than relying on mediated representation which is often provided by NGOs in global governance processes (Brem-Wilson, 2015). The IPC has been an important convergence space for fishers' movements to interact with like-minded social movements and support NGOs that are challenging corporate control of the global food system and working to develop and promote alternatives from food producers themselves. The space has facilitated discussions between movements that have allowed them to recognize common threats they are facing, such as exclusion and marginalization in the food system and the prioritization of industrial agendas that downgrade and undermine the work of small-scale producers. Movements have also been able to use the IPC as a channel of communication and interaction to develop collective strategies for addressing these common threats and strengthening and expanding mobilization

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<sup>44</sup> The IITC is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Caribbean and the Pacific working for the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples.

(Claeys and Duncan, 2019). As was also highlighted in Chapter 4, fishers' movements' membership in the IPC has been crucial for connecting their struggles to those of agrarian movements, which have comparatively larger membership bases and a wider global reach. In particular, interaction between WFFP, WFF and LVC in the IPC space has created an important channel for knowledge exchange between fishers and farmers, while also helping to amplify fisheries issues through LVC's platforms, statements and demands (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members and allies, 2017; 2018; 2019).<sup>45</sup>

The Fisheries WG, which is coordinated by three representatives each from WFFP and WFF, includes membership from WFFP, WFF, LVC and IITC, and four NGOs playing important support roles, namely Crocevia (IPC Secretariat), ICSF, Transnational Institute (TNI), and FIAN (IPC, 2017; 2019a).<sup>46</sup> Two of the coordinators include Naseegh Jaffer (WFFP) and Editrudith Lukanga (WFF), who were also highlighted in Chapter 4 as key actors in the SSF Guidelines development process, and continue to play important leadership roles in the two movements in many different platforms. The WG has regular online meetings to develop collective strategies and agendas, and has worked together to produce numerous webinars, reports, and visual tools, such as videos and infographics (see Figure 5.2) (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). Representatives from the movements and support NGOs participating in the Fisheries WG, and in the IPC more broadly, are vivid examples of what Tarrow (2005) and others call 'rooted cosmopolitans', or those who actively seek ways to expand mobilization beyond (while still building from) their own immediate societies. Tarrow argues:

The fundamental sociocultural change that has increased transnational activism is the growth of a stratum of individuals who travel regularly, read foreign books and journals, and become involved in networks of transactions abroad. Underlying these activities are a number of mechanisms that link individuals into webs of interests, values, and technology. Through the use of both domestic and international resources and opportunities, domestic-based activists – citizens and others – move outward to form a spectrum of “rooted cosmopolitans” who engage in regular transnational practices... We find these [transnational] activists engaged in a wide variety of transnational politics: from labor and global justice activists and immigrant

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<sup>45</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in the WFFP General Assembly (2017), COFI (2018), CFS (2019), and the CSM Forum (2019), as well as several smaller meetings involving WFF and WFFP members and allied organizations.

<sup>46</sup> Crocevia is an Italian NGO working on environmental and agrarian issues and community alternatives. TNI is a Netherlands-based international non-profit research and advocacy think tank committed to building a just, democratic and sustainable world. FIAN is an international human rights organization focusing on the right to food and nutrition.

transnationals to environmental and humanitarian aid workers, from peace activists to anti-landmine campaigners, from advocates from transnational justice to religious advocates (Tarrow, 2005, 35-36).

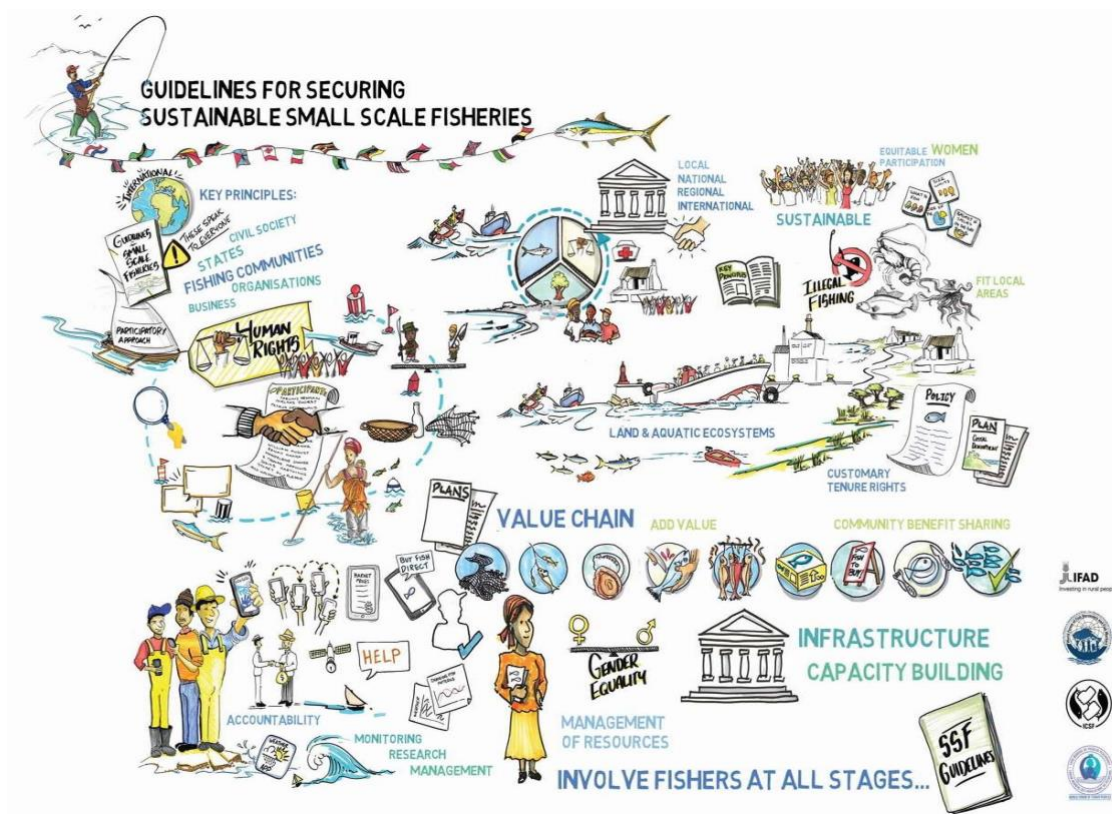


Figure 5.2: SSF Guidelines infographic produced by ICSF, WFFP and WFF  
Source: ICSF (2018)

#### 5.2.4 IPC at the 2018 COFI and the SSF-GSF

In the 33<sup>rd</sup> COFI session in 2018, the last in-person session to take place,<sup>47</sup> 41 representatives from the IPC Fisheries WG participated, including 25 members of WFFP and WFF, 6 members of LVC and IITC, and 10 from support organizations (Crocevia, ICSF, and TNI). The IPC made four interventions during the COFI plenary proceedings regarding small-scale and artisanal fisheries governance; world and regional ocean processes; the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and climate change. Prior to the official COFI session, WFFP organized a two-day political workshop for its members, in which they developed their strategy for engaging in the COFI sessions productively. The Fisheries WG then spent an additional

<sup>47</sup> The 34<sup>th</sup> COFI session, which was postponed from July 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, took place virtually in February 2021.

two days participating in a CSO preparatory meeting involving the broader IPC, in which the COFI agenda was discussed, points for engagement were highlighted, and their strategy was further developed (Fieldnotes, 2018)<sup>48</sup> (see Figure 5.3). An important point of focus for the Fisheries WG in the 33<sup>rd</sup> COFI was to highlight the recent establishment of the Global Strategic Framework in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (SSF-GSF), and the role of fishers' movements in its Advisory Group (AG). The SSF-GSF is a global mechanism supporting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at all levels, intended to facilitate interactions between COFI members and other interested actors (FAO, 2018c). It was established as the result of discussions and collaboration between the Fisheries WG and FAO, serving as a complementary mechanism for the FAO SSF Umbrella Programme, the development of which was welcomed by the COFI at its 2016 Session (IPC, 2019b). The FAO SSF Umbrella Programme promotes and applies the SSF Guidelines to enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and sustainable livelihoods. It is particularly focused on raising awareness about challenges and opportunities in small-scale fisheries; strengthening the science-policy interface through data collection on the small-scale sector; empowering fishers' organizations; and increasing governments' knowledge, skills and capacity for implementing the Guidelines (FAO, 2021b). In a statement made by the IPC at the 2018 COFI, they commented on their role in SSF-GSF process:

In 2016, the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of COFI invited FAO to further develop the SSF Guidelines Global Strategic Framework. Following that, IPC contributed to the draft that FAO submitted to COFI Bureau in April 2017. Furthermore, the SSF-GSF has a central role in the Guidelines implementation process, ensuring to keep the spirit of the Guidelines negotiations and the bottom-up participatory approach as a core principle. IPC is tirelessly working towards SSF Guidelines implementation at grassroots level: we concluded 8 national and 3 sub-regional workshops to raise awareness to our Fisheries communities with the support of IFAD, we are realizing 9 national workshops on Tenure in SSF with the support of FAO, we are discussing with our constituencies and other Small Scale Fisheries organizations on the priorities for implementation of the Guidelines. Moreover, we are mainstreaming the SSF Guidelines in the FAO regional conferences and in the regional Farmer Forum, and discussing with IFAD a follow up programme policy change oriented. We call upon member countries to further support the FAO Umbrella Programme putting Fisherfolks organizations at the core of the Guidelines implementation process through the SSF-GSF (IPC, 2018).

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<sup>48</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in WFFP's pre-COFI political workshop, the IPC Fisheries WG preparatory meeting, and the official COFI session (July, 2018).



**Figure 5.3:** IPC Fisheries Working Group pre-COFI preparatory meeting (Rome)  
Source: Author (2018)

The SSF-GSF Advisory Group is made up of representatives from transnational small-scale fisheries organizations and other relevant UN organizations, which are chosen through a participatory process (see Figure 5.4). Currently, the Advisory Group includes members of the Fisheries WG – 2 from WFFP, 2 from WFF, 1 from LVC and 1 from IITC – and is supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The role of the Advisory Group is to promote the coherent and participatory implementation and monitoring of the SSF Guidelines, and ensure the process meets international human rights standards. It also keeps the FAO and COFI informed about the process, facilitates CSO participation, and advises the Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP) (made up of academia, research institutes and NGOs) and the Friends of the Guidelines (made up of governments members of the COFI) about priorities for the implementation work. In collaboration with global and regional CSOs, the Advisory Group has also played a central role in establishing Regional Advisory Groups in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The purpose of these groups is to strengthen collaboration among small-scale fishers' organizations and facilitate their participation in SSF Guidelines implementation (IPC, 2019b; FAO, 2018c).



**Figure 5.4:** SSF-GSF Structure  
Source: IPC (2019)

Another important point that emerged from the 2018 COFI Session, was a proposal made by the Norwegian government to establish a Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management within the COFI. The proposal included particular attention to the management and governance of the small-scale sector, as a sector with a unique set of challenges requiring specialized policy solutions in order to ensure its long-term viability. The decision to create such a sub-committee can only be made after an official proposal is put forward, at least one other government supports the proposal, and the whole committee then votes on the proposal in the next official session. This proposal was met with criticism from many fishers movement members present in the COFI session, who believed that the inclusion of small-scale fisheries in such a sub-committee would frame governance of the sector as a management issue, and cause small-scale fisheries issues to be siloed or relegated to the sub-committee. They pointed out that such issues should be a central theme in the main COFI sessions, which receive much broader attention and participation from governments (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members, 2018).<sup>49</sup> One WFFP member pointed out that:

<sup>49</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation at COFI (2018).



The idea of a fisheries sub-committee was tabled twice at COFI, and in both cases we lobbied against it, and in both cases they withdrew it, or they didn't pursue the resolution on the plenary floor. And we had good reason at the time, because our concern was, you put together a sub-committee, and then the sub-committee might develop management guidelines for small-scale fishing. And then it just becomes a management issue. It's not elevated to a set of global Guidelines for which governments globally are responsible, and for which FAO has a role to play in making sure that there's awareness about it and that there's strategies and mechanisms supporting its implementation. A management committee or sub-committees is a sub-committee, it only deals with sub-issues, not main issues (Interview, December, 2019).

The sub-committee proposal was carried forward for deliberation in the next COFI session, which was originally planned for July 2020, but was later postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In February 2021, the 34<sup>th</sup> COFI Session was held virtually using the Zoom platform, and involved 51 participants from the IPC, including 32 from WFFP and WFF, 9 from LVC and IITC, and 10 from support organizations (Crocevia, ICSF, TNI and FIAN). The IPC Fisheries WG prepared statements addressing several of the COFI agenda items, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; supporting small-scale and artisanal fisheries; addressing climate change and other environment-related matters; International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture; the effects of COVID-19 on small-scale fisheries; and the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The proposal to establish a Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management was also further discussed, with many governments voicing their support. By the conclusion of the COFI session, the member governments agreed to continue a transparent and consultative consultation process on the establishment of the sub-committee, with the final proposal to be submitted by and discussed at the 35<sup>th</sup> COFI in September 2022 (Fieldnotes, 2021).<sup>50</sup> This was a critical theme for the IPC Fisheries WG to engage with, responding 'with concern' to this proposal, and stating that:

While COFI meetings enjoy the highest participation of both member countries and observers, the Sub-Committees at their meetings, more or less, have half the number of member countries at COFI, and a fraction of COFI observers. It is undebatable that COFI attracts the best participation. Unlike at the Sub-Committees, the attendance at COFI has been demonstrating an increasing trend since 2003. Furthermore, the active attendance at COFI meetings provides an opportunity for civil society organisations (CSOs) to be heard by the largest possible number

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<sup>50</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during virtual participant observation (using the Zoom platform) in COFI (2021).

of state and non-state actors. Small-scale artisanal fisheries issues have a bearing on almost all COFI agenda items, not just fisheries management. Moreover, issues related to the small-scale artisanal fisheries are much broader in scope than what a sub-committee on fisheries management can potentially offer, such as social development and a human rights and tenure rights approach in marine and inland fisheries... A comprehensive discussion of small-scale fisheries cannot be subsumed in a narrow discussion on fisheries management, as has been proposed. Considering all of the above, the IPC would urge the Committee that COFI continue as the forum to address strategic and policy issues related to small-scale fisheries, as a stand-alone agenda item (IPC, 2021).

### ***5.2.5 Challenges to Maintaining a ‘Seat at the Table’ in COFI***

Movement participation in international spaces involves many challenges, some of which have been discussed in Chapter 4. These include trying to balance member organizations’ national level work in addition to international work; ebbs and flows in the capacities of individuals within those organizations; and having to frame demands in a language that is acceptable to government actors. As the frequency of transnational UN and social movement spaces and events has increased in the past two decades, the demands on social movement participation have also increased (Smith, 2013), which in turn ‘is posing serious challenges to the technical and infrastructural capacities of social movements’ (Brem-Wilson, 2015, 84). Such spaces also involve unequal power dynamics, which pose challenges for movements. Some power holders in UN committees or government delegations may perceive movements solely as observers, and do not always facilitate their participation in discussions. In the experience of some fishers’ movement members, the chair of a meeting or plenary session, for example, holds a lot of power in deciding who gets to speak and when, which can cause frustration among movement participants (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019).<sup>51</sup> An example of this occurred in a 2012 FAO event, in which civil society participants walked out of a plenary session in response to their exclusion by the Chair in a roundtable discussion (see Brem-Wilson, 2015).

While the COFI has been an important space for fishers’ movements in various ways since the 1980s, even before WFFP and WFF were formally established, it has involved many

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<sup>51</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation (in-person and virtually) in COFI (2018 and 2021) and CFS (2019 and 2021).

challenges, particularly during the SSF Guidelines process. Despite playing a central role in this process, fishers' movements had to make concessions on some of the issues they felt should be included in the Guidelines because some governments did not want to make strong commitments toward the universal protection of small-scale fishers' rights and livelihoods (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019). The language in such instruments is also carefully scrutinized by governments, as was discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to the controversy that arose over the mention of protecting fishers in "situations of occupation". There is also concern among some movement members that since the 2014 endorsement of the Guidelines, their role in the COFI process have become less clear, and that many governments are not making concerted efforts to implement and uphold the principles of the Guidelines (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019).<sup>52</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced an additional challenge, in that many intergovernmental processes have had to be relocated to online platforms, making it even more difficult for civil society representatives to be physically seen and heard in these decision-making spaces, and much easier for those in decision-making positions to silence them – sometimes even muting their microphones. Fishers' movements faced this challenge during the virtual 34<sup>th</sup> COFI Session that took place in 2021, when two days into the plenary agenda, the chair began drastically cutting the time allotted for observer statements, meaning anyone not from a government delegation could only speak for one minute. This was reportedly because lengthy discussions (between governments) had led to the schedule being delayed, and by the last few agenda items, observers were no longer able to make statements at all. This effectively silenced civil society participants in the session, who have provided important critical voices in the COFI space for the past three decades. Verbal statements during plenary sessions are typically the most effective way for civil society representatives to have their voices heard by government delegations, particularly when there is no opportunity to meet in person outside of the plenary sessions. Written statements could be submitted to the Secretariat to be considered, or posted on the COFI website, but there was no way to know if government delegations or other participants would actually read these statements. This decision was met with a lot of frustration and disappointment from the IPC participants, who reflected on the broader trend

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<sup>52</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in WFFP's pre-COFI political workshop, the IPC Fisheries WG preparatory meeting, and the official COFI session (July, 2018).

of shrinking space for social movement voices in intergovernmental spaces, and whether this could be a sign of things to come in the future (Fieldnotes, 2021).<sup>53</sup>

There was also no space allotted for side events to be organized during the 2021 COFI, which is typically a critical space for fishers' movements' voices to be heard and to address issues affecting small-scale fishers. This was supposedly due to the online format of the event, however the CFS 47<sup>th</sup> Session, which also took place virtually the week after the COFI, did include space for side events to be organized (Fieldnotes, 2021).<sup>54</sup> The Fisheries WG noted that if the COFI were to consider reviewing its process in the near future, they 'would like to propose that the rules of participation of COFI be reformed to bring them on par with those of modern United Nations institutions like the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)' (IPC, 2021). In a statement made by the SSF-GSF Advisory Group, they further highlighted:

We want to express our concern for how the 34<sup>th</sup> COFI session's modalities are de facto excluding civil society from participation in COFI's proceedings. Efforts have to be made to make COFI a more participatory process and allow civil society members to meaningfully participate in the discussion and decision-making, in line with the principles of participatory governance. This is all the more alarming in light of how the COVID-19 pandemic has severely hit small-scale fisher and Indigenous communities, wherever they may be across the globe. In some cases, the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 have been even worse than the biomedical impacts. Yet, government relief and support efforts tend to overlook the working poor, including small scale fishers, and do not reach those most in need. Access to adequate health care is insufficient. Many small-scale fisher and Indigenous communities, whose very survival is at stake, are being squeezed by lack of healthcare, loss of work and livelihoods. This emergency impacts us even more, as it comes on top of the already irreparable damage that climate change is causing to water bodies and oceans (IPC, 2021).

Fishers' movements have had to continuously push to have their voices and concerns heard in the COFI space, that is first and foremost providing a forum for government delegates to debate fisheries priorities and policies. One movement member noted that 'we need to constantly fight for our place at the table, we need to show that we still deserve to be there' (Interview, July, 2018). Attention to small-scale fisheries has also typically been relatively marginal in COFI, included under a single heading in sessional agendas, in which issues like aquaculture development, fisheries resource management, trade and sustainable development take priority

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<sup>53</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during virtual participant observation in COFI (February, 2021).

<sup>54</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during virtual participant observation in COFI and CFS (2021).

(see for example FAO, 2021d; 2018d). To address these challenges, particularly in the post-Guidelines endorsement period, movements have been focusing on how to secure their continued role in the COFI space, such as through active participation and making powerful statements in COFI sessions. Their role in the Advisory Group of the SSF-GSF has also been crucial, in order to continue to be centrally involved in the implementation and monitoring of the SSF Guidelines, and ensure the process is not co-opted by competing interests who may try to use the Guidelines for their own benefit (Fieldnotes and interviews with movement members and allies, 2018; 2019).<sup>55</sup>

### **5.3 Food Governance Space: Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**

In the sphere of food governance, a key space for engagement by fishers' movements is the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The CFS was established in 1974 to serve as an international intergovernmental forum for reviewing and following up on policies related to the production of and access to food globally. The CFS structure includes a Bureau, Secretariat, Advisory Group and Plenary, comprised of Members, Participants and Observers. Unlike the COFI, CFS Plenary sessions are held annually. The Bureau, which is elected by the Plenary every two years and serves as the executive branch of the CFS, includes a Chairperson and twelve member countries – two each from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Near East and Latin America, plus one each from North America and South West Pacific. The operational functions of the CFS are handled by a permanent Secretariat, which supports the Plenary, Bureau and Advisory Group, includes staff from FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP), and is based at FAO headquarters in Rome. CFS Membership is open to all Member States participating in the FAO, IFAD, WFP, and UN Members States that do not participate in the FAO. As of 2021, the CFS includes 124 Member States. Participants include representatives from other UN agencies, civil society, NGOs and international agricultural research networks, international and regional financial institutions, and private sector associations; while observers can be from other invited organizations with an interest in particular CFS agenda items or programmes of work. An Advisory Group is made up of representatives from different categories of Participants. This

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<sup>55</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in WFP's pre-COFI political workshop, the IPC Fisheries WG preparatory meeting, and the official COFI session (July, 2018).

structure was established as a way to allow inputs from stakeholders at national, regional and international levels (FAO, 2021e).

In 2009, the CFS went through a reform, as a result of the 2007-2008 food price crisis and the subsequent financial crisis that led to rising levels of structural poverty and hunger globally. As McKeon (2017) argues, this crisis illuminated the shortcomings of the dominant neoliberal approach to global food governance and policy-making, and ‘opened up a window of political opportunity for change that the food sovereignty movement was ready to seize thanks to a decade of networking and capacity building’ (77). It also revealed a global governance vacuum, in which the absence of democratic authority on global food security had caused decisions in this critical sphere to be taken by default by institutions whose official expertise is not food security, such as the WTO and World Bank, ‘by donor government groups such as the G8, and—worse still—by economic actors, such as corporations and financial speculators subject to no political oversight’ (McKeon, 2017a, 78). The food price crisis was the tipping point of a much larger crisis in the global food system, in which effective food governance had become increasingly complicated by multiple overlapping challenges. As Andréé et al. highlight:

The instability of the dominant food system, premised on industrial methods and corporate control, is also affected by the political imperative to respond to a complex set of issues, including the challenges resulting from the financialization of food and the volatility of the global market- place, climate change mitigation and adaptation, food access and safety, and diet-related diseases. This state of flux represents a critical historical moment, full of both challenge and opportunity, for social movements organizing around food to build a more sustainable and just world (2019, 1).

In response to this crisis in the global food system, UN Secretary-General at the time, Ban Ki-Moon established a High Level Task Force for the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF), which accepted proposals for addressing the crisis. The selected proposal, which was submitted by an alliance of G77 governments,<sup>56</sup> FAO and the IPC for Food Sovereignty, was to reform the existing ineffective CFS and focus on policy-led solutions to the causes of global food insecurity. The reform included redefining the CFS’ role and vision; expanding participation in CFS to bring in more relevant voices, such as from civil society, on food and agriculture policy; adapting its rules and procedures in order to become the main UN platform addressing

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<sup>56</sup> The G77 is a coalition of 134 governments from the Global South, which promotes its members’ collective economic interests and enhances their joint negotiating capacity within the United Nations.

food security and nutrition; strengthening its local, national and regional connections; and creating a High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) to ensure CFS' work is based on structured expertise and hard evidence (FAO, 2009).

Since the reform, the CFS has become one of the key global governance and policy-making spaces for movements focusing on food issues and food sovereignty (Claeys and Duncan, 2019). It is based on a multi-stakeholder approach, through which it collaborates with and coordinates diverse stakeholders, and develops and endorses policy guidance and recommendations on a wide range of topics related to food security and nutrition. These recommendations are developed using scientific and evidence-based research conducted by the HLPE, as well as technical work supported by FAO, IFAD, WFP, and the CFS Advisory Group (FAO, 2021e). Annual CFS Plenary sessions are held at the FAO headquarters in Rome, and alongside the formal sessions, there are typically a large variety of side events taking place during the plenary breaks, organized by government delegations, FAO and other UN organizations, and civil society. The CFS reform was a more transparent and inclusive process than was the norm in the UN at the time, and the IPC facilitated the participation of social movements and small-scale producers. The resulting CFS, which takes a human rights approach to food and is mandated to coordinate food security policy among a range of institutions globally, is considered the most inclusive global forum dealing with food issues (McKeon, 2017a; Brem-Wilson, 2015).



**Figure 5.5:** Plenary Session of the CFS 46<sup>th</sup> Session at FAO (Rome)  
Source: Author (2019)

### ***5.3.1 CFS as an Invited and Claimed Space***

Similar to the COFI, the CFS is arguably a combination of a space which civil society actors have been invited to participate in by (inter)governmental actors, and one which civil society has claimed alongside powerful actors, namely governments and intergovernmental agencies (Gaventa, 2006). The role of the IPC in proposing and negotiating the CFS reform alongside the alliance of G77 governments and the FAO, strategically positioned social movements to help shape an inclusive and participatory CFS space. This role also contributed to strengthening the relationship between the IPC, allied governments and the FAO, which ensured that their continued participation in CFS was valued and supported by these allies. A key element of the reform was to establish an ‘International Food Security and Nutrition Civil Society Mechanism for Relations with CFS’, which would allow civil society actors to have structural access to the CFS and participate directly in CFS plenaries and processes. The CFS reform document highlights:

Civil society organizations/NGOs and their networks will be invited to autonomously establish a global mechanism for food security and nutrition which will function as a facilitating body for CSO/NGOs consultation and participation in the CFS. Such mechanisms will also serve inter-sessional global, regional and national actions in which organizations of those sectors of the population most affected by food insecurity would be accorded priority representation. Civil society organizations/NGOs will submit to the CFS Bureau a proposal regarding how they intend to organize their participation in the CFS in a way that ensures broad and balanced participation by regions and types of organizations (CFS, 2010, 1).

The proposal to establish a civil society mechanism emerged out of two decades of struggles and advocacy work by movements that were challenging corporate-controlled industrial food systems. The movements had been developing and proposing alternative ways of producing, harvesting, processing, distributing, consuming and even governing food. These alternatives centred around food as a key element of a broader interconnected system, in which the health of both people and the environment are crucial, and gave more attention to how the food we eat is dependent on the fields, forests, oceans, lakes, and rivers that it comes from (Andrée et al., 2019). Through participation in the IPC, movements had been strategizing among themselves as to how small-scale food producers themselves could become centrally involved in the food governance processes that directly impacted their lives, and these strategies were



key in shaping the proposal for the civil society mechanism. The movements also organized a *Peoples' Food Sovereignty Forum* parallel to the World Food Security Summit in 2009, to discuss their full participation in the newly-created civil society space in the CFS:

Civil society has played a fundamentally important role in the CFS reform process, opening up a critical space which we intend to fully occupy in a responsible and effective manner. In so doing, we will ensure that the voices of the excluded continue to be heard at the heart of food and agricultural policy-making and governance, at all levels (CFS, 2010, 1).

### ***5.3.2 Establishing an Autonomous CSM and Illuminating Fishers' Issues***

The proposal to include a civil society mechanism was approved as part of the CFS reform, and the CSM was established in 2010. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the resulting CSM is the largest international civil society space working toward the eradication of food insecurity and malnutrition. This space is a vivid example of what Gaventa (2006) calls a claimed/created space in which civil society actors created an autonomous space of their own. The structure for the CSM was developed during the CFS reform process, and involved much debate around how civil society participation was going to be organized and institutionalized within the CFS (see Figure 5.6). One fishers' movement member who has participated in the CSM noted:

Social movements said we don't want to be in CFS. If we are in CFS, we will be speaking as one voice for CSOs globally, but each government is able to speak for themselves. And we can't be equated to one national government. So even if we are in [the CFS] and we argue a particular position and we lose that position, because [all the governments] speak against it, they cannot say that we were not part of the process. So we will actually be giving up our identity. We will be giving up the power that we have within our own right. And that led to the position being created in the founding documents that CSOs be Participants in CFS. The members of the UN could become Members of CFS, and then there could also be Participants who are not Members. They could participate equally with all the Members, except that they do not occupy any official position, they can't become the Chair or the General Secretary, or a Bureau Member, but they could observe and take part in discussions. So that is how the social movements got to participate in CFS through the CSM (Interview, December, 2019).

The CSM was established as an autonomous body to facilitate civil society participation in CFS discussions and policy processes, and is an open, inclusive space that includes participating organizations, rather than formal members. The CSM has been quite an effective



represented constituencies. The role of the CC is to facilitate civil society activities within their constituencies and sub-regional groups, ensure that the CSM's tasks are carried out effectively, and oversee communication processes by sharing information, facilitating consultations and dialogue, and supporting national and regional advocacy and analysis (CSM, 2021). The main difference between the CSM and the IPC is that the CSM is largely funded by the CFS, and only exists for the purposes of engaging in the CFS, while the IPC is largely independent of specific UN or Rome processes. One IPC member argued that IPC is a 'space for the coming together of social movements, regardless of whether there's a CFS or whether there's a COFI, or whether there's a Human Rights Commission, regardless of any international or UN intergovernmental body, there is IPC' (Interview with IPC member, November, 2019). IPC also supports and is active in the CSM, with IPC members meeting as a group to discuss how they will contribute to CSM and help with analysis and reflection for developing CSM's positions within the CFS (Interview with movement member, 2019).

### ***5.3.3 Fishers' Movements in the CFS and CSM Forum (2019)***

The 46<sup>th</sup> CFS Session, the last in-person Committee meeting, was held in October 2019, and included 172 CSOs, 141 of which participated via the CSM – including representatives from WFFP and WFF (FAO, 2019b) (see Figure 5.7). The CSM actively participated in the official CFS plenary sessions, making detailed statements responding to agenda items on agroecological approaches, smallholders, the UN Decade on Family Farming, the SDGs, and urbanization and rural transformations. The CSM also organized six side events on hunger, human rights and inequalities; the *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition*; re-thinking and re-shaping food systems through agroecology; the impact of extractivism on women's right to food; the future of food and the visions of youth; and the People's Sovereignty Network. Members of the IPC Fisheries WG (from WFFP, WFF and ICSF) also participated in side events on strengthening smallholder food systems; and treasures of the oceans and inland waters. This was also the first CFS in which the CSM was given a symbolically equal position in the plenary hall, with the CFS Chair, Mario Arvelo, noting during the official opening that 'this is the first time we have desegregated the participants in the seating arrangement. CSM representatives are now sitting near the front of the room, rather than at the back' (Fieldnotes from CFS, 2019). This was an important gesture by the CFS Secretariat, as it demonstrated the value that some CFS members see in the CSM's participation, reflecting

not just a top-down gesture, but a gradual process of mutual trust-building between CSOs, governments and international organizations.



**Figure 5.7:** Opening Session of the CSM Forum at FAO (Rome)  
Source: Author (2019)

In the days prior to the 2019 CFS Session, the CSM also held its annual Forum in which the CFS agenda was discussed and strategies were developed for effectively engaging in the Session, including the establishment of key messages to put forward in the CFS plenary. This included discussion on political reporting and analysis; the global context of the CFS; the HLPE report on Agroecology and other Innovations; and the *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition*. The FAO Director General, CFS Chair and representatives from IFAD and WFP all spoke in the opening panel of the CSM Forum, highlighting the level of importance the CFS places on the CSM. This kind of participation from COFI officials, for example, does not occur in the IPC preparatory meetings prior to COFI Sessions (Fieldnotes, 2019).<sup>57</sup>

A few speakers in the CSM forum mentioned the crucial contributions small-scale fisheries makes to the global food system, and several points were raised by representatives from fishers' movements and organizations regarding the importance of not leaving fish and fishers out of debates around food security and nutrition. One CSM participant also highlighted that the *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition* (VGFSyN), an instrument

<sup>57</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in COFI (2018), CSM Forum (2019) and CFS (2019).

adopted by the CFS at its 47<sup>th</sup> Plenary session in 2021, does not give adequate attention to fish as an important source of food, with the focus being mainly on crops and agriculture (Fieldnotes, 2019).<sup>58</sup> Situated in a food systems perspective, the VGFSyN is an intergovernmental tool intended for governments and their partners to develop policies and institutional arrangements to address the systemic causes of hunger and malnutrition globally. While the document does mention fishers a handful of times, it mainly refers to fisheries and aquaculture production as a sub-category of agriculture, alongside crops and livestock (see CFS, 2021). Such an approach to fisheries limits the ability of the CFS to fully understand and engage with fisheries as a sector that is distinct from farming, and requires policy tools that address its specificities in the context of global food systems.

#### ***5.3.4 Challenges to Connecting Fisheries and Food Governance***

The lack of engagement with fisheries issues in CFS instruments, agendas and sessional reports – despite the CSM including small-scale fishers in its own statements and reports – reflects a broader limitation of the CFS, in that it does not adequately engage with fish as food and a key component of global food security. One fishers’ movement member highlighted:

CSM will have a fisheries position, but CFS does not. So even though CSM may make submissions or interventions and mention fisheries, in particular small-scale fisheries, you will never find it quoted or repeated within CFS itself. But CSM is aware and conscious and integrates fisheries into its identity, into its programme and into its outlook. It does not actively support the [IPC] Fisheries Working Group work, at the moment that is. There was a time in 2014<sup>59</sup> when on the CFS agenda there was small-scale fisheries as a contributor to food security and nutrition and a resolution was being tabled. There was a ‘decision box’ on small-scale fishing that contains this decision with a number of sentences on motivation or context. That had to be drafted and prepared, and then the Fisheries Working Group of IPC actively took part in that, with the support of the IPC Secretariat, to help structure that decision box. That was the only time when fisheries was on the CFS agenda, but for the rest of it, it’s never on the CFS agenda, but it’s present in CSM. The CSM takes issues on food, nutrition, human rights, and

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<sup>58</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in CSM Forum and CFS (2019).

<sup>59</sup> In 2014, the CFS published a policy recommendation on *Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Security and Nutrition*, including nine recommendations, the first of which is to “give to fish the position it deserves in food security and nutrition strategies, policies and programmes (see CFS, 2014).

food sovereignty into the CFS space, it always includes fisheries. But when the [CFS] record comes back, there's no fisheries in it (Interview, December, 2019).

The marginalization of fishers and fisheries issues in the CFS makes it a difficult space for fishers' movements to engage in as actively as they do in the COFI, and for some members it is not always clear why they do participate. Several members also reflected on how strange it is that two separate intergovernmental spaces exist to deal with food and fisheries, with minimal interaction between the two – particularly when some of the same national government representatives are present in both the CFS and the COFI (Interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019).

Engagement in the CSM is also challenging for fishers' movements, considering the vast majority of its members come from the agriculture sector. In the 2019 CFS and CSM forum for example, out of 172 participating civil society organizations, only two were from fishers' movements. This imbalance in representation in the space has arguably also contributed to small-scale farmers receiving significantly more attention in the CFS (CSM, 2020; Fieldnotes, 2019).<sup>60</sup> This is reflective of a broader issue in global food governance in which fisheries is often treated as a sub-sector of food production, while the majority of the attention goes to the role of agriculture in the global food system (Levkoe et al., 2017). While agriculture is a larger sector overall, fisheries provides the primary source of animal protein for 17 per cent of the world's population, meaning it also plays an integral role in both food security and nutrition (FAO, 2019). Fishers' movements have attempted to address the marginalization of fisheries issues by building alliances with sympathetic member organizations in the CSM. Along with other CSM participants, fishers' movements also continue to raise the issues faced by small-scale fishers, calling upon both the CFS delegates and the CSM to take these issues into account in a more central way. Yet, it remains to be seen whether fisheries will become a prominent theme in future CFS agendas or reports, or in the work of the CSM.

Despite the challenges, many fishers' movement members do still see the CFS and CSM as important spaces to continue engaging in, considering the important role these spaces play in decision-making around global food politics and food system governance. They recognize that they have an important role to play in continuing to draw attention to fisheries issues and ensuring small-scale fishers do not become even further marginalized in food policy

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<sup>60</sup> Fieldnotes refer to written notes taken during participant observation in CSM Forum and CFS (2019).

discussions (Interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019). The CSM space has also proven to be an effective convergence space for fishers' movements to strengthen their alliances with a broad, diverse network of other civil society actors working on food issues. As a claimed autonomous space, it allows fishers' movements to gain experience participating in a central, structural way in an intergovernmental process, which is not possible to the same degree in COFI due to the external nature of the IPC. Yet, despite the embedded participation that the CSM allows, fishers' movements, in collaboration with their agrarian allies, will need to continue to put forward strong, convincing proposals to maintain their legitimacy in the CFS, while also focusing on internal capacity-building that both ensures they have articulate spokespersons engaging in the space, and that they can expand their roster of leaders with the skills to represent small-scale food producers in global food policy debates (McKeon, 2013).

#### **5.4 Climate Governance Space: Conference of the Parties (COP)**

In the sphere of climate governance, a key space for fishers' movements' engagement is the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (hereafter referred as the COP). After the 1992 adoption of the UNFCCC, the COP first met in Berlin in 1995, and is now the principal international body focusing on national emission limits and climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. Every year, the 197 UNFCCC Parties (UN Member States) participate in COP sessions in order to review the Convention's implementation and related legal instruments and negotiate various institutional and administrative measures intended to improve its implementation. The main task for the COP is to review national communications and emission reports submitted by individual Parties, and assess the effectiveness of the measures being taken and progress being made toward achieving the objectives of the UNFCCC (UNFCCC, 2021a). The formation of blocs and coalitions are an important element of the COP, with many governments grouping together in order to influence negotiations by extending the reach of their national positions and advancing common agendas. On one side, groups have emerged like the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), involving a collection of states with strong economic interests in protecting the oil and gas industry and blocking climate change actions. While on the other side, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), involves a coalition of island states that are being impacted by sea level rise, and have proposed some of the most ambitious mitigation targets and plans for reducing emissions (Bulkeley and Newell, 2010). Such

competing interests reflect the complexity of the COP space and gives an indication of why international climate negotiations have historically been so challenging.

Similar to the COFI and the CFS, the structure of the COP also includes a Bureau and a Secretariat. The Bureau, which is elected from the participating Parties, supports the COP by providing advice and guidance related to the organization of annual sessions, the operation of the Secretariat, and the ongoing work occurring under the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and the 2015 Paris Agreement. The Bureau is also responsible for managing the COP process and for examining Parties' credentials, reviewing the international organizations and NGOs seeking accreditation, and compiling regular reports on the process for the COP. Meanwhile, the Secretariat, which has been based in Bonn, Germany since 1996 and has a staff of approximately 450, is responsible for supporting and coordinating the global response to climate change and overseeing emissions reporting (UNFCCC, 2021a). The Secretariat plays a central, yet often underestimated, role in shaping the outcomes of negotiations. While it initially focused on facilitating intergovernmental climate change negotiations, it is now also responsible for providing technical expertise and assistance in analysing and reviewing the climate change data that is submitted by the Parties (UNFCCC, 2021a; Bulkeley and Newell, 2010). This includes maintaining a publicly accessible database to record Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), which were established under the Paris Agreement, and include the plans, policies, targets and actions taken by each participating country toward international climate change mitigation goals (UNFCCC, 2021b).

The annual COP sessions, which are the largest annual UN conferences, are hosted by a different country each year, unless the host country is unable to physically host the conference for financial, political or capacity reasons. In this case, the conference is held in Bonn, Germany, where the Secretariat is based. The conferences have an average of 25,000 participants, so a host country needs to have a substantial infrastructure available. The COP presidency also alternates between the UN's five regions – Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Europe and Others. In the last few years, the COPs were hosted by France (COP21, 2015) (see Figure 5.8); Morocco (COP22, 2016); Germany (COP23, 2017); Poland (COP24, 2018); and Spain (COP25, 2019) – which was originally supposed to be hosted by Chile, but had to be relocated due to significant political unrest in the country. COP26, which will be hosted by Scotland, was postponed from 2020 to November 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (UNFCCC, 2021a).





**Figure 5.8:** Plenary session at the COP21 (Paris)  
Source: United Nations (2015b)

Annual COP sessions and intersessional meetings have been important moments for mobilizing energy around climate agendas and actions, not only among governments, but among a range of civil society actors as well. Due to the high-level nature and scale of COP sessions, the formal conferences are not open to the public and can only be attended by government delegations and accredited organizations. However, CSOs can submit an application for observer status in order to participate, and these applications are reviewed and assessed by the UNFCCC Secretariat to “ensure the coherence and balanced distribution of organizations in line with the constituencies of UNFCCC” (UNFCCC, 2021c). This raises questions about how civil society representatives are selected and what sort of criteria are used to determine there is coherence and balance among them. Rising international concern about the climate crisis in recent years has also contributed to a significant increase in demand from CSOs applying to participate in the COP, making it increasingly difficult for new applicants to receive accreditation. Orr (2016) notes that the number of NGOs accredited by the UNFCCC more than tripled between 2002 and 2015, from 506 to 1880. As Bulkeley and Newell further highlight:

Alongside the formal negotiations organized in plenary sessions and working groups that meet in parallel to discuss specific issues, a bewildering array of non-governmental, business and other organizations are registered to participate in the process. Though they do not have formal voting rights, they are allowed to make interventions and are often admitted onto government delegations where they have access to all the meetings taking place. In many ways, these actors are non-governmental “diplomats” that perform many of the same functions as state delegates:

representing the interests of their constituencies, engaging in information exchange, negotiating, and providing policy advice (2010, 19).

#### ***5.4.1 'Principled Non-Participation' in COP and Parallel Climate Justice Spaces***

In contrast to the COFI and CFS, in which social movements have been able to participate directly, the COP can be described as a somewhat more closed space, in which powerful actors – namely governments and intergovernmental organizations – are negotiating and making decisions. This sort of closed space tends not to facilitate the broadening of inclusionary boundaries that would enable direct participation by a wider range of civil society actors. States may consider these to be ‘provided’ spaces in which an elite group of bureaucrats, selected representatives and experts makes decisions and provides services to the broader society, with the view that broader consultation or involvement is not necessary. Some CSOs may focus their efforts on prying open these closed spaces by demanding increased participation, more transparency and greater accountability to the public (Gaventa, 2006). While some larger CSOs and NGOs, with the capacity, have chosen to form alliances with their national governments in order to join a delegation and gain access to COP sessions, many civil society representatives are excluded from these sessions. Social movements which have a particularly critical perspective on the solutions proposed and the climate mitigation actions being taken by governments, may be unable to access COP sessions, and some may choose not to as a strategy of resistance (Chatterton et al., 2013; Featherstone, 2013). MacGinty (2012) refers to this strategy as principled non-participation, in which individual actors or groups ‘opt out of civic and political activity on the basis of principle’ (173). He further highlights:

The principle is one of non-recognition of the legitimacy of international actors, their local proxies and the processes that they institute. As such, it is a political act and can be interpreted as a form of communication at the out-group and in-group levels. It is worth stressing that the agency involved in principled non-participation is reactionary and is a response to an agenda largely set by others. This illustrates the importance of power relations in considerations of non-participation (MacGinty, 2012, 174).

Transnational social movements engaging with issues of climate justice, such as LVC, WFFP, WFF and the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), take different approaches to engagement with the UNFCCC process. In the IIPFCC’s case, a decade

of international advocacy led by indigenous movements to include Indigenous Peoples' rights in the Convention, resulted in IIPFCC being officially recognized in 2008 as a UNFCCC constituency able to represent Indigenous Peoples in COPs. The IIPFCC's contributions to the UNFCCC process have centred around regaining control over ancestral territories and ensuring their rights to land and natural resources are protected in the development of climate-related actions (Claeys and Delgado Pugley, 2017; Chatterton et al., 2013).

In contrast, LVC has chosen not to participate in COPs, but has contributed to the organization of parallel civil society events promoting climate justice, and used intergovernmental climate discussions to 'advance their alternative development paradigm grounded in food sovereignty, agroecology and peasants' rights' (Claeys and Delgado Pugley, 2017, 326). Their strategy of principled non-participation in the COP space reflects their fundamental disagreement with what they have called 'false solutions' to climate change, referring to initiatives such as agrofuel production, carbon trading, REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), and Climate-Smart Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (CSA).<sup>61</sup> Such initiatives, which are heavily influenced by corporate interests, promote technological and market-driven approaches to addressing climate change, rather than addressing the structural political and economic issues that are contributing to environmental degradation and marginalizing those most affected by climate change. On the other hand, the climate justice movement, which calls for 'system change, not climate change', highlights how climate change is disproportionately affecting food-producing and indigenous communities, and promotes solutions put forward by these communities as a way to achieve a just transition for both people and the environment (Clapp et al., 2018; Claeys and Delgado Pugley, 2017; Tramel, 2016; Martinez-Alier et al., 2016; LVC, 2007).

WFFP and WFF have taken a similar position as that of LVC on the 'false' climate solutions proposed by governments, and engaged in a strategy of principled non-participation in the COP space. This has meant that their engagement with the COP space does not take the same direct form that it does in the COFI and CFS, and has focused instead on parallel civil society spaces aimed at promoting alternatives like food sovereignty, agroecology and climate justice, and following UNFCCC debates and processes virtually. As was highlighted in Chapter

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<sup>61</sup> REDD+ is a framework created by the COP "to guide activities in the forest sector that reduces emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, as well as the sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries" (UNFCCC, 2021d). CSA is an approach for developing agricultural strategies oriented toward ensuring food security in the context of climate change. It focuses on "sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes; adapting and building resilience to climate change; and reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions, where possible" (FAO, 2021f).

4, fishers' movements have been engaging with issues emerging from the climate crisis, including the impacts of climate change on fishing communities and the effects of mitigation and adaptation initiatives on small-scale fisheries, and have internalized these issues in their agendas and political strategies.<sup>62</sup> Part of their strategy has been to strengthen alliances with movements, such as LVC, struggling for climate justice and promoting the positive contributions made by small-scale fishers and farmers to mitigating climate change through sustainable and responsible approaches to food production. A key part of this alliance-building process was what Tramel (2016) calls the 'road through Paris', which led up to and beyond the momentous COP21 in Paris in December 2015. As Tramel highlights, this road involved:

[A] collective transnational process rooted in local experience that intentionally featured marginalized voices spanning the global South and North, among them, women, rural peasants, urban migrants, indigenous peoples, and low-income communities of color. It is through these kinds of dialogues and maximization of scarce resources that people are figuring out together how to fight back against what they consider false solutions to climate change proposed by corporations and governments (2016, 2).

#### ***5.4.2 COP21 and the 'Zone of Action for the Climate' (2015)***

The COP 21 was a momentous event in UNFCCC history, in which Parties came together to negotiate the Paris Agreement, a document focusing on strengthening state-level response to tackling climate change, efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and setting targets for national contributions to climate mitigation (UN, 2015c). There was a huge amount of international energy and attention built up around the COP21, due to the expectation that, for the first time in history, an agreement would be established uniting all Parties in their commitment to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its impacts. The Paris Agreement, however, turned out to be a disappointment for social movements fighting for human rights, particularly LVC, WFFP and WFF, as the text only mentions human rights once in its preamble, noting that 'Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights' (UN, 2015c, 2). The Agreement is particularly troublesome

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<sup>62</sup> The impacts of climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives on small-scale fisheries is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

considering it does not put forward any legally binding obligations for Parties to frame their climate actions in a human rights-based approach (Claeys and Delgao Pugley, 2017).

Parallel to the official COP, there were also critical gains made for social movements in terms of transnational mobilization and alliance-building. In another part of Paris, a parallel ‘Zone of Action for the Climate’ (ZAC) was organized in which hundreds of CSOs, including LVC, WFFP and WFF, held meetings and workshops to debate the false solutions to climate change being promoted by world leaders at the COP. The ZAC was another vibrant example of a space created anonymously by civil society actors to lead their own climate summit (Gaventa, 2006). During the ZAC, fishers, farmers, pastoralists, and social movement representatives discussed the effectiveness of the climate solutions being presented by world leaders, and put forward alternative approaches and ‘real solutions’ to protect the environment and climate (Mills, 2018). Declarations, statements and reports reflecting these discussions were also written and shared widely online and on social media (see LVC, 2015a; LVC, 2015b; WFFP, 2015a; WFFP, 2015c). In a WFFP report, the movement highlighted real solutions to climate change including: respecting nature and not exploiting it; acknowledging traditional and indigenous knowledge; the need for democratic governance and community-driven natural resource management; and prioritizing human rights over corporate rights. The report also discusses ways forward in the pursuit of climate justice including: building alliances and converging with other movements; the importance of mass mobilization; the central role of women in leading local struggle; taking legal action against governments and companies for infringement of human rights; and making use of human rights and UN instruments (WFFP, 2015a).



**Figure 5.9:** Zone of Action for the Climate (ZAC) (Paris)  
Source: Author (2015)

At the ZAC, WFFP and WFF co-organized a meeting on ‘Blue Carbon: Ocean Grabbing in Disguise?’, in which members from the movements came together to discuss the Blue Carbon mechanism of the UNFCCC, arguing that it perpetuates a politico-economic system that profits from the commodification of nature. This event also highlighted that fisher peoples’ control of water and land was a crucial element of climate justice. Despite being from many different regions and national fishers’ organizations, all of the speakers shared a common concern for the impact such agendas could have on fishing communities, and a common vision for alternative strategies to protect coastal environments (WFFP, 2015c; Mills, 2018; Damanik, 2015). The report from this workshop, highlights that ‘blue carbon needs to be understood as part of broader processes of the privatisation of nature, and grabbing resources under the guise of conservation’ (WFFP, 2015a, 1). One WFFP member further noted that ‘in Indonesia, the fishers say: “the sea is our mother who provides, protects and loves us.” The Blue Carbon project asks us to sell our mother’ (WFFP, 2015a, 3).

The WFF and WFFP members also participated in the second meeting of ‘Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles’ public meeting, following its launch a few months earlier, along with representatives from frontline communities around the world to discuss the transformation of the global food system. They argued for the realization of food systems that are based on food sovereignty and agroecology models, centred on small-scale food producers’ access to and control over land and natural resources. The culmination of the week was a massive demonstration in which 30,000 people, including members of WFFP and WFF, marched across Paris demanding climate and social justice (Mills, 2018; Tramel 2016; LVC, 2015a). Due to the terror attacks that had occurred in Paris a few weeks earlier and related security concerns across the city, the march had to be significantly scaled down from the 200,000 participants that were initially expected. Yet, organizers of the march still felt it was crucial for the mobilization to take place, highlighting:

The tragedy in Paris has only strengthened our resolve. This movement for climate justice has always been a movement for peace – a way for people around the world to come together, no matter what their background or religion, and fight to protect our common home... We can think of few better responses to violence and terror than this movement’s push for peace and hope... there couldn’t be a more important time to push for climate justice, and the peace it can help bring (Orr, 2016, 26).



**Figure 5.10:** Civil Society Climate Justice March (Paris)  
Source: Author (2015)

### ***5.4.3 COP Complexity and Limits to Movement Capacity***

The complexity of the COP space, and broader climate politics that it contributes to, present numerous challenges for social movement participation. As highlighted above, the formation of government blocs and coalitions among UNFCCC Parties, some of which involve powerful economic interests like agribusiness, financial institutions and the oil and gas industry, make power imbalances within climate politics very difficult for civil society representatives to navigate (Bulkeley and Newell, 2010; Chatterton et al., 2013; Featherstone, 2013). As Newell (2011) argues:

The terrain of climate politics shifts rapidly, and policy arenas such as the nation-state, where decisions were traditionally made, become less and less relevant. Instead, policy action on climate change resides in a plurality of private and public, formal and informal sites of regulation. This altered framework of governance in itself creates accountability challenges, given that traditional channels of representation and participation often do not exist in private and non-state spheres, and rights to information and consultations are not easily applied to private sectors (225).

The COP space has also had a history of restricting civil society participation, with one particularly controversial example being the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, where the

Copenhagen Accord was negotiated. Of the 13,500 civil society observers that had been allowed to register, the Conference organizers decided at the last minute that only 1,000 participants would be permitted inside on the second-last day of the meeting, decreasing this number to 90 on the final day. Civil society actors responded to this decision with a mix of anger and disappointment. The COP21 in Paris introduced restrictive limits on civil society participation from the start, allowing organizations just two to five slots for their representatives (Orr, 2016). This decision may have also contributed to the large number of CSOs that joined the parallel ZAC space.

Although energy leading up to and during the COP21 was vibrant, fishers' movements' engagement with the COP has decreased since 2015, with only a few fishers movement representatives able to participate in a social movement climate justice training organized in a Moroccan village parallel to the COP22 in 2016. For the three most recent COPs (in Germany in 2017, in Poland in 2018, and in Spain in 2019), livestreaming of the events allowed more virtual participation globally, and some movement members were able to follow the process online. However, online participation can be an obstacle for many fishers movement members who live and work in remote areas and have limited access to the internet. Virtual meetings may also pose challenges for ensuring inclusivity and transparency in the proceedings, which is best achieved in in-person settings. An additional obstacle arose in 2019 when the COP25 had to be relocated just a few weeks before the conference due to political unrest in Chile, making it difficult for CSOs to quickly shift their organizational capacities to Madrid and mobilize as strongly as they had originally planned. There were many logistical reasons for the lack of physical participation by fishers' movements in the three recent COPs, including lack of travel funds and the complicated process of getting a European visa. However, there are also more structural capacity issues which prevent fishers' movements from participating in international climate processes (Interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019). As one movement member noted:

I don't think that the movements are necessarily strong enough to have a presence in all climate spaces or moments when they arise. I think a lot depends on the strength of the alternative movement or organizations in that country. It just so happened that in Paris, there was quite a strong movement that was opposed to, or that would argue a different voice in opposition to the mainstream climate agenda, and would in fact, argue an alternative worldview than what is being discussed on the [COP plenary] floor. That's what I understand was the strength in Paris... It is the strength of the political agenda of the progressives in that country that will make it happen. But if we don't have a presence, either through members, or through a local



organization there, it's not likely to happen. We don't have the resources to go there from outside [the country]. Capacity-wise it's just not possible (Interview, December, 2019).

This highlights an important factor in the facilitation of fishers' movements' participation in civil society climate spaces parallel to COPs – where their member organizations are located. While COPs 23 and 24 took place in countries where WFFP and WFF do not have members (Germany and Poland), COP25 was shifted from Chile to Spain (where WFFP has a member) just a month before the COP was scheduled to take place. As mentioned above, this made it difficult to quickly organize a large international civil society event involving participants from outside of Europe – particularly for movements like WFFP and WFF with members largely based in the Global South, and with limited financial and human resources for international travel.

Considering the COP is the key space for determining international climate regulations, by which small-scale fishers' livelihoods and survival are directly impacted, not having the capacity to participate in parallel civil society spaces would be a big loss for transnational fishers' movements. It will be important for them to continue to devote time and energy to ensuring that their voices are not left out of climate discussions and that they do not lose what little ground they have gained in climate spaces over the last two decades. Since climate politics are a relatively new sphere for fishers' movements, a significant amount of energy will need to be put into capacity-building so members are better equipped to engage in climate-related spaces and debates. This also involves being prepared for the waves of activity and energy that typically characterize social movements, and ensuring that the leadership is prepared to lead the members through ebbs and flows in mobilization. As one movement member noted:

It's typical of how social activism works. There are moments of heightened activity or activism, and there are moments where it is less, less so. It depends entirely on the leadership that we have, the strength or the nature of the issue that drives the political agenda or the developmental agenda. And it depends on capacities and how interested people are. Not just people who are immersed in the issue, but the broader solidarity movement you have in the world. The strength of the solidarity movement can also act as an energizer for local conditions and for local struggle. But struggles like the climate crisis is a global struggle. It's not just a developing country issue (Interview, December, 2019).

Despite the many challenges to participation, international spaces and processes which address climate change, such as the COP, are crucial for fishers' movements, which often point out that the 'effects of climate change on the coastline will hit small-scale fishers first, because they

operate in the near shore, and if the conditions there change, they can't go into the deep, they don't have the means' (Interview with movement member, July, 2018). Civil society-led climate justice spaces are also crucial because they reflect a common thread linking fisheries, agrarian and climate justice initiatives, with spaces such as the ZAC marking important moments for convergence between transnational fisher, agrarian and climate movements. The creation of these shared international spaces has allowed civil society actors from once separate silos to discuss and better understand each other's narratives, and find ways to engage with them collectively. These spaces have also made crucial contributions to both alliance-building, and expanding and broadening the scope of transnational fishers and agrarian movements. These alliances are hinged upon food production as a central issue in climate change debates, with movements calling into question the current destructive modes of production, circulation and consumption. Together, these movements are illuminating their common struggle for access to and control over resources, stemming from simultaneous threats of climate change and mitigation and adaptation initiatives, and combining their efforts as a strategy for widening their international reach (Mills, 2018).

## **5.5 Concluding Discussion**

Understanding why and how transnational fishers' movements are contesting and seeking to influence the politics of global fisheries and its intersections with food and climate politics, involves analysing the political spaces they are participating in and the strategies used to guide their participation. This chapter has mapped the COFI, CFS and COP, as three intergovernmental UN spaces that have been central to the politics of transnational fishers' movements in the last two decades, as well as some related events and parallel civil society spaces which have been crucial for the movement-building process. The diverse ways in which fishers' movements have participated in these intergovernmental spaces have also been highlighted, which has provided insights into some of the varied forms social movement engagement can take at the transnational level (see summary in Table 5.1). The discussion in this chapter contributes particularly to answering the second sub-question guiding this study: Which international political spaces are fishers' movements prioritizing, what is their historical significance, and how are movements participating in them?

**Table 5.1: Participation in Intergovernmental Spaces**

COFI	CFS	COP
<p>Invited/Claimed space</p> <p>Fishers' movements participate directly in the COFI biennial sessions as members of the IPC Fisheries Working Group. The Fisheries WG is the official representative of CSOs in the COFI. Movements also organize side events during the COFI in collaboration with FAO, governments and NGOs (for example, ICSF)</p>	<p>Invited/Claimed space</p> <p>Fishers' movements participate directly in the CFS annual sessions as members of the CSM. They also participate in the annual CSM forum, which takes place in the days prior to CFS sessions, and WFF and WFFP each have a member in the CSM Coordinating Committee.</p>	<p>Relatively closed space with restrictions on CSO participation due to the vast numbers of interested actors.</p> <p>Fishers' movements engage in 'principled non-participation' in the formal COP, while focusing their energies on parallel civil society-led climate justice spaces with allied organizations.</p>

Source: Author

Transnational fishers' movements have participated in and contributed to numerous international political spaces, of which COFI, CFS and COP emerged as three of the most important. Their importance emerged through archival research, interviews, conversations and participant observation due to their international significance; the continuous engagement fishers' movements have had in these processes over time; active movement participation in the events within; and the impact these processes have had on shaping the movements' political agendas. Outside of these three political spaces, and sometimes connected to them, there have also been countless other important events that fishers' movements have participated in, which have also played direct and indirect roles in shaping their character and political agendas. These too have been important spaces for convergence and alliance-building between movements, as well as for mobilization and movement-building within the fishers' movements themselves. In Appendix 2 at the end of the dissertation, you will find a timeline of some of these key events which were highlighted during the research process, in documents, and by interviewees, as those which have contributed to shaping the fishers' movements into what they are today.

As the first, and arguably the most important intergovernmental space for fishers' movements' participation, the COFI has been a central focus for their transnational political energy, particularly in the last decade. The 2008 Bangkok Conference was a pivotal moment in which fishers' movements and FAO came together to begin collaborating on a common agenda to develop an international instrument to guide the governance of small-scale fisheries. As both a claimed and invited space, movement participation in the COFI through their membership in the IPC has been possible as the result of two key factors: First, through the movements' own political initiative and capacities, they recognized the importance of

intergovernmental UN spaces for their struggles, while also understanding the power of the human rights framework that was prominent in UN agendas. Targeting UN spaces like the FAO and COFI and framing their demands, such as those highlighted in the 2008 *Bangkok Statement*, firmly in relation to the human rights of small-scale fishers proved to be an effective strategy for scaling up their struggles into international platforms. Second, key allies within FAO and their commitment to engaging directly with fishers' movements and fishing communities were also crucial in opening doors in the COFI space, particularly after the Bangkok Conference and the subsequent SSF Guidelines development process. The post-SSF Guidelines endorsement period has posed some important challenges for the movements in maintaining mobilization at the international level, particularly as members shift their focus to national-level implementation of the Guidelines. However, the active participation of a handful of committed members in the autonomous IPC space and its Fisheries Working Group has secured their continued role in the Advisory Group of the SSF-GSF, playing a central role in monitoring the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

A second space for fishers' movements' participation is the CFS, which has been a more challenging space for their engagement due to the Committee's prioritization of agriculture and lack of attention to fish as food in governance discourse and policy. Like the COFI, the CFS is also a combination of both a claimed and invited space, although due to the central role of social movements in the CFS reform and the creation of the CSM, the CFS is arguably more of a 'claimed' space than COFI is. Fishers' movements, however, have generally not put as much energy into the CFS, with fewer members participating in this space than in the COFI, and some members seeing it as a less relevant space to devote their limited resources and capacities to. Despite challenges to their participation, there have been three important outcomes of fishers' movements' continued engagement in the CFS. First, as the most participatory intergovernmental space dealing with food issues, the CFS and its CSM have provided a channel for fishers' movements to participate directly in a high-level UN process. This has contributed to expanding their international experience, strengthening their political analysis and capacity, and increasing their visibility within the FAO. Second, the CSM has become a crucial convergence space for fishers' and agrarian movements, which has bolstered their alliances, enhanced their collective agendas and strategies, and expanded agrarian movements' engagement with fisheries issues, and vice versa. Third, fishers' movements have consistently brought fish to the food table in CFS and CSM discussions by putting a spotlight on small-scale fishers' issues and highlighting the importance of fish for

global food security and nutrition. This has been a crucial for raising the profile of fisheries issues in these spaces and attempting to expand the food governance agenda beyond agriculture, crops and livestock.

A third space for fishers' movements' engagement is the COP, which has illuminated a different form of participation from the COFI and CFS spaces. Rather than participating directly in the COP, which is a complex and restricted space for many CSOs, fishers' movements have engaged with the issues debated and negotiated at the COP via parallel created civil society spaces. Together with their allies from agrarian movements like LVC, fishers' movements have engaged in the strategy of principled non-participation in the official COP, focusing instead on creating autonomous spaces to challenge the false solutions proposed by governmental institutions and corporate partners. Their participation in these spaces has had two important outcomes. First, parallel spaces like the ZAC in Paris and the climate justice civil society training in Morocco, have been crucial convergence spaces for fisher, agrarian and climate movements, offering moments for strategy discussions, capacity-building and deepening mutual understandings between diverse movements engaging in the global climate justice movement. These spaces have also allowed these movements to collectively highlight the real solutions that small-scale food producers have to offer to tackle the causes of climate change, such as the sustainable production systems and traditional knowledge that are central to food sovereignty and agroecology. Second, for fishers' movements, which began engaging with climate issues relatively recently, these convergence spaces have also been crucial for enhancing their understanding and analysis of climate politics, through interactions with movements with a longer history of engagement with climate justice. This has strengthened their capacity to engage with global climate debates and develop ways to highlight the disproportionate impacts of climate change on small-scale fishing communities in their advocacy work. At the same time, agrarian and climate movements have been able to learn more about the impacts of climate change and mitigation and adaptation initiatives on small-scale fishers, and highlight these issues in their own work.

The contributions fishers' movements have made to the COFI, CFS and COP and the particular events highlighted in this chapter, has been crucial, as they have continuously voiced the concerns of small-scale fishers on international platforms, and advocated for the human rights and livelihoods of fishers to be respected and protected. Their role in these spaces has been to provide a critical voice, raising questions about mainstream approaches and agendas, and offering alternatives that take into account the knowledge and experience of fishers and

fishing communities themselves. While human, knowledge and financial capacity issues have meant that they have not always been able to engage with or participate in all important international spaces where decisions are made that directly affect them, they continue their struggle to maintain space for engagement in COFI, CFS and COP, recognizing them as spaces which have been crucial for their struggles. Some ground has been lost, while other ground has been gained, and mobilization and active participation has ebbed and flowed over time. Yet, fishers' movements have managed to make themselves visible in international platforms and debates, situated within a global context that largely does not prioritize small-scale fishers. Without their advocacy, in collaboration with key allies, the human rights of small-scale fishers, and their crucial contributions to the global food system and protecting the climate and environment would have slipped even further off the radar.

## 6

## **Contentious Fisheries Issues: At the Heart of Social and Political Struggles**

### **6.1 Introduction**

While exploring why and how transnational fishers' movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries, digging deeper into the contentious issues at the heart of their struggles provides important insights into their political agendas. The complexities of global fisheries have become increasingly complicated by intersections with global food and climate crises, and related agrarian, rural and environmental transformations. While discussions on such transformations have tended to focus on agriculture and land, particularly in the context of agrarian political economy and critical agrarian studies, useful insights into the causes and consequences of these transformations can also emerge from exploring transformations in relation to fisheries (Campling and Colás, 2021; Campling et al., 2012; Sundar, 2012). A fisheries perspective can also shed light on the role of fishers' movements in rural and environmental transformations and how they have responded to such changes – including in the political agendas they establish, the actions they engage in, and the spaces and events they participate in. The impacts these transformations have on fishers and fishing communities globally also confirms the importance of fishers' movements organizing beyond national boundaries and expanding internationally.

Stemming from the central research question guiding this study, this chapter addresses the third sub-question introduced in Chapter 1: What contentious fisheries issues are movements struggling over, what are the social and political implications of these issues, and how are movements engaging with them? While fishers' movements have been shaping their political agendas and making demands around key issues since the 1990s, empirical research digging deeper into what propels these agendas and demands remains limited. Fishers' movements have prioritized several key issues, which are broadly implicated in the exclusion and dispossession of small-scale fishers from traditional fishing territories and fishing

resources, and to some degree, the exploitation of fishers' labour.<sup>63</sup> Since 2014, the movements, as members of the IPC Working Group on Fisheries, have highlighted issues related to the blue economy, ocean grabbing, aquaculture, inland fisheries, and aquatic genetic resources (IPC, 2019b). In order to understand the structural significance of these issues, O'Connor's (1998) and Campling and Colás' (2021) analyses are relevant here, honing in on capital's continuous expansion, emerging through privatization and corporate interests that seep into new sectors and spaces, and how this contributes to uneven and combined development. Such development is historically produced, leads to unevenness in global fisheries production, consumption and wealth, and contributes to combined social, economic and political characteristics that determine disparities in regional development.

This framing helps us understand how and why small-scale fisheries are being continuously undermined by multiple overlapping contentious issues and the political, social and economic obstacles they create, and how movements frame their work and discourse in response to these issues. Their work and discourse reflects an anti-capitalist narrative, which as Fraser (2021) argues, narrows in on multiple layers of injustice and is key to the development of a "powerful counter-hegemonic project of eco-societal transformation" (97). Their political agendas also reflect several of the anti-capitalist strategies highlighted by Olin Wright (2019), particularly taming and resisting capitalism by neutralizing the damage it has caused in small-scale fisheries. Underpinned by these strategic elements, this chapter argues that the issues flagged by the IPC Fisheries WG, including the impacts of the blue economy and blue growth agendas, ocean and coastal grabbing, industrial aquaculture expansion, the neglect of inland fisheries, and the loss of aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity are deeply entrenched within, and emblematic of, four global phenomena. As introduced in Chapter 1, these include: First, the expansion of the industrial (sea)food system has broadened and intensified privatization in fisheries. Second, intensive investment in the 'sustainable development' and use of natural resources has extended into new frontiers, namely the oceans. Third, the accelerated spread of mitigation and adaptation initiatives have intersected with conservation agendas, further restricting access to fisheries resources and territories. Fourth, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has added an additional layer of insecurity for small-scale fishers, illuminating and exacerbating multiple vulnerabilities in the fisheries sector (Belton et al.,

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<sup>63</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, fishers' movements have engaged very little with labour issues, since they claim to represent self-employed small-scale fishers, and not industrial fishworkers. Labour is therefore not a focus of this chapter. For in-depth analyses of labour relations in industrial fisheries, see Vandergeest and Marschke, 2020; Belton et al., 2019; Marschke et al., 2018).



2021; Marschke et al., 2021; Havice et al., 2020). These four phenomena also illuminate the convergence of four global crises: a production crisis, an investment crisis, an environmental and climate crisis, and a health crisis.

The four global phenomena can also be situated in relation to Bernstein's (2010) framing for understanding social relations, which as discussed in Chapter 2, unpacks who owns, does, and gets what, and how they use what they get. In other words, this framing helps us to better explore social relations of: property, resources, access, and ownership; divisions of labour; distribution of income and non-material earnings; and consumption, reproduction and accumulation. In relation to the issues and phenomena highlighted in this chapter, questions of ownership and capital accumulation are particularly important for understanding the political and economic systems from which industrial seafood and aquaculture expansion, privatization, intensive investment in ocean spaces, blue economy discourse, and climate change and neoliberal conservation agendas emerge. Bringing in an additional question on socio-ecological relations, inspired by Fraser (2021), Friedmann (2015) and Weis (2007) and broader ecosocialist debates, allows us to reflect on how productive activities affect fishing areas and ecosystems. An ecosocialist perspective also sheds light on how the fishers' movements are responding to the current global system, in which capital accumulation is able to continuously expand unrestrained, to the detriment of relations between society and the environment (Fraser, 2021; Olin Wright, 2019; Foster, 2017). This perspective also provides space for understanding the alternative pathways toward fisheries, food and climate justice which are being proposed by movements like WFFP, WFF and LVC.

Socio-ecological relations are deeply embedded in global fisheries politics, and are crucial to understanding the impacts of production in the fisheries sector, particularly in the context of the global fisheries crisis and the continued decline of many fish stocks. Mainstream approaches to fisheries, food and climate governance, which favour 'efficient' industrial production, fail to acknowledge the limits of nature and often gloss over linkages between politics, power and environmental issues (Campling et al., 2012; Longo et al., 2015). Neoliberal conservation discourse, centred around conserving natural resources for a profit, illuminates the complexities of the overlap between politics and ecology, presenting an ecomodernist vision of technological fixes being the cure for all ecological issues. These fixes are presented as a way for everyone and everything to win – the environment, the economy and society. However, the ecomodernist vision fails to question or address the dominant commodity-obsessed system, which leaves levels of overconsumption unchecked, and allows

power and wealth to become concentrated in the hands of states and markets (Foster, 2017; Dressler et al., 2014; Arsel and Büscher, 2012). In the fisheries sector, ecomodernist and neoliberal approaches to conservation and sustainable development have become increasingly widespread in the context of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), blue economy and blue growth agendas, which have contributed to further blurring the boundaries between protecting aquatic resources and capital accumulation (Campling and Colás, 2021; Barbesgaard, 2018; Segi, 2014).

There are countless issues and challenges underpinning the politics of global fisheries and the broader blue economy, which are squeezing out not only small-scale fisheries, but fisheries in general. This chapter focuses particularly on analysing those that have been central to fishers' movements' political agendas in the past decade, and which have played an important role in shaping these movements. The issues and phenomena discussed in this chapter illustrate what has shaped fisher' movements' struggles and political agendas, and how their role in global fisheries politics (as shown in Chapters 4 and 5) has influenced their prioritization of particular issues. The centrality of these issues has been determined through thematic analysis of reports, public statements, media and social media, email communications, meeting minutes, and research; conversations and interviews both with members of transnational fishers' movements, and individuals from civil society and intergovernmental organizations who work with the movements; and participant observation at events where fishers' movements have participated or where fisheries is a central theme. This analysis revealed not only which issues are currently central to fishers' movements and fisheries politics, but also how engagement with particular issues has evolved. This illuminated which global phenomena and related issues have consistently posed challenges for small-scale fisheries in the past several decades, such as industrialization and privatization, and which are relatively more recent, such as climate change mitigation, conservation, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the rest of this chapter, I first discuss the five main issues flagged by the IPC Fisheries Working Group and addressed in their work in international spaces and processes since 2014, including blue economy and growth, ocean and coastal grabbing, aquaculture, aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity, and inland fisheries. The following sections discuss why fishers' movements have targeted these issues, and how they have factored them into their political agendas and advocacy. I then turn to the four global phenomena highlighted above, which are contributing to both transforming global fisheries and fostering the emergence and spread of

transnational mobilization. This discussion contextualizes the structural significance of these phenomena in fisheries, and how they have impacted small-scale fishers' lives and livelihoods. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how fishers' movements are raising the profile of small-scale fisheries issues at the global level, and providing a critical link between global debates and fisher experiences on the ground.

## **6.2 The IPC Fisheries Working Group**

When exploring the central issues shaping the political agendas of transnational fishers' movements, there are several important sources which contribute to tracking this information. As mentioned above, an obvious starting point for me was to talk to fishers' movement members themselves, allies working with the movements, and to read through archival documents, such as public statements, meeting reports, publications, and social media pages, where issues are highlighted and discussed. It was through these conversations and archival digging that the central fisheries issues framing this chapter emerged. Many of the conversations I had also revealed the increasing importance of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), and particularly its Working Group on Fisheries (Fisheries WG), for framing and voicing the concerns of small-scale fishers' organizations on international platforms, particularly at FAO (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2017; 2018; 2019). As discussed in earlier chapters, the IPC is a network of civil society organizations, which was established in 1996 to provide a platform for collaboration between transnational movements, namely WFFP, WFF, LVC and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), and their respective member organizations. Since 2002, the IPC has become the official platform coordinating CSO participation in the COFI and CFS (IPC, 2017; 2019a).

The IPC's five active working groups, which focus on agricultural biodiversity; agroecology; fisheries; indigenous peoples; and land, forests, water and territory, were established in 2013 as part of a strategic decision to engage more explicitly with a set of key issues at the core of the IPC's work. The focus of most of these groups can be directly linked to LVC's main thematic issues, which include agrarian reform, food sovereignty and trade, agroecology, biodiversity and genetic resources, human rights, women and gender, and youth (LVC, 2021; Edelman and Borrás, 2016; Rosset, 2013). The Fisheries WG, however, has largely been the domain of the fishers' movements, with representatives from LVC and IITC only recently beginning to play a more active role in the group. It is the main international

space for civil society coordination and collaboration on fisheries issues, and includes representatives from WFFP and WFF, and support NGOs, namely Crocevia (IPC Secretariat), ICSF, TNI and FIAN (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2) (IPC, 2019a; Interviews with allies, 2020). This group has played a key role both in guiding how fishers' movements engage with and are represented in COFI and CFS, and in shaping fishers' movement discourse at the FAO level and in broader international civil society and research spaces, through their participation in numerous events, meetings, webinars and workshops.



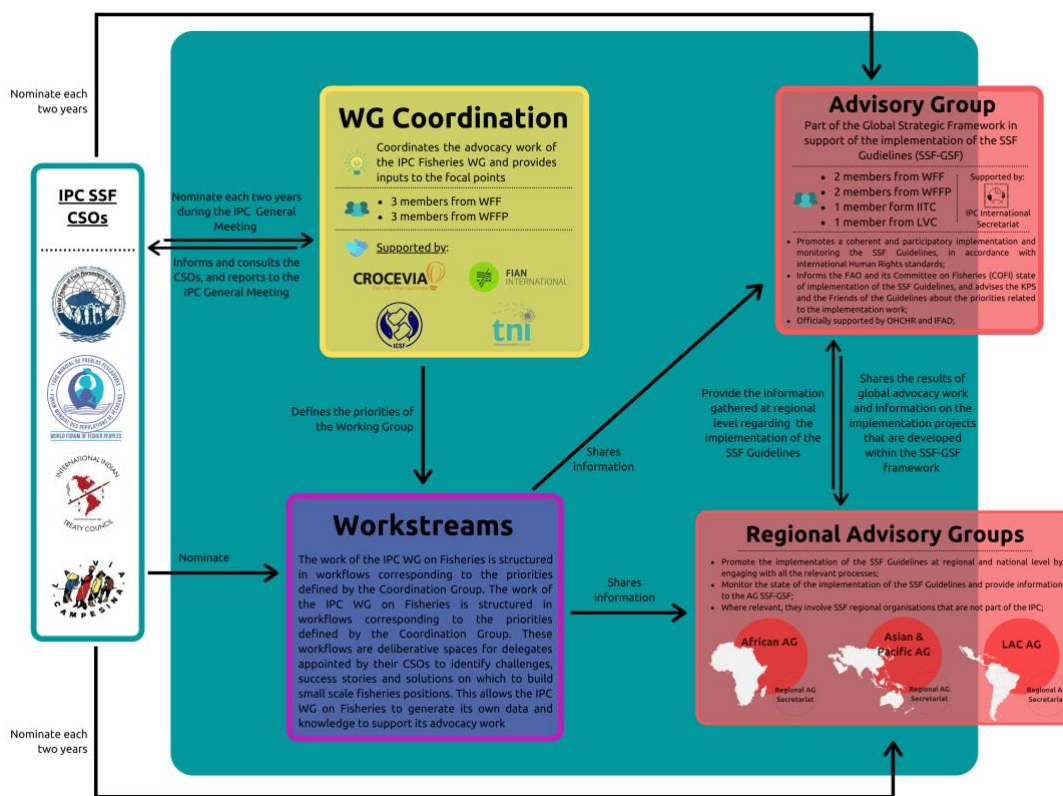
**Figure 6.1:** Meeting of the IPC Working Group on Fisheries at FAO (Rome)  
Source: IPC (2019a)

In 2014, shortly after the endorsement of the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, fishers' movements began scaling up the work of the Fisheries WG as part of a strategic decision to expand and concretize their focus on food sovereignty, which is at the core of IPC's work. This strategic shift has involved campaigning for the realization of food sovereignty in local fisheries contexts and strengthening their alliances with other social movements working toward similar goals (KNTI and WFFP, 2017). On its official website, the Fisheries WG highlights the importance of its international role:

Through the space of alliance and coordination offered by the IPC Working Group on Fisheries, the major global civil society networks representing small-scale fisheries have joined together to bring the voice of their communities to international political decision-making bodies. This advocacy work has made it possible to achieve one of the main achievements of the IPC when,

in 2014, the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) were endorsed by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). The key role played by the IPC in developing the SSF Guidelines was acknowledged by COFI when, two years later, with the establishment of the FAO SSF Umbrella Programme and the Global Strategic Framework in support of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (SSF-GSF), the IPC Working Group on Fisheries was identified to act as the SSF-GSF Advisory Group (IPC, 2019b).

Through its international work, the Fisheries WG has been crucial in moving forward the process of implementing the SSF Guidelines, as well as providing critical analysis on and responding to a series of contentious issues. As highlighted in the opening of this chapter, these issues are deeply entrenched within, and emblematic of, the expansion of capital, privatization and corporate interests, and the overarching consequences of uneven capitalist development in fisheries.



**Figure 6.2:** Structure of the IPC Working Group on Fisheries  
Source: IPC (2019b)

### ***6.2.1 Issues at the Core of the Working Group's Political Agenda***

The Fisheries WG's five main issues, introduced above, which since 2014 have been at the centre of its advocacy work and featured prominently in its statements and demands, include blue economy, ocean grabbing, aquaculture, marine genetic resources, and inland fisheries. These are issues which transnational fishers' movements, together with allied organizations, have collectively identified as crosscutting international themes that are central to their struggles and require critical analysis. Fishers' movements frame the emergence of the blue economy agenda, ocean grabbing processes and aquaculture expansion as competing interests for aquatic spaces that small-scale fishers depend on for their livelihoods, and pose urgent threats to the survival of the small-scale sector (Bennett et al., 2021). The preservation of marine or aquatic genetic resources is central to ensuring the longevity of small-scale fisheries, which are dependent on biodiversity and healthy, well-balanced aquatic ecosystems, particularly in shallow coastal areas (Charles et al., 2014). Attention to inland fisheries has also become a key issue for fishers' movements in the last few years, due to concern that there was an imbalanced focus in international fisheries governance on marine fisheries and spaces, despite millions of people around the world depending on inland lakes and rivers for fishing livelihoods (IPC, 2019b; WFFP, 2017; Interviews with movement members, 2018; 2019). These five key issues and concrete examples of how fishers' movements are engaging with them are discussed in the following sections.

### ***6.2.2 Exclusionary Blue Economy and Blue Growth Approaches***

The 'blue economy' concept and agenda first appeared at the UN's 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development (more commonly known as Rio+20), in which ocean issues and governance were discussed and negotiated. This unprecedented attention to the oceans was sparked by many of the same issues highlighted above – namely overfishing, marine biodiversity loss, climate change-induced ocean temperature rise and acidification, and a growing consensus among governments globally about the urgency to prioritize the conservation and sustainable development of the oceans (Silver et al., 2015). As a development agenda, the blue economy has been promoted particularly vigorously by governments in Europe and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as Fiji, Saint Lucia, Mauritius and Seychelles, which are simultaneously on the frontlines of climate impacts, and have maritime sectors that play a significant role in their national economies (Bennett et al., 2019; Silver et

al., 2015). The blue economy agenda aims to simultaneously generate wealth and conserve ocean biodiversity through market-based approaches to conservation and mechanisms that place value on resource sustainability (Charles et al., 2014). This agenda promises win-win-win solutions in which coastal communities, the environment and investors can all benefit, while failing to acknowledge the contradictions that exist between continuously chasing economic growth and conserving and restoring ocean resources as a way to mitigate climate change (Mallin and Barbesgaard, 2020; Barbesgaard, 2018).

In 2015, international interest in the blue economy grew exponentially, with a flood of conferences on investment in the blue economy and ways to achieve ‘blue growth’ being organized and funded by governments, environmental NGOs (ENGOs), conservation organizations, financial institutions and military companies. The European Commission, which had adopted its own blue growth strategy in 2012, positioned blue growth at the centre of its maritime contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (European Parliament, 2020; Mallin and Barbesgaard, 2020). The reach of both the blue economy and blue growth extend well beyond the fisheries sector, encapsulating the management of all maritime and coastal resources. Silver et al., (2015) pinpoint four broad discourses around human-oceans relations in which the blue economy is being employed, including oceans as: natural capital, good business, integral to SIDS, and small-scale fisheries livelihoods. In relation to the last category, which is particularly relevant here, the increasing prominence of ‘blue’ agendas poses a serious threat to fisheries sectors globally by competing for aquatic resources and spaces, squeezing out fishing activities in favour of more lucrative aquatic investments, such as deep-sea mining, ecotourism, and offshore energy (Bennett et al., 2021; Barbesgaard, 2018; Eikeset et al., 2018).

Small-scale fishers and coastal communities stand to be the hardest hit by the increasing number of initiatives popping up under the pretext of blue economy development, as many of the coastal areas targeted by ‘blue investors’ are those in which they live and depend on for their livelihoods. These areas end up being closed off to fishing activities in favour of investing in the conservation of aquatic resources. Examples of this include the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and the purchase of blue carbon credits, involving the sequestered in coastal mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses (discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation). While both initiatives were features of marine conservation before the emergence of the blue economy agenda, with the first MPAs being established in the 1970s, and blue carbon being introduced in a 2009 FAO report titled *Blue Carbon: The role of healthy*

*oceans in binding carbon*, they have been drawn into and promoted as part of the blue economy discourse (Silver et al., 2015; Barbesgaard, 2018).

Wolff refers to the creation of protected areas as a ‘protectionist, authoritarian and violently repressive practice of conservation’, which have caused people to lose ‘their rights of access to vast areas of the most productive marine resource sites, which they consider themselves to have traditionally governed and utilized sustainably in the past’ (2015, 16). Bennett et al. (2021) further specify ten social injustices that could be produced by blue growth: 1) dispossession, displacement and ocean grabbing; 2) environmental justice concerns from pollution and waste; 3) environmental degradation and reduction of ecosystem services; 4) livelihood impacts for small-scale fishers; 5) lost access to marine resources needed for food security and well-being; 6) inequitable distribution of economic benefits; 7) social and cultural impacts of ocean development; 8) marginalization of women; 9) human and Indigenous rights abuses; and 10) exclusion from decision-making and governance.

Fishers’ movements have been responding to these injustices, criticizing blue economy and blue growth agendas, and speaking out about various initiatives, particularly since international interest in the agenda was ramped up in 2015. They criticize the fact that blue agendas have had little, if any, engagement with small-scale fishers’ organizations and movements, while also presenting a vision for a sustainable future that leaves little space for the survival of small-scale fisheries. The Fisheries WG highlights that:

Seen as the formula for combining food production, environmental protection and economic gain, the so-called “blue economy” refers to a series of economic practices that try to integrate the exploitation of natural resources with the preservation of the local ecosystems. Nevertheless, this solution fails to address the main problems related to the capitalistic management of the maritime resources, feeding the illusion of a green – blue in the present case – growth. Moreover, the development of this economic paradigm, and the practices it contains, has been done without the participation, or even the consultation, of the small-scale fisheries communities. Their ancestral knowledge is not valorized, nor are their traditions and their spiritual link with the ecosystems they are part of, both sacrificed to the altar of the economic gain (IPC, 2019b).

In terms of activities, fishers’ movements have held workshops and released numerous public statements and publications, stressing that the win-win-win promises of blue agendas are false, and actually stand to marginalize small-scale fishers even further by separating them from fishing resources and territories (see Figure 6.3). As discussed in Chapter 5, the movements



organized a parallel workshop in 2015 parallel to the COP21 framing blue carbon as ocean grabbing in disguise, and a false solution to climate change. A public statement was also released in which fishers' movements highlighted that 'this so-called protection does more harm than good. The way the actors pushing blue carbon envision "conservation" will result in the displacement of the people who live off and with these areas. Their brand of conservation involves expulsion of communities, reducing customary or community access rights and fundamentally changing communities' relationship with the resources' (WFFP and WFF, 2015a).

Fishers' movement members have also participated in some 'blue justice' workshops, meetings and webinars. Blue justice is a concept which was first introduced by Moenieba Isaacs at a World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress in 2018, as a social justice-centred response to blue economy and blue growth debates, and was later expanded into a campaign by the Congress hosts, Too Big to Ignore (TBTI) (Isaacs, 2019). TBTI, which was established in 2013, is a research network of social scientists from universities around the world working on small-scale fisheries issues. TBTI explains blue justice as 'a critical examination of how coastal communities and small-scale fisheries may be affected by blue economy and blue growth initiatives that promote sustainable ocean development but neglect SSF and their contribution to ocean sustainability' (TBTI, 2019). This debate is relatively new and still developing, and it is yet to be seen whether blue justice initiatives will have real material impacts in the lives of small-scale fishers. However, fishers' movements continue to keep a critical eye on the evolving blue discourses and agendas, and demanding that the rights and livelihoods of small-scale fishers be protected, and ensuring that these initiatives do not continue to perpetuate ocean and coastal grabbing.



**Figure 6.3:** Report of the WFFP/WFF Blue Carbon Workshop  
Source: WFFP (2015a)

### ***6.2.3 Dispossession and Displacement caused by Ocean and Coastal Grabbing***

The rise of the blue economy and blue growth reflects the continued expansion and latest phase of broader global processes of ocean grabbing (Barbesgaard, 2018), and coastal grabbing (Bavinck et al., 2017). Both involve similar processes and impacts to those of land grabbing, a phenomenon that has been spurred by converging food, energy, financial and environmental crises, leading to a global land rush (Borras and Franco, 2012). The concept of ocean grabbing highlights processes and dynamics that negatively affect people, namely small-scale fishers and coastal communities, whose lives and livelihoods depend on fisheries and coastal resources. It refers to ‘dispossession or appropriation of use, control or access to ocean space or resources from prior resource users, rights holders or inhabitants. Ocean grabbing occurs through inappropriate governance processes and might employ acts that undermine human security or livelihoods or produce impacts that impair social–ecological well-being. Ocean grabbing can be perpetrated by public institutions or private interests’ (Bennett et al., 2015).<sup>64</sup>

The result is that powerful actors, such as corporations and financial institutions, take over control of fisheries resources, including marine, coastal and inland resources, in the interest of profiting from them, while small-scale fishers and coastal communities lose access. This enclosure of resources is mainly facilitated through laws, policies and practices that prioritize private ownership and management, without taking into account the damaging social and environmental impacts of such an approach. More specifically, it occurs through a variety of mechanisms, such as national and international fisheries governance and energy policies, the establishment of conservation areas, ecotourism, financial speculation and investment, and expansion of the global (sea)food sectors and aquaculture. During the past decade, this process has increasingly threatened the survival of small-scale fisheries globally by transforming production methods and access to resources (Barbesgaard, 2019; Foley and Mather, 2019; Bennett et al., 2015; TNI et al., 2014). The Fisheries WG highlights that:

[A]s a set of practices regrouping access agreements that harm small-scale fishers, unreported catch, incursions into protected waters, and the diversion of resources away from local populations, *ocean grabbing* is a major threat to our oceans. If unchallenged, it could lead to

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<sup>64</sup> Ocean grabbing is also defined by TNI (2014) as “the capturing of control by powerful economic actors of crucial decision-making around fisheries, including the power to decide how and for what purposes marine resources are used, conserved and managed now and in the future” (3).

the significant impoverishment of the fishing reserves and the destructions of ecosystems. Small-scale fisheries communities are particularly affected, as they have to face international agreements systematically diminishing their exclusive fishing areas, compromising their survival and the culture that goes with it. The effects are not limited to the catch itself, as they also affect the complex and rooted post-harvest value chain that develops along the community, and in which women play a crucial role (IPC, 2019b).

Similarly, coastal grabbing refers to ‘the appropriation of coastal space – including sea and land – by interests external to the community’ (Bavinck et al., 2017, 2). The concept of coastal grabbing emerged in the interest of deliberately addressing the connection between land and sea, as two spaces that most coastal communities depend on accessing. These grabs are driven by economic interests, such as aquaculture and mining projects, conservation policies, such as the establishment of MPAs, and political support for rapid economic development. Coastal grabs have two main types of impacts: first, they exclude coastal communities from the spaces and resources they depend on for their livelihoods; and second, they negatively influence communities’ motivation and capacity to engage in local conservation activities. The possible socio-ecological damages include lost livelihoods and impoverishment, and pollution and environmental degradation, leading to physical harm, displacement and out-migration (Bavinck et al., 2017).

Fishers’ movements have been tracking various grabbing processes and the different forms they take, and flagging them on international platforms. They have released numerous statements, publications, organized workshops and established an Ocean Grabbing Working Group to strengthen internal capacity to recognize and respond to it. In one statement, they denounced ocean grabbing and called for social and economic justice, demanding that ‘serious and implementable action should be taken by the concerned governments against Ocean Grabbing by corporate profiteering interests’ (WFFP, 2015b). In another statement, in which the movements rejected an invitation to join the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI)<sup>65</sup> steering committee, they denounced the CFI for its top-down approach to coastal fisheries governance and for facilitating ocean grabbing, highlighting that the lack of inclusion of fishers’ organizations, and focus on property rights-based fisheries<sup>66</sup> was yet another example of a

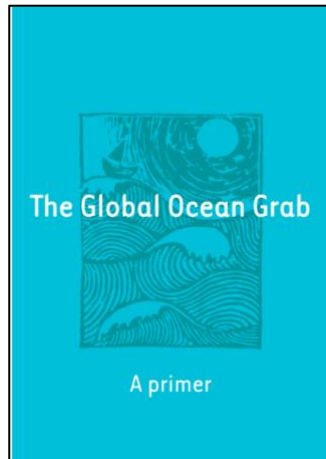
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<sup>65</sup> Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI) is a global effort funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which brings together United Nations agencies and international conservation organizations, aiming to improve fisheries management and conserve marine biodiversity in coastal areas through better governance and strengthening the seafood value chain (FAO, 2020c).

<sup>66</sup> Property rights-based fisheries focus on establishing (private) property rights as a way to manage access to fisheries resources, usually through the distribution of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) (Bromley, 2016).

“privatization process unleashing benefits for a small elite, while dispossessing the majority” (WFFP and WFF, 2015b). WFFP also published a paper on *Human Rights vs. Property Rights: Implementation and Interpretation of the SSF Guidelines*, which highlights the differences between the two very different understandings of rights in fisheries management. This report notes that “in addition to denouncing the negative effects of property rights-based fisheries programs, small-scale and artisanal fisherfolk have been actively developing and promoting a human rights-based approach to fisheries; this is the backbone of the SSF Guidelines” (WFFP et al., 2016, 9).

In collaboration with two allied research NGOs, TNI and Afrika Kontakt, WFFP also co-published a prominent publication, *The Global Ocean Grab: A Primer*, in 2014, sparking an international debate on the topic that soon gained attention from social movements, academics and governments alike (see Figure 6.4). The Primer highlights that ocean grabbing is not only about oceans, but is ‘unfolding worldwide across an array of contexts including marine and coastal seawaters, inland waters, rivers and lakes, deltas and wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs’ (TNI et al., 2014, 4). At the WFFP’s 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in November 2017, which WFF and other allied organizations also participated in, a workshop on ocean grabbing was held in which movement members from Sri Lanka, Belize, Indonesia and Kenya discussed the various ways in which ocean grabbing can take place, and gave examples of how it is playing out in local contexts. The workshop resulted in a collaborative list of how ocean grabbing is occurring, who the main actors behind it are, and strategies for developing a collective campaign against ocean grabbing, and ended with a call for fishers’ movements to join hands and engage with other movements around the world to protect and uphold the rights of fishers and farmers (WFFP, 2018; Fieldnotes, WFFP GA, 2017). How fishers’ movements grapple with and respond to ocean grabbing and related privatization agendas is still an ongoing discussion within the movements, considering the complexity of such agendas and the wide array of actors involved often make it unclear who to direct responses to and what strategies will be most effective.



**Figure 6.4:** The Global Ocean Grab: A Primer  
Source: WFP (2014)

#### ***6.2.4 Threats Emerging from Industrial Aquaculture Expansion***

The development of large-scale industrial aquaculture has rapidly become a dominant ‘sustainable’ solution for addressing the global fisheries crisis and environmental sustainability. Heralded as a win-win solution for both dwindling fish stocks and feeding a growing global population, aquaculture has become one of the world’s fastest growing food-producing industries. While small-scale food producers have engaged in artisanal aquaculture for centuries, such as in rice paddies in China and in small ponds on farms in India, aquaculture activities have expanded and been technologically transformed to a staggering industrial scale (Gui et al., 2018; FAO, 2018b; TNI et al., 2014). Between 1986 and 2018, while capture fisheries production grew 10 per cent from 87 to 96 million tonnes per year, aquaculture increased from 15 to 82 million tonnes per year – a growth of almost 450 per cent (FAO, 2020e). In the same time period, aquaculture’s contribution to fish supply for direct human consumption increased from 10 to 52 per cent. Although the majority of large-scale aquaculture takes place in Asia – particularly in China, which accounted for 58 per cent of global aquaculture production in 2018 – many European, Middle Eastern and South and Central American countries are also increasingly producing at a large scale (FAO 2020a; FAO, 2020g; Gui et al., 2018; TNI, et al., 2014). Aquaculture’s rapid growth has allowed governments and the private sector alike to continuously cast the industry as a more lucrative and predictable alternative to the fluctuating and unstable capture fisheries sector. In countries where fisheries sectors receive significant government support, such as Canada and the United States, the aquaculture industry has continuously received injections of public money in the last few

decades, particularly since eastern Canada's famous cod fishery collapse in the 1990s (Rigby et al., 2017).

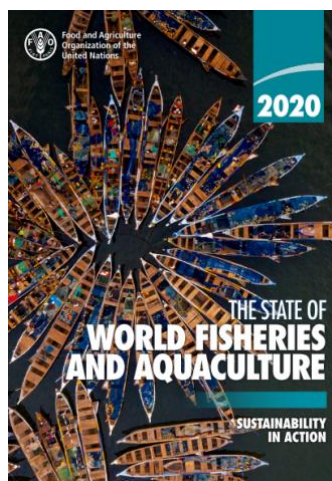
As discussed in Chapter 3, aquaculture expansion is a key development of the post-2000 conservation wave in fisheries, which has had a huge impact on the future viability of small-scale fisheries and survival of coastal communities. Aquaculture development is a prime example of the privatization policies that punctuate ocean and coastal grabbing, ignoring critical political questions about who should be deciding what species to fish, and where and how fishing should occur – effectively revoking the political agency of fishers themselves (Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2018; TNI et al., 2014; Nayak and Berkes, 2010). As the Fisheries WG highlights, 'aquaculture has become the main source of aquatic food. This practice can also be found among local communities, yet it is with the development of the fisheries industrial sector that aquaculture has become an intensive breeding system. If carried out on a large scale and capital-intensive perspective, the result could be the exclusion of the small-scale fisheries from the market' (IPC, 2019b). There has already been a visible impact on the security of small-scale fishers' livelihoods, as seafood markets become saturated with aquaculture products and local fishing grounds become polluted by waste from fish pens (Nayak and Berkes, 2010). Moreover, the species favoured for large-scale aquaculture farms are typically those which fetch high prices on markets in the Global North, such as carp, salmon and shrimp, due to increasingly high demand among middle-income consumers (TNI et al., 2014). This means that most products are destined for international export, with what remains in domestic markets often being too expensive for many to afford, or causing fish shortages in local markets, forcing people to change their eating habits. This has negatively impacted local food systems, particularly in the Global South, and the food security of poor rural people, increasing their vulnerability (Nayak and Berkes, 2010; Bavinck et al., 2017).

Fishers' movements have been speaking out about large-scale aquaculture developments for decades, with many members organizing campaigns and direct actions at the national level. In 1992, for example, massive protest and lobbying by fishers caused a company in India to withdraw plans to develop a 1400-hectare industrial shrimp aquaculture project after its environmental clearance was denied. By 1999, these mobilizations expanded into an anti-aquaculture protest movement, led by the Fisher Federation, National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) and the WFF, which helped to freeze a controversial aquaculture bill for more than fifteen years (Bavinck et al., 2017; Adduci, 2009). This is quite an exceptional outcome, as in many other cases around the world, resistance from social movements has not been able to

force the halt of aquaculture development. However, some resistance has effectively managed to delay projects or lead to legal cases in which court rulings call for project terms to be adjusted (Das, 2018; TNI et al., 2014).

Movement-led actions against aquaculture persist in India and many other countries around the world. Fishers' movements have also adamantly rejected industrial aquaculture in numerous public statements. A notable example is the Bangkok civil society statement on small-scale fisheries, in which they called upon the FAO, other UN agencies, regional fisheries bodies and national governments to '[r]everse and prevent the displacement of fishing communities through the privatization of waters and lands of fishing communities for activities that include tourism, aquaculture, defense/military establishments, conservation and industry' and to '[r]eject industrial aquaculture and genetically modified and exotic species in aquaculture' (WFFP, 2008). During the WFFP's 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Pakistan in April 2011, movement members also spoke out against large-scale aquaculture and initiated a global campaign, including national level actions to save natural resources and oppose aquaculture development in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and South Africa, among others. One press statement released during the General Assembly noted:

WFFP wants the global government to introduce sustainable aquaculture instead of promoting commercial interventions, which are destroying natural resources. The firms developing aquaculture in various countries use chemicals in fish feed and catch, destroying natural water resources... All these member organisations represent poor fishers, who are directly involved in fishing and not a single group of rich peoples is with us. When we demand aquaculture reforms, it means saving the freshwater bodies, which are being depleted by commercialisation of aquaculture all over the world (Fish Site, 2011).



**Figure 6.5:** The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report  
Source: FAO (2020a)

### ***6.2.5 Critical Loss of Aquatic Genetic Resources and Biodiversity***

The protection of aquatic genetic resources (AqGR), or marine genetic resources (MGR), refers to maintaining genetic diversity among aquatic species and populations. Biodiversity conservation, as it is more commonly known, is an important element of many fisheries governance and management agendas, as an attempt to ensure the sustainable production and trade of seafood from both capture fisheries and aquaculture (FAO, 2020e; Pullin, 2008). Overfishing, overcapacity, and the rapid growth of the aquaculture sector have made attention to biodiversity increasingly important, particularly since the 1980s. Overfishing and overcapacity in fisheries have predominantly emerged from growing numbers of large-scale industrial fishing boats, leading to the rapid depletion of many fish stocks, and too many boats chasing too few fish (Greer and Harvey, 2013). The FAO reports that between 1974 and 2017, the per centage of global marine fish stocks being overfished at a biologically unsustainable level rose from 10 to 34.2 per cent (FAO, 2020e). Meanwhile, large-scale aquaculture based on monoculture production is usually characterized by low genetic diversity. This type of production can cause genetic issues in farmed fish, such as deformities and the rapid spread of diseases. More worrying, is that it can lead to genetic contamination among wild species populations that come in contact with farmed fish, either due to proximity, waterborne diseases, or because farmed fish escape from their pens (FAO, 2019a; Krøvel et al. 2019). There has been increasing international concern about the widespread loss of biodiversity and degradation of marine and freshwater ecosystems. In addition to overfishing, overcapacity and aquaculture, this stems from pollution, climate change-induced ocean temperature rise and acidification, deep-sea oil drilling and mining and underwater noise caused by shipping and other human activities (OceanCare, 2020; Greer and Harvey, 2013).

The importance of protecting biodiversity for small-scale fishers and movements is crucial, considering their close connection with, and reliance, on delicate coastal and inland aquatic ecosystems. The Fisheries WG highlights that:

Small-scale fisheries face many threats: industrial and destructive fishing practices, climate change, water contamination caused by mining, the proliferation of invasive species, large-scale infrastructure development, violence and persecution, water grabbing, privatization and exclusion of the natural resources on which they depend. Freshwaters and lakes are affected to varying degrees by pollution that affects reproduction and causes genetic mutations. Women



fishers, youth and indigenous peoples continue to be marginalized and struggle to participate meaningfully in policies for the sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems and to adapt their livelihoods and preserve their traditional cultures and skills, with all the socio-economic impacts associated with these major disruptions (IPC, 2019b).

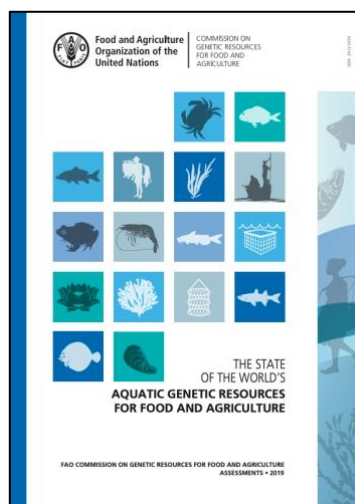
One of the ways that fishers' movements have been engaging with the protection of aquatic biodiversity is by participating in the process for upholding the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) (IPC, 2019b). Endorsed in 1992 by 150 government leaders at the Rio Earth Summit, the CBD is dedicated to promoting sustainable development globally. It is a legally binding instrument for conserving biological diversity, using natural resources sustainably, and sharing benefits derived from the use of resources equitably (CBD, 2000). For the last two decades, members of the Fisheries WG, namely WFFP, WFF and ICSF, have participated in CBD conferences, meetings, regional workshops, open-ended working groups, informal advisory committees; contributed to action plans, frameworks and guidelines, and national reporting; and implemented country level programmes and projects<sup>67</sup> (Interviews with movement members and allies, 2019; CBD, 2020). They have also released numerous statements, such as on the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) (22 May), asserting the rights of fishing communities to protect biodiversity. On IDB in 2012, which had a marine biodiversity theme, fishers' movements organized country level events and highlighted the importance of participatory conservation and management initiatives. They also demanded the recognition of their rights to access and use resources for their livelihoods, conserve and manage biodiversity, and participate in various conservation and management processes (CBD, 2012). At the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the CBD in October 2012, WFFP and ICSF made a statement in response to the agenda item on 'Inland Waters Biodiversity':

With millions of people dependent on inland water fisheries for a livelihood, fishing communities perhaps have one of the largest stakes in ensuring the health of inland waters and their biodiversity. It is important to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, including fishing communities, in the conservation and sustainable use of inland waters biodiversity if long-term conservation goals are to be met and if the ability of biodiversity to continue to support the water cycle is to be maintained. This would require the integration of the traditional knowledge, practices and rights of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities, particularly fishing

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<sup>67</sup> One notable example is the *Time for a Sea Change* study on Thailand published by ICSF (see Prasertcharoensuk and Shott, 2010).

communities, to sustainably manage inland waters, by strengthening cooperation on capacity building and governance, promoting secure land and water tenure, and particularly by putting in place participatory decision-making processes and benefit sharing arrangements, is crucial to the conservation of inland water biodiversity and maintenance of the water cycle (WFFP, 2012).



**Figure 6.6:** Report on Aquatic Genetic Resources  
Source: FAO (2019)

### ***6.2.6 Detrimental Neglect of Inland Fisheries***

Inland capture fisheries carried out in lakes and rivers can be found throughout the world, and provide a central source of protein for millions of people, particularly the African Great Lakes, Lower Mekong Basin, Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon, and the Brahmaputra and Ayeyarwady River Basins, where fish consumption per capita is the highest in the world. Several of the largest fish producing countries, such as China, India, Cambodia and Indonesia, have reported an increase in inland production in the last decade, representing 59 per cent of inland fish catch globally (FAO, 2020e; Arthur and Friend, 2011). Inland lakes and rivers are also severely impacted by environmental and climate fluctuations, such as changes in rainfall and ground water level and drought, as well as human activities, including soil and water salination caused by agricultural run-off, water pollution in urban areas, and hydropower development (FAO, 2020e; Funge-Smith and Bennett, 2019; Sneddon and Fox, 2012; Arthur and Friend, 2011). Despite these critical issues, inland fisheries have received far less international attention from policymakers and researchers than their marine counterparts. The Fisheries WG highlights that:

Too often neglected in the international discussions, the internal waters fisheries provide work more than 60 million people and nutrition for their communities. Most of the internal waters

fishery is located in developing countries, while its totality is practiced through artisanal methods. Yet, despite his significant importance in certain regions, the effects of land grabbing and the direct and indirect pollution of the waters by extractive and industrial practices seriously endanger this kind of fishery (IPC, 2019b).

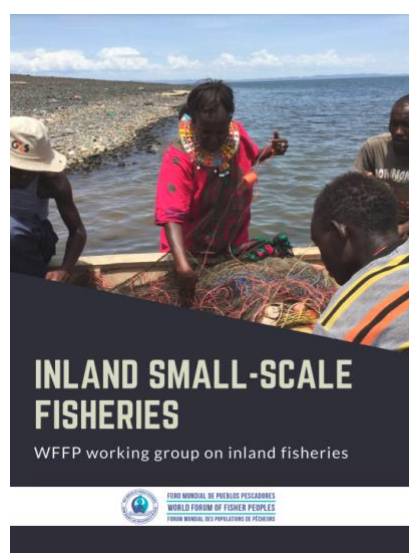
Despite the important contribution of inland fisheries to both livelihoods and global fish production, small-scale inland fishers' catches are often underreported. While data collection on marine fisheries has increased steadily in the past few decades, the inland subsector is often neglected, leading to a lack of information available on both catches and employment (Funge-Smith and Bennett, 2019; Arthur and Friend, 2011; De Schutter, 2012). FAO's 2012 *Hidden Harvest* study highlighted that millions of tonnes of fish caught by small-scale fishers is invisible and unreported, with an estimated 70 per cent of the inland fisheries catch underreported. FAO further highlights that the lack of routine monitoring across diverse inland fisheries makes it extremely difficult to establish a clear picture of the stock levels and health of inland fisheries globally (FAO, 2020e). This lack of attention has not only been an issue in the policymaking and research spheres. Within fishers' movements, there has also been a tendency to focus on oceans and marine fisheries, without providing much space for inland fishers' voices or for addressing issues effecting inland fisheries. A ground-breaking report on inland small-scale fisheries published by WFFP in 2017 (see Figure 6.7), highlights:

Until recently, the voices of millions of inland small-scale fishers, the primary users of freshwater resources and inland stream have been unheard. Indeed, the few studies around inland small-scale fishing, at an international level and at local national levels, have mainly been conducted by the academic and corporate sectors. Initially, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) did not address the state and challenges of small-scale fisheries, even though inland fishing communities represent a significant part of WFFP and its constituency. This started to change in 2015, when a WFFP working group on inland fisheries was created, with the objective to consolidate and strengthen the voice of inland small-scale fishers within the organisation and beyond. Central to this was a Human Rights Based approach for the management of inland fisheries and to enhance food sovereignty for inland small-scale fishing communities (WFFP, 2017, 1).

The WFFP report further notes that inland fisheries are too often confined to informal or recreational fishing sectors, which overlooks the health, nutritional, cultural and social value of inland fisheries livelihoods. Despite their crucial role in local livelihoods and nutrition, about half of freshwater species globally are not biologically registered in official scientific databases, meaning that they are essentially non-existent in official statistics. This is largely

caused by a lack of engagement between researchers and small-scale inland fishing communities and a lack of understanding of artisanal, indigenous and traditional knowledge. While the definition of inland fisheries used in academic and governmental spheres refers only to harvesting methods, WFFP argues that this definition fails to take fishing communities and livelihoods into account, nor does it speak to food sovereignty practices in fisheries (KNTI and WFFP, 2017).

Fishers' movements have been working toward addressing this gap through the publication of their report, as well as organizing local level workshops with inland fishing communities, and a knowledge exchange on the state of inland fisheries globally with participants from South Africa, Kenya, Bangladesh and Canada. In WFFP's 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2017, an inland fisheries workshop was also held in which participants established key action points for moving forward and expanding their work on inland fisheries. These points included building alliances around agroecology to rebuild depleted lakes and rivers; learn from experiences in Indonesia and India where there are strong inland fishers' movements who have participated in policy-making processes; organize knowledge exchanges to inland fishing communities; strengthen community-based research mechanisms for producing inland fisheries data; resist dams and industrial projects effecting inland waters; demand the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in inland waters; and fight for the recognition of inland fishers rights to access and govern resources (WFFP, 2018).



**Figure 6.7:** Inland Small-Scale Fisheries Report  
Source: WFFP (2017)

### **6.3 Four Global Phenomena and Implications for Small-Scale Fisheries**

The five issues discussed above which have been flagged by the IPC Working Group on Fisheries, including the blue economy and growth; ocean and coastal grabbing; aquaculture; aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity; and inland fisheries, have all been addressed in various ways by movements in their advocacy, statements, activities, and through their participation in international platforms and spaces. I argue that these five issues are deeply entrenched within, and emblematic of, four global phenomena that have emerged in fisheries in recent decades. These phenomena also provide important insights into the implications of converging fisheries, food and climate crises for small-scale fishers. They include: 1) The expansion of the industrial (sea)food system and intensification of privatization; 2) the extension of intensive investment in ‘sustainable development’ into the oceans and inland fishing areas; 3) the accelerated spread of climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives; and 4) the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the exacerbation of multiple vulnerabilities in the fisheries sector. These four phenomena are expanded upon in the following sections.

#### ***6.3.1 Expansion of the Industrial (Sea)food System and Privatization***

The first phenomenon is that the expansion of the industrial (sea)food system has broadened and intensified privatization in fisheries, concentrating property, wealth and power in the hands of large-scale industrial fishing companies. Privatization agendas are illustrative of a type of wealth-based fisheries management being promoted by international financial agencies like the World Bank, as an approach which aims to limit the leakage of resource rent from the sector (Biswas, 2011; Høst, 2015). Controversy over how to deal with ‘property and rent have long been at the heart of debates over the growing fisheries crisis, a debate that is gaining attention because of the importance of fisheries in ecological systems, food security and economic development’ (Campling and Havice, 2014, 723). Fishing territories are not only key sites of production contributing to the global food system, they are also crucial for the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and coastal communities (Jentoft, 2019; Barbesgaard, 2018). Yet, the push for privatization in fisheries has been led by state and private sector interests in harmonizing social and environmental norms with economic efficiency. In other words, packaging everything up into tidy private property and access rights is presented as a way to make the

sector simultaneously more manageable, sustainable, and profitable (Biswas, 2011; Pinkerton, 2017).

One prominent example of the privatization process has been the implementation of fishing quota systems, such as Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs), in order to control access to fisheries resources (Longo et al., 2015; Sundar, 2012). As highlighted in Chapter 3, ITQs and Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs) are catch share systems, used by many governments around the world to regulate fishing and adhere to limits established by sustainability measurements or Total Allowable Catch (TAC) calculations (Bromley, 2016). These systems facilitate the emergence of competitive quota markets, in which large industrial fishing companies are able to obtain several quotas from other fishers, further entrenching private ownership, access to and control over fisheries resources. In many prominent ITQ-implementing countries (for example, Iceland, Canada, Namibia, South Africa, New Zealand, Chile), the allocation of fishing quotas has excluded more fishers by restricting commercial fisheries to a few core fishers and fishing companies (Arnason, 2002, 2005; Bodwitch, 2017; Ibarra et al., 2000; Pinkerton, 2017). Fishers often end up selling their quotas because a) it brings in more money than they would get from fishing, b) they are unable to sell all of their catch on the market because of industrial competition, or c) because dwindling fish stocks means they cannot catch enough to make a living. Quota systems exacerbate the concentration of wealth and power in the industrial fisheries sector, while intensifying inequality, poverty and livelihood insecurity in small-scale fishing communities (Jentoft, 2019; Jones et al., 2017; Longo et al., 2015; Sundar, 2012; Isaacs, 2011; Isaacs and Hara, 2015).

**Box 6.1: ITQ Implementation in South Africa**

The ITQ system was introduced in South Africa in 1988 as a mechanism that connected fishing capacity and resource availability in the interest of economic efficiency. During the post-apartheid fisheries reform in the early-1990s, the new ANC government called for the development of a new fisheries policy, resulting in the 1998 Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA). Since most black fishing communities had lost their fishing rights during apartheid, when small-scale and subsistence fishing were not officially recognized as part of the fisheries sector, fishers had high expectations that the reform would secure their access and livelihoods. However, while the MRLA allocated quotas to commercial and subsistence fishers, small-scale fishers were completely overlooked. Subsistence fishers and fishers' organizations, including unions and cooperatives, were forced to privatize, or they would not be eligible for quotas (Isaacs and Hara, 2015). The allocation of quotas contributed to wealth concentration in the sector, and excluded thousands of fishers by restricting commercial fisheries to a few core formalized entities and companies (Biswas, 2011). This has subsequently increased poverty in many small-scale fishing communities, and in some cases, contributed to a rise in drug and alcohol addiction, as fishers find themselves in desperate situations, with no prospects for making a living or supporting their families. The ITQ system has caused social fractures within communities, as competition intensifies between those with quotas, and divisions increase between those with quotas and without (Isaacs and Hara, 2015). At a deeper, structural level, the ITQ legacy has contradicted efforts toward social justice, while failing to acknowledge and preserve small-scale fishers' historical and cultural rights to secure their livelihoods (Isaacs, 2011).

**6.3.2 Intensification of Investment in 'Sustainable Development'**

The second phenomenon is that intensive investment in the 'sustainable development' of natural resources has extended beyond forests and agricultural lands, and into new territories and frontiers – particularly the oceans and inland fishing areas. The sustainable development approach promises to provide economic growth and opportunities, while simultaneously protecting the environment and ensuring resources will continue to be productive. This approach has become especially prominent in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are framed as universal goals that are relevant for all countries, regardless of their level of economic development. The SDGs aim to link multiple aspects of development, including economic, social and environmental, in order to expand beyond the limited focus on poverty and human development which was at the core of the MDGs. The focus on sustainability also brings the UN's environment agenda to the fore, and prioritizes the development of sustainable consumption and production patterns globally (Gasper et al., 2019; UN, 2019; UN, 2015a). This discourse has been criticized as one 'devoted to the rational management of scarce resources so that nature can continue to serve as a material

base for capital accumulation well into the twenty-first century’ (Steinberg, 1999, 403). In recent years, both freshwater and marine areas, such as mangroves, marshes, shallow coastal areas, have increasingly become the target of sustainable development agendas – especially due to the rise in land conflicts spurred by development projects that cut off local communities’ access to forests and agricultural land. In contrast, investors commonly approach global oceans as if they are a lawless frontier full of natural resources that are up for grabs (Campling and Colás, 2021; Campling and Colás, 2018; Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2018), or a ‘frontier replete with opportunity, at last capable of being “conquered”’ (Steinberg, 1999, 404).

A prominent example of this phenomenon is intensive investment being poured into the development of aquaculture, which has quickly become a popular ‘sustainable’ solution for addressing the crisis of dwindling fisheries resources. Aquaculture expansion, which Saguin (2016) calls the fisheries sector’s newest commodity frontier, is presented as a catch-all way to address growing global demand, address overfishing by decreasing pressure on wild fish stocks, and support sustainability and the conservation of aquatic ecosystems by limiting fishing activity. It has quickly become one of the world’s fastest growing food-producing industries, with aquaculture sectors expanding around the world, from Chile to Norway and Turkey to China (see Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2018; Gui et al., 2018; Krøvel et al., 2019). Between 1980 and 2018, while capture fisheries increased from 67 to 96 million tonnes of live catches per year, aquaculture production increased from 5 to 82 million tonnes per year (FAO, 2020e). This rapid increase is having a significant effect on small-scale fishers ability to maintain their livelihoods, due to intensified market competition and ecological impact. The speed and scale at which aquaculture can produce allows huge quantities of fish to be sold for relatively low prices, effectively saturating the market and making it difficult for small-scale fishers to be able to compete (Rigby et al., 2017). Many industrial fishing companies have also increasingly targeted small fish, such as anchovies, to sell to fishmeal factories to process into feed for aquaculture fish – exhausting stocks which many small-scale fishers are highly dependent on (Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2018). Aquatic ecosystems are further impacted by fish pen waste collecting on the sea floor, water contamination caused by worn down facilities and production inputs like growth hormones and antibiotics, and the spread of diseases both among penned fish, and to wild fish that come into contact with them. All of these issues impact the present and future viability of wild fish stocks and the health of the ecosystems that small-scale fishers’ livelihoods depend on (Gui et al., 2018; Krøvel et al., 2019).



**Box 6.2: Aquaculture Development in Turkey**

Situated at the periphery of the European Union – one of the world’s biggest seafood importers – horizontal expansion of Europe’s interest into large-scale marine aquaculture development soon seeped into Turkey. In the mid-1980s, production levels were still quite low, but began to increase steadily over the following decade. Between 2000 and 2016, aquaculture production grew more than 400 per cent, with 75 per cent of its two main products, sea bass and sea bream, being exported to Europe. While aquaculture expansion was framed as an economically viable and sustainable solution for dwindling fish stocks in the Black Sea, the rapid growth of the industry has created another source of pressure on the fisheries sector. The Turkish aquaculture sector depends heavily on anchovies, which are caught by industrial boats, sent to fishmeal factories for processing, and then used as feed for fish, such as sea bass and sea bream, being bred in aquaculture tanks. This means that industrial boats are catching even more anchovies in the Black Sea to meet the demands of the aquaculture companies. Small-scale fishers in the region, who predominantly catch anchovies for human consumption, are quite concerned about this expansion, arguing that it could lead to the complete collapse of the anchovy industry that so many people – both fishers and fish processors – depend on (Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2018).

**6.3.3 Accelerating Spread of Climate Change Initiatives**

The third phenomenon is that the accelerated spread of climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives, and their intersection with conservation agendas, further restricts access to fisheries resources and territories. This leads to ‘new forms’ of control over access and resources, which have overlapped with, and exacerbated, existing exclusion, dispossession and exploitation of small-scale fishers stemming from decades of privatization and industrialization in the (sea)food sector (Mills, 2018; Campling and Havice, 2014; Mansfield, 2011). This acceleration is perhaps most prominent in the context of land-based initiatives like REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), which involves the sale of carbon credits as a way to prevent deforestation, offset existing and future emissions, and slow global warming (Scheidel, 2019; Claeys and Delgado Pugley, 2015; Beymer-Farris and Bassett, 2012), but more recently has seeped into fisheries. Fishing areas where climate change mitigation and adaptation overlap with food production policies are central points for the emergence of the global ‘climate-food system’. In this system, ‘new’ initiatives, such as Climate-Smart Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (CSA) and blue growth, are presented as win-win solutions to address destructive production practices, environmental degradation and climate change-induced natural disasters. However, despite promising benefits for all, many small-scale fishers and farmers end up losing either partial or complete access to fisheries resources and are excluded from potential benefits (Clapp et al., 2018; Barbesgaard, 2018; Hunsberger et al., 2017; Martinez-Alier et al., 2016).

A key element of this phenomenon is that in global and national climate governance agendas, development initiatives are increasingly being reframed as mitigation and adaptation efforts. Such agendas have also begun to prioritize adaptation measures over mitigation efforts, as the effects of climate change – particularly coastal storms and sea level rise – become more frequent and severe sooner than predicted. Some governments have also turned to the private sector to act as development sponsors and manage adaptation initiatives, shifting the social and economic responsibility away from the state. Coastal development projects have in some cases been presented as part of a national adaptation strategy, such as relocating fishing communities for their protection, only to subsequently use vacated areas for high-end tourist resorts and other development projects (Uson, 2017; Bavinck et al., 2015; Segi, 2014). Such projects prioritize private interests over the protection of fishers' livelihoods and the environments they depend on, while facilitating the expansion of capitalist development in coastal areas and creating more opportunities for private companies, in partnership with governments, to accumulate capital under the guise of climate change adaptation efforts (Longo et al., 2015). This is just one example of the complex politics that exist within climate governance agendas, in which economic and technological fixes are offered up to address environmental limits and resource overexploitation, instead of addressing the core causes of degradation (Dressler et al., 2014; Arsel and Büscher, 2012; Büscher and Arsel, 2012).

**Box 6.3: Climate Change Adaptation in the Philippines**

In the Philippines, 2013's typhoon Haiyan devastated the country, including Sicogon Island, home to around 1,100 fishing families who have fished and lived on the island for the past 100 years. Around 70 per cent of the island is owned by an elite family who were operating a sugarcane plantation and a high-end tourism business between the mid-1970s and 80s, after which communist insurgency in the area caused the business to collapse. Local people increasingly used the vacant land for small-scale agriculture, yet in recent years, the family has been actively seeking investors to allow them to rebuild the business. They soon partnered with the Ayala Corporation, an investment firm that was interested in expanding its tourism portfolio. After the 2013 typhoon hit, a convenient opportunity emerged for the tourism development project to be carried forward. As part of the typhoon recovery efforts, the national government partnered with the private sector, including the Ayala Corporation, to act as development sponsors. However, rather than providing assistance for rebuilding local communities, Ayala's strategy was to relocate all Sicogon residents to newly built houses on the Panay mainland. This relocation was presented as a climate adaptation strategy that would move residents to a safer area less susceptible to natural disasters, but the company was more interested in having the locals out of the way so it was easier to turn the island into a high-end tourist resort. Residents who resisted the move were met with coercion and were refused aid to rebuild local fisheries and farms, and many small-scale fishers were dispossessed of their land and access to fishing territories (Uson, 2017).

### ***6.3.4 Emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic***

The fourth phenomenon is a bit different, and has emerged much more recently than the previous three. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has both illuminated and exacerbated multiple vulnerabilities in the fisheries sector, including dependence on international trade and markets; the insecurity of fisheries livelihoods; and the lack of access to healthcare and other social services in fishing communities (Belton et al., 2021; Marschke et al., 2021; Havice et al., 2020). People in every corner of the world have been impacted by the outbreak of the Corona virus, with impacts in poor, rural and indigenous communities, where healthcare services are often unreliable and inaccessible, being especially disproportionate and severe (IPC, 2021; Samudra, 2020). Fishers and fishing communities have been hit hard by the pandemic on a number of fronts, including health impacts and deaths, loss of livelihoods, and are facing new obstacles to accessing seafood markets. In countless countries, fisheries were closed and fishing seasons cancelled because fishing boats and processing facilities could not provide enough space (1.5 or 2 meters) for fishers and processors to work together safely (FAO, 2020f; Guttal, 2020; Bennett et al., 2020).

The closure of restaurants, hotels and other tourism facilities, particularly in the first months of the pandemic, caused a sudden and drastic drop in demand for seafood. This meant a huge loss of income for many fishers, particularly those without access to processing, storage or freezing facilities who are dependent on selling fresh fish daily, usually through a fish seller. Many became solely reliant on selling their catches to supermarkets, in local markets or directly to consumers (Belton et al., 2021; Marschke et al., 2021; Havice et al., 2020). However, many fish markets have also been forced to close due to speculation that the virus originally emerged from such a market in China, and fears that it could spread more easily in wet markets where animals are present. For small-scale fishers and fish sellers, who rarely have direct links with large supermarket chains, small local markets became their only option for making a living. However, such markets typically account for a small fraction of what many fishers and fish sellers need to sell in order to secure an adequate and stable income (Bennett et al., 2020; Guttal, 2020; FAO, 2020f).

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted significant vulnerabilities in the seafood sector, such as the dependence on both domestic and international trade. The high perishability of seafood makes it difficult to transport without first processing it, either by freezing, canning or packaging, salting or smoking it. In many places, huge amounts of seafood had to be thrown back into the sea because it could not be sold in time (Havice et al., 2020;

Jamwal, 2020; Ananth, 2020). Fishers in many countries pleaded with their governments to direct pandemic support funds toward fisheries, or provide them with some form of debt relief to allow them to survive until they were able to work again (Guttal, 2020; Jordan, 2020; Prendergast, 2020). At the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the COFI, held online in February 2021, the IPC Working Group on Fisheries made a statement, in which they highlighted:

Despite several disruptions in the fisheries value chain due to COVID-19 and pandemic control measures, small-scale fisheries have been resilient in many parts of the world. Others are still struggling to adapt to lockdown measures, restrictions on movement of workers, fisheries inputs, the commercialisation of fish products, increasing significantly food insecurity of families... We recommend therefore that social protection measures need to be inclusive of all workers in the fisheries and aquaculture value chain – formal and informal, full-time and part-time – and should be extended to these workers during the entire duration of the pandemic. We urge that national governments create a COVID-19 social protection fund for fishworkers and their families. The impacts of COVID-19 remind us of the connections between our food systems and health. It is thus important that FAO, OIE, WHO and other multilateral agencies work with governments to collaborate and jointly develop protocols and standards for zoonotic diseases and pandemics in the context of fisheries and aquaculture (IPC, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented and historic global moment across all sectors, and fisheries have certainly felt the full force of it. While the short-term impacts of the pandemic are already quite visible, bigger questions remain of what the longer-term impacts in the global (sea)food system will be, particularly for the already-vulnerable small-scale sector and in countries where pandemic measures have been the strictest. However, while this global crisis has created critical obstacles and setbacks in global struggles against poverty and food insecurity, it has also reminded us of the importance of the indivisible linkages between human rights, food, health, and environmental systems. It has shed new light on the crucial and ongoing work that is being done to integrate the universal right to food and the rights of fishers and fishing communities to secure lives and livelihoods, offering an opportunity to build back and build forward better (Samudra, 2020; Clapp and Moseley, 2020; HLPE, 2020).

**Box 6.4: Lockdown at Sea in India**

In India, more than a hundred thousand fishers were stranded in their fishing boats in the Arabian Sea after Prime Minister Modi announced a nation-wide lockdown in March 2020 to try to curb the spread of the corona virus. Thousands of fishers in this area engage in deep-sea fishing, requiring them to be away at sea for weeks at a time, typically carrying just enough food and supplies to last the duration of their trip. While the fishers were out at sea, the country was placed under a 21-day lockdown period, which meant the fishers were not allowed to return to the shore until the lockdown was lifted. Many of these fishers were migrant workers from India's land-locked interior states. Locals from nearby coastal villages shuttled rice and water rations to the fishers since they did not have enough supplies to last the three weeks anchored offshore (Jamwal, 2020; Ananth, 2020). All 1,547 fish landing sites in coastal Indian states, as well as processing sites, were also forced to shut down in order to avoid overcrowding at ports and fish markets. With fishers unable to sell their catches, mass amounts of seafood were dumped back into the sea. Export markets were also hit hard due to lockdown-induced lack of demand in places like Europe and the United States. With 70 per cent of India's seafood earnings coming from exporting frozen shrimp, this struck a heavy financial blow to fishing sector. Further exacerbating the situation, the day the lockdown ended, the annual two month fishing ban came into force in eastern India, meaning fishers were essentially unable to fish or sell their catches from March to June. For many fishers, their situation has become so desperate that there are growing concerns about mass fisher suicides, an epidemic that has already devastated many Indian farming communities (Jamwal, 2020; Guttal, 2020; Bennett et al., 2020).

## 6.4 Concluding Discussion

The fisheries sector is rife with contentious politics and issues, which have only become more complex in recent decades as a result of rural and environmental transformations, and related global food and climate crises. In seeking to understand why and how transnational fishers' movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries, this chapter has addressed the third sub-question guiding this study: What contentious fisheries issues are movements struggling over, what are the political implications of these issues, and how are movements engaging with them? The chapter has explored the five key issues prioritized by fishers' movements in their political agendas and engagement in international spaces and platforms, including blue economy and growth, ocean and coastal grabbing, aquaculture, aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity, and inland fisheries, which have also been prominent issues punctuating and complicating the politics of global fisheries. Focusing on these particular issues has played an important role in organizing and focusing fishers' movements' discourses, demands and activities, while also allowing them to critically analyse and engage with broader fisheries debates. I have also argued that the issues movements are

struggling over are both entrenched within, and emblematic of, four global phenomena, including the expansion of the industrial (sea)food system; intensive investment in sustainable development extending into the oceans; the intersection of conservation and climate mitigation and adaptation agendas; and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. All four phenomena continue to have deep social and economic impacts on small-scale fisheries.

The IPC Fisheries Working Group has played a crucial role in framing and voicing the perspectives of small-scale fishers' organizations on international platforms like the FAO, and raising the profile of the threats and issues small-scale fishers are facing globally. Of the five IPC working groups, the Fisheries WG has been the main focus within the IPC for the fishers' movements, led by a handful of WFFP and WFF representatives, and with vital support from Crocevia, ICSF, TNI and FIAN. This group has collectively guided fishers' movement engagement and representation in the COFI and CFS, and through their participation in various events, webinars, meetings and workshops, have contributed to shaping movement discourse within the FAO, and more broadly in international civil society and research spaces. Their prioritization of blue economy and growth, ocean and coastal grabbing, aquaculture, aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity, and inland fisheries, has demonstrated their capacities to track and analyse global debates related to fisheries and the oceans, and to connect these debates with developments on the ground and material impacts in fishing communities. This provides a critical link between abstract global governance processes, and the tangible issues and obstacles that small-scale fishers are experiencing, illustrating one of the most fundamental contributions transnational fishers' movements make to the politics of fisheries. Illuminating these connections also allows us to see how fishers are impacted by the material consequences of uneven capitalist development in global fisheries, and the expansion of capital, privatization and corporate interests, which have transformed the sector and contributed to both regional and intersectoral disparities (Fraser, 2021; Olin Wright, 2019; O'Connor, 1998).

Situating the issues prioritized by movements within four global phenomena provides important insights into the implications of converging fisheries, food and climate crises for the lives and livelihoods of small-scale fishers. First, the uptake of fishing quota systems and private property approaches to controlling resource access, illustrates how the expansion of the industrial (sea)food system has broadened and intensified privatization in fisheries, concentrating property, wealth and power in the hands of industrial companies. Second, the expansion of large-scale intensive aquaculture as a technological prescription for dwindling fish stocks and growing seafood demand, demonstrates how investment in the 'sustainable

development' of natural resources has extended beyond forests and agricultural lands, and into oceans and inland fishing areas. Third, as national development agendas become increasingly reframed as mitigation and adaptation efforts, we witness how the accelerated spread of such efforts, which are intersecting with conservation agendas, further restrict access to fisheries resources and territories. Fourth, the COVID-19 pandemic has both illuminated and exacerbated deeply-rooted vulnerabilities in the fisheries sector, illustrated by disruptions in seafood trade, drop in demand, the closure of processing facilities, and a widespread loss of incomes.

These four phenomena have emerged from a system of capitalist development, which has continuously undermined small-scale fisheries, and created a complex array of social relations. In seeking to understand these social relations and who gets what and why in the fisheries sector (Bernstein, 2010), analyses of the expansion of industrial fisheries and aquaculture, privatization, intensive investment in ocean spaces, blue economy discourse, and climate change and neoliberal conservation agendas, provide important insights into the political and economic systems that are facilitating the concentration of property ownership, resource control and capital accumulation. Exploring socio-ecological relations allows us to better understand how large-scale industrial capture fisheries and aquaculture expansion is affecting aquatic ecosystems, and the ineffectiveness of technological fixes that fail to address deeper structural issues of overconsumption and the constant hunger for profit (Foster, 2017; Dressler et al., 2014; Arsel and Büscher, 2012). Fishers' movements have recognized the flaws in global systems of production, circulation and consumption, and are resisting the exclusionary concentration of power and control that this system fosters. They also recognize that effective resistance is not only about challenging the dominant system, but about developing and voicing alternative strategies and solutions for building a system based on social justice, human rights and equity. In advocating for these alternatives, fishers' movements play an important role in bringing these alternatives to international spaces and platforms.

The issues and phenomena discussed in this chapter are vital pieces of the puzzle in analysing the role of transnational fishers' movements in the politics of fisheries, which link the movements to broader fisheries, food and climate debates and global governance spaces and processes. This chapter illustrates that while fishers' movements have responded to contentious issues in powerful ways. This has meant that, due to systemic constraints and the marginalization of small-scale fishers, they have not always been able to respond and mobilize as they wish. They have had to be both creative and cautious in their engagement with particular

contentious issues, figuring out when and how to address particular issues, in which spaces, and in collaboration with which strategic allies. They have also had to be pragmatic about their human, time and financial capacities, targeting particular issues while neglecting others depending on what has been feasible at a given moment. Some issues, such as labour and trade policy, may be seen from both outside and inside the movements, as silences which they should consider giving more attention to in internal training and advocacy work. Future research should explicitly explore and analyse these silences in order to determine specific reasons why movements have not engaged deeply with them. Yet, despite the ever-evolving politics of global fisheries, and the steady flow of challenges small-scale fishers are being confronted with, movements have made notable progress in expanding their knowledge and analyses, and contributing their perspectives to public forums.



## 7

## Conclusion: Capacities, Alliances, Critical Voices and the Future of Fisheries Justice

### 7.1 Key Questions and Findings

This study has investigated *why and how transnational fishers' movements contest and seek to influence the politics of global fisheries*. Focusing particularly on WFFP and WFF, it has analysed their engagement in transnational spaces and processes for the past two decades in the context of contemporary politics around fisheries, food production and climate change. Throughout the dissertation, empirical data and analytical insights have been woven together to demonstrate how linking the politics of fishers' movements more purposefully to academic and political debates can expand and deepen our understanding of social movements and global politics. The study has contributed to understandings of why and how fishers' movements are organizing themselves and engaging with politics at the global level, and through what channels they are finding ways to participate in formal and informal governance arenas and processes.

Chapter 3, on the three successive waves of industrialization, privatization and conservation, provides historical and structural analysis of how overlapping processes of exclusion in global fisheries have both threatened small-scale fishers and fostered mobilization. Emerging from this historical and structural context, three overlapping analytical spheres have structured my inquiry: 1) transnational movements contesting and seeking to influence the politics of global fisheries; 2) international political spaces movements are prioritizing; and 3) contentious fisheries issues shaping movements' struggles and political agendas. Inquiring into these spheres has allowed me to answer the three sub-questions devised to operationalize the central research question. These sub-questions, which focus on the evolution of fishers' movements and their political agendas, the significance of particular international spaces, and engagement with fisheries issues, have been answered in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively and are reviewed in the following sections.

Analysis of the key questions guiding this study have revealed four main findings:

- First, overlapping processes of exclusion have contributed to both triggering and propelling transnational mobilization, as fishers seek ways to respond to exclusion and through anti-capitalist strategies of resistance.
- Second, fishers' movements' engagement with fisheries, food and climate politics have been crucial catalysts for both internal capacity-building and the formation of productive alliances with civil society and intergovernmental organizations.
- Third, fishers' movements contribute an essential critical voice to international political spaces, by analysing and challenging particular agendas put forward by governments and intergovernmental bodies.
- Fourth, fishers' movements play a key role in raising the profile of the issues and threats small-scale fishers are facing globally, by developing and presenting a political narrative that challenges the status quo and offers alternatives for advancing fisheries justice.

These four key findings are elaborated upon in the following sections, before I turn to the broader analytical and methodological implications of this study, policy recommendations, and key challenges for political activism.

### ***7.1.1 Overlapping Processes of Exclusion Propelling Mobilization***

When tracing and analysing the historical and structural developments in global fisheries, three distinct, overlapping waves emerge: the industrialization wave (post-1900); the privatization wave (post-1970); and the conservation wave (post-2000). As demonstrated in Chapter 3, these three waves have contributed to the overlap of existing and newer processes of exclusion in the fisheries sector. These overlapping processes exclude and dispossess small-scale fishers from traditional fishing territories, threaten their livelihoods, exploit their labour, and in some cases, escalate resource conflicts caused by dwindling fish stocks, intensified competition for fisheries resources, and changing patterns of consumption and demand (Longo et al., 2015; Friedmann, 2016; McMichael and Friedmann, 2007). For transnational fishers' movements, the complexity of such processes has required them to develop diverse resistance strategies and tools for mobilization – including producing statements, research and reports; organizing assemblies, meetings and workshops; building alliances with like-minded and supportive organizations; engaging directly in intergovernmental and civil society spaces; and in some

cases, choosing principled non-participation. These strategies and tools have been employed with varying degrees of consistency in the last two decades, which has been reflected in movements' level of activity, visibility and cohesion. None of these elements have been historically static, but have rather ebbed and flowed as a result of shifting global political and economic contexts and internal capacities (Diani, 2015; Tarrow, 2011; Fox, 2010).

This study has demonstrated how the first process of exclusion, emerging from 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialization and related advances in shipping and storage, caused substantial changes in global patterns of seafood production and consumption. By the 1950s, as fisheries became more profitable, there was a dramatic growth in the capital and resources being invested in the sector. This facilitated further technological advancement, the rapid expansion of the large-scale industrial sector, and a 400 per cent increase in the annual amount of fish caught globally by 2000 (Longo et al., 2015). Much of this fish is now being redirected away from human consumption, in order to be processed into fertilizers and feed for industrial livestock (Campling and Havice, 2014). However, rising demand for seafood has also been a key factor in industrial expansion, with annual per capita consumption increasing from 3 to 20.5 kilograms between the 1950s and 2020 (FAO, 2012; 2020e).

The industrial sector's highly mechanized fishing gear and methods, which require less human labour than traditional fishing methods, have led to widespread marine ecosystem disruption and destruction, while simultaneously flooding markets with cheap seafood. Industrial competition has forced many small-scale fishers out of the sector, leading to high levels of unemployment in fishing communities, and threatening their survival. Privatization agendas have exacerbated these problems, with private property arrangements, inequitable access agreements, and ocean grabbing transforming fishing grounds from common to privately-controlled spaces, and diverting resources away from local people. As a result, many small-scale fishers have lost access to traditional fishing territories and resources, threatening both their livelihoods and food and nutrition security. As long as unsustainable industrial practices and capital-hungry privatization processes are allowed to carry on unrestrained, the critical role that small-scale fisheries plays in global food security is at risk (Campling and Colás, 2021; De Schutter, 2012; Mansfield, 2011).

The second process of exclusion rolled in with the conservation wave, and the intersection between conservation and climate change mitigation agendas. During this wave, blue economy and blue growth agendas are being steadily promoted as triple-win approaches to protecting aquatic environments and mitigating climate impacts, developing ocean and

coastal infrastructure and economies, and creating employment opportunities for local communities (Barbesgaard, 2018; Clapp et al. 2018). Fishing territories have been increasingly enclosed in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and government-enforced fishing restrictions are justified as a way to protect ecologically vulnerable coastal waters (Campling et al., 2012). The oceans are also becoming increasingly implicated in a global ‘carbon complex’ (Borras, 2016), as blue carbon credits derived from mangroves, marshes and seagrass meadows are sold to private sector investors aiming to offset their emissions elsewhere (Thomas, 2014; Nellemann et al., 2009). Meanwhile, industrial aquaculture expansion is being presented as a way to conserve wild fish stocks and provide protein for a growing global population, while simultaneously requiring huge operational inputs of capital, resources (including wild fish) and energy (Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà, 2017).

The range of initiatives that are both emerging and expanding in this wave come with the promise that everyone, including small-scale fishers, will benefit from their development. Yet, many conservation projects end up causing fishers to lose full or partial access to fishing territories and resources, while they are not provided with opportunities or training to switch to alternative livelihoods, such as eco-tourism – nor do they necessarily want to. Highly mechanized aquaculture and technological coastal industries developed as part of the blue economy, such as wind energy, also require much less human labour than the small-scale fishing sector, meaning a loss of fisheries jobs is replaced by high levels of unemployment and poverty (Wolff, 2015; Benjaminsen and Bryceson, 2012). Considering fishing and coastal communities are already on the frontlines of many climate-induced threats, countries with large fishing populations, particularly in Africa, Asia and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), face critical development challenges and compounded socio-economic burdens stemming from intersections between climate impacts and the unintended ramifications of conservation and mitigation initiatives (Allison et al., 2009).

This study has demonstrated that the combined consequences of overlapping processes of exclusion have facilitated significant transformations in global fisheries, involving shifting socio-economic relations between fishers, markets and consumers. As a result, many small-scale fishers have lost access to markets, been dispossessed from their means of production, and had their labour exploited by owners of industrial fishing companies. Governance mechanisms have focused too narrowly on the management and conservation of fisheries resources, while failing to address deeper structural inequalities and concentration of power in the sector. This system has also cast fishers as subjects of development, which themselves need

to be managed and controlled, rather than providing space in which they can contribute to fisheries governance and resource conservation (Campling et al., 2012). Yet, fishing communities are also transforming, as they seek ways to adapt to socio-economic shifts, develop creative ways to continue to survive in the sector, and demonstrate their capacities to be agents of change. The emergence of WFFP and WFF has been a vivid illustration of the creativity and political capacities within these communities, which have found ways to organize locally and nationally, and subsequently scale up their struggles to the transnational level. These movements have mobilized around and contributed to debates and processes within broader civil society and fisheries governance arenas, in order to explicitly challenge mainstream visions and norms that neglect fishers' human rights and fail to protect the future viability of the small-scale sector. In the context of increasingly complex politics around seafood production, circulation and consumption, the role of fishers' movements as actors that are challenging the current state of affairs and raising critical perspectives, becomes all the more crucial.

### ***7.1.2 Internal Capacity-Building and Productive Alliances***

When analysing the history and evolution of transnational fishers' movements, this study has demonstrated the importance of embedding this history in the structural context of neoliberal globalization and uneven and combined capitalist development. This context has transformed the strategies of civil society actors, particularly those of an anti-capitalist nature, and how they engage in public actions and spaces, and navigate changing forms of global power (Olin Wright, 2019; Scholte, 2011; Gaventa and Tandon, 2010; McCarthy, 2005; O'Connor, 1998). This history has been central to the first analytical sphere framing this study, and explored extensively in Chapter 4, which addressed: *What transnational fishers' movements exist, how have they evolved over time, and what are their political agendas and strategies?* Through analysis of this multi-part question, I discovered that three pivotal developments provide crucial insights into alliance-building with civil society and intergovernmental organizations, and have had important implications for fishers' movements' political agendas and strategies and their broader role in the politics of global fisheries. While the first development has been an internal capacity-building process in which movements have engaged with overlapping fisheries, food and climate crises; the second and third developments have been external processes in which movements have formed productive alliances with agrarian movements and

UN bodies. In combination, these three developments have been key to fishers' movements deepening and strengthening their political analysis and agendas, while also engaging with allies' networks to scale up their advocacy work and reach a broader international audience.

Extensive historical archives on social movements, and particularly fishers' movements, are rare, which means gathering more information on how movements evolve over time is crucial to understanding agendas and strategies for collective action (Diani, 2015). This is also a difficult endeavour. This study contributed by collecting historical data in a coherent way, and building an archive that not only serves as a resource for future research on the subject, but also as a resource for current and future members of the movements to understand their shared history. Such an archive is valuable both as a publicly available resource accessible to researchers and other interested actors, as well as a tool for capacity-building within movements themselves that enables the transfer of knowledge between members. Movement archives provide important insights into how movements have engaged with particular issues, framed their key messages and statements, and how their political analysis has evolved over time. As I collected and pieced together documents, I was able to trace their engagement with overlapping fisheries, food and climate issues and related crises, and analyse how their internalization of these issues was strengthening their advocacy work, enabling them to expand their networks and forge new ties with like-minded movements and organizations, and scale up their international reach.

When analysing how fishers' movements have evolved over time, it is also important to understand their internal political dynamics and how this has impacted their trajectories. The transnational nature of the movements, and the diverse contexts of members, means that they require a high level of common collective identity, and communication between members in order to remain cohesive (Fox, 2010). This cohesion is further complicated by the diversity of direct and indirect relationships that individuals and local and national organizations within the movement are involved in (Diani, 2015). As movements of movements, maintaining cohesion within WFFP and WFF is a continuous challenge, and even more difficult than it typically is in movements that have a shared local or national context and more frequent direct contact. Members also often have different perspectives on identity and how membership is constructed, while inclusionary and exclusionary practices emerge in different forms at different moments in a movement's history (Bernstein, 2014).

The heterogeneity of members in a movement can often cause internal tensions and conflict, which sometimes can be addressed and smoothed over, while other times these tensions boil over and create fractures. In the fishers' movements, this became particularly

evident leading up to and during the 2000 split in Loctudy. The split was the consequence of a combination of tensions around both the political direction and purpose of WFF, and leadership dynamics in which the strong, and at times inflexible, characters of particular individuals were a determining factor in the decisive outcome. This effectively divided the international network of individuals and organizations fighting for the rights of small-scale fishers. This pivotal moment likely had a long-term impact on the mobilizing strength of both WFF and WFFP, by spreading small-scale fisheries-centred advocacy work thinly across two movements, rather than having all hands on the same deck and concentrating the work in one unified base.

On the other hand, the split may have also opened up new mobilization paths, in which both movements could develop and pursue political agendas that better suited their respective membership. Having the members divided into two more politically aligned camps may have prevented future stalemates emerging in discussions around agenda-setting, strategy and actions to organize. In the following years, while maintaining similar constitutional bases and focusing on drawing attention to similar structural issues in small-scale fisheries, WFF and WFFP evolved into different movements with different political characters. With several strong fishers' organizations from India, Sri Lanka and South Africa at the helm, WFFP remained relatively active in the early-2000s, consistently holding annual Coordination Committee meetings and triennial General Assemblies between 2004 and 2017 (WFFP, 2020d). Meanwhile, WFF was loosely networked and largely inactive between the early 2000s and 2012, with its secretariat going through a slow process of capacity development (WFF, 2010), which allowed the movement to re-emerge at a critical moment when the SSF Guidelines were in the midst of development.

WFF joining the Guidelines process in 2012 added an extra layer of movement power to the efforts of WFFP and ICSF, while also providing a crucial opportunity for the three organizations and FAO to re-build and strengthen their alliances with each other. The success of this process required a great deal of energy and mobilization, especially from particular committed individuals within the four organizations, without which the Guidelines may have taken a very different form, or may have never come to fruition. The role of fishers' movements in the Guidelines process is one prominent example of how they have developed their capacities to critically analyse global structural inequality and unequal power relations; effectively negotiate intergovernmental spaces; and centre their advocacy work on a human rights-based approach to addressing small-scale fishers' social, political and economic marginalization (Ratner et al., 2014). The movements' ability to recognize the power of human rights principles, the importance of developing international guidelines for small-scale

fisheries, and to access and actively participate in this process, are the result of a series of historical events and developments. In combination, the UN steadily opening up spaces to civil society engagement since the 1990s, the rise of social movement opposition to private property agendas, and their recognition of the essentiality of human and tenure rights in their struggles, highlight how historical events are continuously influencing each other and creating new possibilities for the future (McKeon, 2017a; Ratner et al., 2017; Schiavoni, 2017).

### ***7.1.3 Contributing a Critical Voice to International Political Spaces***

The globalizing context that many transnational fishers' movements emerged from in the 1990s, in which power began shifting from nation-states to more global actors and institutions, has necessitated a central focus in this study on global politics and governance arenas. At the heart of this shift was an increase in the global flow of capital, goods and people, allowing capital to expand even further into new domains, and exacerbating uneven and combined processes of development in different global regions (Fraser, 2021; Olin Wright, 2019; O'Connor, 1998). The role of the state in global politics and the economy was transformed alongside an unprecedented expansion of global governance instruments and agencies, namely the UN, World Bank and WTO. These agencies increasingly became implicated in social struggles worldwide, requiring many civil society actors to refocus their struggles from the national to international level (Marchetti, 2017; Scholte, 2011; Gaventa, 2006). This has subsequently required our interpretation of movements to move beyond being solely people-focused, to include moments, spaces, events and interactions as well (Diani, 2015). This study has addressed this need by analysing movement engagement in international spaces and processes, in order to get a better understanding of how they are contributing to global politics. The political spaces sphere is analysed extensively in Chapter 5, which addressed: *What international political spaces are movements prioritizing, what is their historical significance, and how are movements participating in them?*

As the three international political spaces that have been most prominent in the politics of transnational fishers' movements in the last two decades, the significance of the UN's COFI, CFS and COP, as well as some key event within, emerged through archival research, interviews, conversations and participant observation. These spaces are not only politically significant for global fisheries, food and climate governance, but have also involved active, long-term engagement from fishers' movements, and contributed to shaping some aspects of



their political agendas and the issues they prioritize. Fishers' movements have participated in these spaces in different ways, which has provided important insights into the diverse forms of social movement engagement that emerge at the transnational level. In the COFI and CFS, they have participated more directly through their membership in the IPC and CSM, while they have engaged more indirectly with the COP through their participation in parallel civil society-led climate justice spaces. The IPC, CSM and parallel COP-related events in particular have also been crucial convergence and alliance-building spaces (Claeys and Duncan, 2019; Claeys and Delgado Pugley, 2017), which have played a key role in capacity-building within fishers' movements. Beyond the COFI, CFS and COP, there have also been numerous other important events where movements have participated, or engaged less directly, which have contributed to shaping their political character and agendas. Many of these have been highlighted in Appendix 2 at the end of this dissertation.

As the first, and most important political space for fishers' movements, the COFI has been a central focus for transnational mobilization in the last decade. The COFI is a combination of both an invited and claimed space (Gaventa, 2006), in which the 2008 Bangkok Conference was an important catalyst in bringing together the movements and the FAO, and setting the SSF Guidelines process in motion. The movements' own political initiative and recognition of the importance of UN spaces for scaling up their struggles, in combination with the commitment of key FAO allies to engage directly with fishing communities and movements, were crucial factors in opening doors and allowing more direct involvement from the IPC. This involvement became particularly important between 2009 and 2014, when the SSF Guidelines were being developed, although this process also involved critical challenges and difficult negotiations in regard to ensuring the instrument's tone and recommendations were widely acceptable to COFI Members States. The development of the Guidelines was also an important unifying process within and between fishers' movements and allied organizations, sparking productive mobilization which continued for several years. As an instrument created by and for small-scale fishers, the 2014 endorsement of the Guidelines was a pivotal victory for WFFP, WFF and ICSF following years of hard work, due to the resulting commitment made by COFI Members to protect and uphold the rights of fishers around the world. Yet, the post-Guidelines endorsement period has posed important challenges for movements in maintaining international mobilization and cohesion, particularly as many members shift their focus toward collaborating with national governments to Guidelines implementation at the country level. Through their role in the Advisory Group of the SSF-GSF, movements will need

to continue to work hard to maintain a space for themselves at the COFI table, and ensure they maintain a central role in monitoring the implementation of the Guidelines.

In the second important political space, participation in the CFS has posed different challenges to fishers' movements than the COFI has. These challenges have stemmed largely from the CFS' prioritization of agricultural issues, while paying little attention to the importance of seafood and the contributions fisheries make to global food security. Similar to the COFI, the CFS is a combined claimed and invited space (Gaventa, 2006), in which social movements played a key role in its 2009 reform and the subsequent establishment of the CSM (McKeon, 2017a; Brem-Wilson, 2015; CFS, 2010). Fishers' movements began engaging with the CFS in 2010, somewhat later than they had with the COFI, and there has been much less participation from WFFP and WFF members in the CFS. A few members have participated regularly through their roles in the CSM Coordination Committee, while some others see it is a less relevant international space than the COFI for the movements to allot limited capacities and resources to. However, as one of the most participatory intergovernmental spaces and its central role in international food policy and governance, the CFS continues to be a strategic space for fishers' movements to be involved in. While there is still more progress to be made, movements have made important contributions to raising the profile of fisheries issues in this space, by being critical of the lack of analysis of small-scale fisheries issues and highlighting the contributions the sector makes to food security and nutrition. Their participation has also had notable impacts on their capacities, including gaining valuable international experience at the UN level, enhancing their knowledge and political analysis of food issues and systems, and making themselves more visible in FAO beyond its Fisheries Department and the COFI. The CSM has also been an important convergence space for fishers' and agrarian movements, which has strengthened their alliances and collective strategies (Claeys and Duncan, 2019), and increased agrarian movement' understanding of fisheries issues, and fishers' movements' understanding of agrarian issues.

In the third important political space, which is fundamentally different than the first two, engagement with the COP has taken a contrasting form to that of the COFI and CFS. As a space attracting the interest of a vast number of organizations, the COP has developed more limiting restrictions about how many and which CSOs can participate. Fishers' movements have both chosen and been compelled not to formally engage with the COP, instead prioritizing parallel civil society-organized spaces, such as the Zone for Climate Action in Paris in 2015 and the climate justice workshop in Morocco in 2016. Like many of their allies in agrarian and

climate justice movements, WFFP and WFF have engaged in a strategy of principled non-participation in the official COP (MacGinty, 2012), choosing instead to direct their energy toward autonomous spaces that seek indirect influence and criticize the false climate solutions proposed by governments and corporations. These autonomous initiatives have been important convergence spaces, in which fisher, agrarian and climate movements have engaged in capacity-building, strategy discussions, and deepened mutual understandings of each other's struggles (Mills, 2018; Tramel, 2016). They have also provided spaces for like-minded movements to collectively highlight what many small-scale producers consider real solutions to tackling the climate crisis, including the use of traditional knowledge and sustainable methods of production that are the foundations of food sovereignty and agroecology (Claeys and Delgado Pugley, 2017). Considering climate issues are a relatively recent focus in fishers' movements' political agendas, their interactions with actors that have been embedded in the climate justice movement for much longer, have been essential for strengthening their analysis of complex climate debates and politics. This has contributed to the capacities of fishers' movements in drawing attention to the disproportionate impacts climate change has on small-scale fishing communities, and equitable, just ways to address the structural causes of these impacts. There is, however, still much more work to be done to expand and deepen the fishers' movements' work on climate change, and continued engagement with both climate justice spaces and allies in the movement will be a key factor in this.

This study's focus on mapping key political spaces addresses the need to analyse transnational movements across time and space, and the particular events that represent important historical markers in their evolution (Edelman and Borras, 2016). The research has also focused on historical and political connections within and between these spaces, in order to incorporate time and relational dynamics, and the cultural politics of events into the analysis (Schiavoni, 2017; Jackson, 2006; Tilly, 2002; McMichael, 2000). This has provided insights into how moments and events that have taken place in the past, have made important contributions to shaping the current political strategies and character of the fishers' movements. At the same time, the movements have made important contributions to these international spaces and events, by voicing the concerns of small-scale fishers and advocating for the protection of their rights, lives and livelihoods. They have raised critical questions, challenged mainstream governance agendas, and offered constructive ways for fishers' knowledge and experience to be taken more centrally into account. However, as mobilization and active participation have ebbed and flowed over time (Tarrow, 2011), the movements have also faced

internal capacity issues, in terms of human and financial resources and analytical capabilities, which have posed obstacles to their participation in other relevant international spaces addressing fisheries and related issues. They continue to struggle to assert their right to a seat at the table in intergovernmental UN spaces, and will need to keep strengthening their political skills and expanding their mobilization efforts in order to maintain a role in these spaces.

#### ***7.1.4 Raising the Profile of Small-Scale Fisheries Issues***

Contentious politics and issues are core factors shaping the character of global fisheries and fishers' movements, and determining why and how movements raise their voices, contest and resist. Several key issues have shaped movements' anti-capitalist struggles, becoming focal points of their political agendas, and central threads connecting them to particular international debates, spaces and platforms. These issues have been discussed and analysed extensively throughout this dissertation, particularly in Chapter 6, which addressed: *What contentious fisheries issues are movements struggling over, what are the social and political implications of these issues, and how are movements engaging with them?* Through their participation in the IPC Fisheries Working Group, fishers' movements have narrowed in on five specific issues, namely blue economy and growth, ocean and coastal grabbing, aquaculture, aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity, and inland fisheries. They have highlighted and analysed these issues in numerous statements, reports, briefs, workshops and webinars, while also engaging with them in FAO spaces and events. The Fisheries WG has played a crucial role in guiding movement engagement with the COFI and CFS, while also contributing to shaping movement discourse in international intergovernmental, civil society and research spaces. The issues they have chosen to prioritize have also been important aspects in organizing and focusing movement discourses and activities, and enhancing their critical analyse of broader fisheries debates.

This study has demonstrated fishers' movements' capacities to analyse capitalist development and the consequences of neoliberal globalization, and connect these broad processes with particular local contexts and experiences fishers have had with ocean grabbing, blue economy initiatives or aquaculture expansion. This ability to create connections between abstract global debates and related governance processes, and tangible issues faced by small-scale fishers, is a vital contribution transnational movements make to both fisheries politics, and to strengthening fisheries justice efforts. These connections also provide important insights

into how small-scale fishers are being unjustly impacted by capitalist development in the fisheries sector, and how the expansion of capital, corporate interests and privatization have transformed the sector. Such expansions has contributed to regional and intersectoral inequalities, and had profound social and economic consequences for fishers (Fraser, 2021; Olin Wright, 2019; O'Connor, 1998). This framing also highlights how the impacts of blue economy and blue growth initiatives, ocean and coastal grabbing, aquaculture expansion and biodiversity loss are all entrenched within, and emblematic of, what I have demonstrated are four global phenomena which continue to have significant impacts on small-scale fishers and fisheries.

First, the expansion of the industrial (sea)food system has broadened and intensified privatization in fisheries, concentrating property, wealth and power in the hands of large-scale industrial fishing companies. This study has looked specifically at how this manifests via the implementation of fishing quota systems, such as ITQs, as an approach to ensuring strict management of access to and control over fisheries resources. Second, intensive investment in the 'sustainable development' of natural resources has extended beyond forests and agricultural lands, and into the oceans and inland fishing areas. This study has discussed how this plays out in the context of large-scale aquaculture development, increasingly being prescribed by decisionmakers globally as an all-encompassing solution for dwindling wild fish stocks and growing demand for seafood. Third, the accelerated spread of intersecting climate change mitigation, adaptation and conservation initiatives, further restrict access to fisheries resources and territories. This study has explored this in the context of global and national development initiatives being increasingly reframed as mitigation and adaptation efforts, in which governments partner with private sector actors to relocate fishing communities in order to carry out coastal development projects. Fourth, the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated and exacerbated vulnerabilities in the fisheries sector, including dependence on international markets, the insecurity of fisheries livelihoods, and the lack of access to social services in fishing communities. This has been examined in this study in relation to the widespread drop in demand for seafood products, the closure of fisheries and processing facilities, disruptions in seafood trade, and the widespread loss of incomes.

These four phenomena illuminate how converging fisheries, food and climate crises are impacting small-scale fisheries, the threats fishers are facing globally, as well as the structural issues propelling fishers' collective mobilization and organization at the transnational level. These insights also expand our understanding of fishers' movements' political strategies, the

choices they make in focusing their advocacy work, and how they are linked with broader fisheries governance spaces and process. Through this study, I have found that, despite systemic constraints and marginalization, fishers' movements have played an important role in raising the profile of small-scale fisheries issues at the global level, finding creative ways to voice critical concerns, through a combination of written documents, public actions, and strategic collaboration with civil society, academic and intergovernmental actors. At times, they have been criticized by governments and intergovernmental organizations for being too radical in their demands or being difficult to collaborate with because they have refused to compromise on issues that they believed were non-negotiable. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, this steadfastness has at times worked out in their favour, and other times it has marginalized them. Their alliances and organizational relationships have shifted over time, as interests and objectives have changed. Some of these alliances and relationships have been strengthened, while others have been weakened, or dissolved altogether. Yet, despite the constantly changing global context, and the continuous flux of challenges being presented to small-scale fishers, fishers' movements have continued to inform themselves about emerging issues, expand their agendas, and find ways to make themselves heard.

## **7.2 Implications of this Study**

This study has woven together three sets of literature and debates, namely around fisheries, food and climate politics, highlighting their connections and the relevance of fishers' movements in all three. It has aimed to contribute particularly toward broadening and extending debates around social movements and global governance, by analysing the historical and emerging implications of fishers' movements and their political agendas and strategies. The study has demonstrated that through the analysis of three spheres of transnational movements, political spaces, and fisheries issues, and how they intersect, we get a clearer picture of why and how transnational fishers' movements engage in and contribute to the politics of global fisheries.

This study has also illustrated how deeper and more focused research on the politics of fishers' movements contributes to three key things. First, it broadens the scope of food politics beyond land and agriculture, through a targeted exploration of how small-scale fishers, fisheries resources and territories are entangled in food system transformations, and how fishers' movements are contributing to alternatives. Second, it extends debates around climate

politics through analyses of how environmental change and mitigation and adaptation initiatives are impacting small-scale fishers and fisheries, and how fishers' movements are responding to these impacts. Third, it strengthens existing bodies of fisheries research and analyses of fisheries politics through the integration of knowledge, insights and alternatives from fishers and their movements. In the following sections, I expand upon the analytical and methodological implications of this study, as well as offering some recommendations for fisheries, food and climate policy, and highlighting key challenges for political activism.

### ***7.2.1 Analytical Contributions to Political Economy and Political Ecology***

Weaving together a set of complementary analytical tools, this study has been conducted in an interdisciplinary and crosscutting manner, in order to construct a rigorous critical analysis. Rooted in the field of international development, and embedded in political economy and ecology, the multi-layered analytical framework allowed me to engage with insights from both social and political sciences. Three sets of literature and debates related to (1) relations of production and ecosocialism, (2) politics of transnational movements, and (3) historical influences and interconnections, have provided crucial analytical building blocks to answer the central question and sub-questions guiding this study. This crosscutting approach has been key in understanding the complex socio-ecological relations and dynamics that exist within the politics of fisheries and social movements. It has allowed me to incorporate multiple perspectives, forms of knowledge and means of generating data, in order to develop a study that offers both analytical and empirical insights into fishers' movements. I hope that this study may also spark more interest in the fascinating and analytically challenging politics of fishers' movements, particularly if such interest contributes toward the development of more equitable research and fisheries governance approaches. Some of the analytical elements of this study, such as the three-sphere movements, spaces and issues approach, may also be relevant for studies of other movements seeking insights into transnational mobilization and global governance processes.

This study has the following broad analytical implications for political economy and political ecology. First, it contributes to debates around relations of production and ecosocialism and the dynamics, processes and actors within, by analysing fisheries on a global, rather than national, level. It responds to the need to understand broader global contexts and

dynamics of food production, circulation and consumption, and related global governance processes which have become increasingly prominent in the last three decades. In doing so, it has combined a set of analytical lenses and tools, some of which have not been traditionally applied to analyses of fisheries, but more often in the context of agricultural production and capitalist development. It has also provided a structural and historical framework for analysing the development of global fisheries within three waves of industrialization, privatization and conservation, which provides crucial insights into the contexts which have triggered and propelled transnational mobilization among fishers their organizations.

Second, this study contributes to the bodies of literature seeking to analyse transnational social movements and food movements, by contributing analysis and analytical tools for understanding the historical context, dynamics and politics of transnational fishers' movements (TFMs). It has explored TFMs as movements that both overlap with, and yet are also distinct from, transnational agrarian movements (TAMs), demonstrating that despite the many common struggles and tensions they share, it is important not to conflate the two, or misrepresent TFMs as simply a sub-group of their agrarian allies. While increasing interest from international scholars in TAMs has expanded our understanding of their politics in the past decade, TFMs present a whole other set of complex fisheries-related characteristics and intricacies that require much deeper and more focused exploration. This study contributes toward addressing this gap, while providing analytical elements and asking questions that can be explored further in future research by other interested scholars.

Third, this study demonstrates how analyses of historical influences and the interconnections within provide crucial insights into both global politics and transnational movements, and how they evolve over time. It contributes to discussions of how incorporating historical developments, relational linkages, and event dynamics into analyses can provide important insights into complex political processes. Narrowing in on these three elements has allowed me to holistically analyse the three spheres of transnational movements, political spaces, and fisheries issues, paying particular attention to how historical moments and events continue to play a role in shaping the current character and politics of fishers' movements. These movements are both a product of and a response to the global social, political and economic context they have emerged within, demonstrating how they have internalized, analysed and resisted inequalities and exclusionary practices within the fisheries sector, that have been perpetuated by uneven processes of development in the past century.



### ***7.2.2 Expanding Global-Level and Movement-Centred Methodologies***

The methodological approach and methods used in this study were selected in order to gather diverse qualitative data in relation to multiple issues, actors, places and times. Considering the globalized context which transnational movements emerge from and are embedded in, it was necessary for me to construct a methodological approach that challenged traditional methodologies and units of analysis (Mendez, 2008). This meant I had to adapt and bring together some classic social science methods in order for them to be useful in more complex and dynamic international contexts. Combining multi-sited and global ethnography, two less conventional forms of ethnography that have emerged in response to the increasing prominence of international spaces and activities, allowed me to reach beyond local situations and individual sites and develop understandings of transnational movements, spaces and issues that would have otherwise not been possible. Using more mobile and flexible forms of ethnography enabled my research to take unexpected paths and engage with various tracking and mapping approaches to make connections between diverse themes and spaces of activity (Marcus, 1995). Focusing on transnational forces, connections and discourse, allowed me to engage with globalization as a key force shaping social, political and economic history (Burawoy, 2000), and how this has contributed to the global structural inequalities that are propelling fishers' movements. The key methodological implications of this study are highlighted below.

First, this study demonstrates how multi-sited global ethnography can be applied in the context of fishers' movements and fisheries. This broadens our understanding of how ethnographic tools can be used for gathering information on fisheries and social movements and their expansion beyond local and national boundaries. Considering the interconnection between oceans and fishing territories across the globe, fisheries by nature is one of the world's most transnationalized sectors, and the increasingly globalized seafood trade has only made this more so. This study illustrates how we can conduct research that helps us better understand the politics of these global processes, by tracking and analysing political debates thematically. It has also contributed to the body of ethnographic work on social movements that goes beyond a single-movement or single-issue focus in order to provide a broader understanding of the social and political contexts in which transnational movements are engaging (Edelman, 2001). It has further demonstrated how complex research on transnational organizations, such as WFFP, WFF, ICSF and FAO, and spaces, such as COFI, IPC, CFS, CSM and COP, can be conducted in a broad, yet rigorous, way that allows us to make connections between

organizations and spaces which may not have been possible otherwise.

Second, this study illustrates how scholar-activist or engaged approaches to social movement research can be expanded, beyond agrarian movements for example, to provide insights into fishers' movements. As research that is connected to social justice movements, and both sympathetic to and critical of the movements being studied (Borras, 2016; Edelman, 2009), this study illustrates how research that is based primarily in academia can also be guided by and address questions and issues that are useful for movements. I paid particular attention to establishing questions that fishers' movements had raised about their own history, what the implications of their engagement in international spaces and processes are, and how the issues they prioritize are connected to broader fisheries, food and climate debates. Being an open, active listener has been crucial to this process, in order to conduct research that reflects not only my own interests, reflections and insights, but also those of the movements and the organizations they collaborate with. A scholar-activist approach also enabled me to provide critical analysis on the movement process in the interest of strengthening political efforts toward fisheries justice, rather than taking a judgemental approach that criticizes without offering constructive feedback.

Third, this study provides a combined archival, virtual and in-person (AVI) approach to research on transnational movements, which can also be useful for research focusing on other global politics or processes. By combining a complementary set of qualitative methods for collecting a range of both primary and secondary data, I was able to gather information at multiple places and times, and cover more transnational ground than would have been possible if I were physically present in all of my research sites. The archival methods allowed me to trace the evolution of fishers' movements and related politics over time, and incorporate key historical information into the study, by using thematic analysis to review and analyse literature, policies, reports, meeting minutes, mailing lists, and social media pages. The virtual methods allowed me to gather diverse perspectives and track online interactions between different actors and groups, by conducting semi-structured interviews on Skype, and using thematic analysis and participant observation to attend online meetings and webinars, and track discussions, news and documentation. These methods also allowed me to carry out multi-sited data collection despite having limited time and funding available. The in-person methods, including participant observation, semi-structured and conversational interviews, and photo collection, allowed me to be physically present in certain events and meetings so I could meet

key people, develop trust and rapport with them, and stay in the loop on certain issues, which opened opportunities for invitations to subsequent meetings or events.

### ***7.2.3 Implications for Fisheries, Food and Climate Policy***

The information and analysis presented in this study generate seven implications for policy related to the fisheries sector, food production, circulation and consumption, and climate change mitigation and adaptation:

- 1) Small-scale fishers, their organizations and movements should be provided space to directly participate in policy and decision-making processes that directly affect their lives and livelihoods. This participation should be organized in different forms and at local, national and international levels, in order to ensure their knowledge and perspectives are being taken into account in different contexts and by governments at all levels.
- 2) Policy related to the production, circulation and consumption of food should engage more directly with fisheries, particularly the small-scale sector, as an essential contributor to global food and nutrition security. Rather than addressing it as a sub-sector of agriculture, fisheries should be recognized as a separate sector with a central role in providing protein to the global population. Fishers should also be given more attention in policy created to provide support to small-scale producers.
- 3) Initiatives emerging from, and being scaled up as part of blue economy and blue growth agendas, such as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), coastal development, blue carbon credit systems, off-shore energy and aquaculture expansion, should not be implemented without effective consultation with fishing and coastal communities. This includes providing adequate information about proposed initiatives to communities so they are able participate effectively in discussions and consultations.
- 4) As an international instrument developed by small-scale fishers' organizations, the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) should be implemented more widely by all of the Member States that endorsed them in the COFI in 2014. This implementation, and the subsequent monitoring of implementation, should be done in

close collaboration with national fishers' organizations which work directly with local fishing communities.

- 5) Considering the increasingly complex nature of the fisheries sector, particularly at the global level, governments should make more concerted efforts to collect information and analyses that strengthen their understanding of the challenges being faced by fishers. This means more resources should be devoted to research, particularly qualitative social research, which can contribute toward the development of more effective and equitable governance approaches.
- 6) Policy related to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts should engage more directly with how fisheries, fishers and fishing communities are impacted by initiatives intended to address climate impacts and protect coastal areas. This includes direct consultation with fishers and fishers' organizations during the development phase of initiatives that will impact the areas where they live and work, and conducting more research on the potential social, economic and environmental consequences of such initiatives.
- 7) Fisheries, food and climate policy should be developed and implemented in a more integrated and holistic manner, rather than addressing the issues in separate silos. This means that decision-making processes and spaces should be more closely linked, and those making the decisions should engage more directly and share knowledge and insights with each other at local, national and international levels. Intergovernmental UN processes in particular, such as the COFI, CFS and COP, which address intersecting global issues, should be better integrated in order to ensure the development of more effective and comprehensive governance instruments.

#### ***7.2.4 Key Challenges for Political Activism and Fisheries Justice***

Beyond academic and policy debates, this study has aimed to offer useful tools and analysis for fishers' movements themselves to gain critical insights into their own positions and contributions to political spaces and processes, and to identify new ways forward in strengthening and expanding practical pursuits toward fisheries justice. It also aimed to provide a comprehensive study which allied movements and organizations, and potential allies, can draw from in order to better understand the political agendas and strategies of fishers'

movements, identify overlaps with their own work, and determine relevant points for collaboration. While this study has provided historical context, discussion and analysis of how fishers' movements have been engaging in politics, and important victories and gains made, it has also highlighted aspects in which fishers' movements can still increase their capacity, scale up international advocacy, expand their political analysis, amplify their messages, and build stronger alliances. This has been done with a genuine interest in supporting and strengthening the movements. These points have been distilled into six key challenges for political activism emerging from this study, and which should be prioritized in efforts toward enhancing and expanding fisheries justice.

First, strengthening **internal capacity** within WFFP and WFF is essential, including increasing regular communication and interactions between members; developing more political training programmes to ensure analytical and leadership skills are more widely dispersed across the membership; building the capacities of leaders to enable them to be more active and engaged in agenda-setting and activities; and expanding membership into more countries.

Second, **maintaining momentum**, particularly during ebbs in energy and mobilization, is key to ensuring the progress made in movement-building during more vibrant, active moments is preserved. This can be done, for example, by focusing on internal capacity building during quieter moments, such as in between General Assemblies, biennial COFI sessions, and other important international events.

Third, finding ways to **balance national and international work** is important for ensuring that national struggles are not neglected due to limited human capacity being directed toward international agendas. This also involves providing more information on the purpose and significance of international work to local and national organizations and actors within the movements to illustrate the value of international participation.

Fourth, **strengthening alliances and collaboration** between WFFP and WFF, and with civil society groups, researchers and intergovernmental organizations, as well as building new alliances with potential allies, is essential for creating wider networks for sharing strategies and developing collective actions, learning from each other, and scaling up national and transnational advocacy.

Fifth, **connecting small-scale fisheries issues and debates** with those related to food production, circulation and consumption and climate change impacts and mitigation, is vital

for these issues to become more widely visible and taken into account by a larger number of key actors in governance and policy-making spheres. This includes more efforts, through public actions, statements, research and reports, to insert fisheries issues into food and climate discussions that have typically been more focused on agriculture and land.

Sixth, **retaining a seat at the table** in key international spaces such as the COFI and CFS, is crucial to ensuring that fishers' movements continue to play a role in fisheries and food discussions, and related politics, and that the interests and perspectives of small-scale fishers are fairly and adequately represented in these spaces. This involves more active participation in respected movement-led platforms, such as the IPC and CSM, and preparing a wider range of members to effectively engage in and contribute powerful insights and messages to these platforms.

The struggles of small-scale fishers are far from over, and in many ways are only becoming more challenging in an era of rising political support and investment in 'blue' agendas. Social movements more broadly are losing traction in some international processes and spaces, as the interests of more powerful political and economic actors squeeze them out or co-opt their agendas. Yet this may also encourage movements to locate other relevant spaces that are worthwhile to devote energy to beyond those they have traditionally prioritized and participated in. Alliances and collaborations between movements and scholar-activists are also more important than ever for sharpening political analysis, sharing resources, developing more powerful strategies, and strengthening and expanding social justice efforts. I hope that this study also sparks more collaborations between movements and scholar-activists interested in intersections between fisheries, food and climate politics, and broadens the critical community of people working on crosscutting land and water issues. As the study has shown, even in the face of complex international challenges, social movements continue to have hope, resist unjust and unsustainable agendas, and find creative ways to critically engage in politics. The struggle continues.

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Bangkok Civil Society Statement on Small-Scale Fisheries (17 October 2008)**

This Statement was presented on 17 October 2008 at the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Royal Government of Thailand. The list of workshop participants is available at <http://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/participants>

Civil Society Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand. 11 to 13 October 2008.

#### **Preamble**

We, 106 participants from 36 countries, representing small-scale fishing communities and indigenous communities dependent on fisheries for life and livelihood, and their supporters, having gathered in Bangkok from 11 to 13 October 2008 at the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop;

Building on prior preparatory processes, in particular the Statement developed by the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and preparatory workshops organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and other organizations in Asia (Siem Reap, Cambodia), Eastern and Southern Africa (Zanzibar, Tanzania), and Latin America (Punta de Tralca, Chile);

Recognizing the principle of food sovereignty outlined in the Nyelini Declaration;

Declaring that the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and that the development of responsible and sustainable small-scale and indigenous fisheries is possible only if their political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights are addressed in an integrated manner;

Recognizing that all rights and freedoms apply equally to all men and women in fishing communities and recognizing the continued contribution of women in maintaining the resilience of small-scale fishing communities;

Declaring that the dependence of fishing communities on aquatic and coastal living natural resources is shaped by the need to meet life and livelihood in their struggle to eradicate poverty and to secure their well-being as well as to express their cultural and spiritual values;

Recognizing the complementarity and interdependency of fisheries-related activities within fishing communities; and

Recognizing the interconnectedness between the health and well-being of coastal communities and of aquatic ecosystems;

Hereby call upon the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), other United Nations agencies, regional fisheries bodies and our respective national governments, to:

#### **Securing Access Rights**

1. Guarantee access rights of small-scale and indigenous fishing communities to territories, lands and waters on which they have traditionally depended for their life and livelihoods;
2. Recognize and implement the rights of fishing communities to restore, protect and manage local aquatic and coastal ecosystems;
3. Establish small-scale fisheries as the preferred model for the exclusive economic zone (EEZ);
4. Establish and enforce measures to prohibit industrial fishing in inshore waters;
5. Prohibit illegal fishing and all destructive fishing gear and practices;
6. Reverse and prevent the privatization of fisheries resources, as through individual transferable quotas (ITQs) and similar systems that promote property rights;
7. Reverse and prevent the displacement of fishing communities through the privatization of waters and lands of

fishing communities for activities that include tourism, aquaculture, defense/military establishments, conservation and industry;

8. Ensure that the declaration, establishment and management of marine protected areas (MPAs) bindingly involve the active participation of local and indigenous communities and small-scale fishers;
9. Ensure the integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge and customary law in fisheries management decision-making;
10. Guarantee the equal participation of small-scale and indigenous fishing communities in fisheries and coastal management decision-making, ensuring their free, prior and informed consent to all management decisions;
11. Recognize the traditional fishing rights of small-scale and indigenous fishers from immediately neighbouring adjacent States and set up appropriate bilateral arrangements for protecting their rights;
12. Protect all marine and inland water bodies from all forms of pollution, and reclamation;
13. Reject industrial aquaculture and genetically modified and exotic species in aquaculture;
14. Recognize, promote and protect the diversified livelihood base of fishing communities.

### **Securing Post-Harvest Rights**

15. Protect access of women of fishing communities to fish resources for processing, trading and food, particularly through protecting the diversified and decentralized nature of small-scale and indigenous fisheries;
16. Improve access of women to fish markets, particularly through provision of credit, appropriate technology and infrastructure at landing sites and markets;
17. Ensure that international trade does not lead to environmental degradation or undermine the human rights and food security of local fishing communities;
18. Put in place specific mechanisms to ensure that trade promotes human development, and that it leads to equitable distribution of benefits to fishing communities;
19. Effectively involve fishing communities in negotiations dealing with international trade in fish and fish products;
20. Guarantee institutional arrangements that give priority to fish for local consumption over fish for export or for reduction to fishmeal;
21. Regulate processing capacity, particularly in export-oriented fisheries, to be in line with the sustainability of the fishery;
22. Reject ecolabelling schemes, while recognizing area-specific labelling that identifies socially and ecologically sustainable fisheries;

### **Securing Human Rights**

23. Protect the cultural identities, dignity and traditional rights of fishing communities and indigenous peoples;
24. Implement legal obligations arising from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and subsequently adopted human-rights legislation, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP);
25. Guarantee the rights of fishing communities to basic services such as safe drinking water, education, sanitation, health and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services;
26. Guarantee the rights of all categories of workers in the fisheries, including self-employed workers and workers in the informal sector, to social security and safe and decent working conditions;
27. Implement the International Labour Organization (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention 2007, and extend its provisions to include inland and shore-based fishers;
28. Ensure that States seek the free, prior and informed consent of small-scale fishing communities and indigenous peoples before undertaking any project or programme that may affect their life and livelihoods;
29. Adopt specific measures to address, strengthen and protect women's right to participate fully in all aspects of



small-scale fisheries, eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, and securing their safety against sexual abuse;

30. Take urgent and immediate steps for the release and repatriation of arrested fishers, in keeping with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and human-rights instruments;
31. Protect men and women engaged in regional cross-border fisheries trade against harassment;
32. Enact and enforce legislation to create autonomous disaster prevention and management authorities based on the need to rebuild and revitalize small-scale and indigenous fisheries;
33. Establish mechanisms to support fishing communities affected by civil war and other forms of human-rights violations, to rebuild their lives and livelihoods;
34. Improve institutional co-ordination at all levels to enhance the well-being of fishing communities;
35. Guarantee rights of fishing communities to information in appropriate and accessible forms; and
36. Provide support to capacity building of fishing and indigenous communities to participate in governance of coastal and fisheries resources.

National governments have a legal obligation to implement international human-rights instruments. We demand that all governments take these obligations seriously and create the environment for fishing communities to fully enjoy these rights. We demand the urgent establishment of independent mechanisms to monitor, and report on, the implementation of human-rights obligations.

We call on the FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) to include a specific chapter in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) on small-scale fisheries, recognizing the obligations of States towards them.

We also recognize our responsibility as representatives and supporters of small-scale and indigenous fisheries to assist the local communities, who have so far been marginalized, to claim their rights at national levels.

We reiterate our deep sense of urgency about the neglect of small-scale and indigenous fisheries, and demand immediate action to avert impending disaster and conflict.

**Appendix 2: Timeline of Key Events for Fishers' Movements 1984 – 2021**

Event	Place	Date
International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters	FAO, Rome, Italy	July 1984
Trivandrum Workshop – Towards and International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)	Trivandrum, India	November 1986
International Symposium on Marine Environment and the Future of Fishworkers	Lisbon, Portugal	June 1989
Global Fisheries Trends and the Future of Fishworkers (international conference)	Bangkok, Thailand	January 1990
The Cebu Conference	Cebu, Philippines	June 1994
World Trade Organization establishment	Geneva, Switzerland	January 1995
1 <sup>st</sup> WFF General Assembly (establishment); 1 <sup>st</sup> Coordination Committee Meeting	New Delhi, India	November 1997
2 <sup>nd</sup> WFF Coordination Committee Meeting (Namur Meeting)	Namur, Belgium	October 1998
3 <sup>rd</sup> WFF Coordination Committee Meeting (San Francisco Meeting)	San Francisco, USA	October 1999
Battle of Seattle protests	Seattle, USA	November – December 1999
4 <sup>th</sup> WFF Coordination Committee Meeting	Loctudy, France	April 2000
2 <sup>nd</sup> WFF General Assembly WFFP-WFF Split (2 <sup>nd</sup> WFFP General Assembly)	Loctudy, France	October 2000
1 <sup>st</sup> WFFP Coordination Committee meeting	Mumbai (Bombay), India	March 2001
World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD); Global Peoples Forum (GPF) (parallel)	Johannesburg, South Africa	August – September 2002
2 <sup>nd</sup> WFFP Coordination Committee Meeting	Fort de France, Martinique	April 2002
International Fisherfolk Workshop	Bali, Indonesia	June 2002
3 <sup>rd</sup> WFFP Coordination Committee Meeting	Nainamadama, Sri Lanka	June, 2003
World Trade Organization Conference	Cancun, Mexico	September 2003
3 <sup>rd</sup> WFF General Assembly	Lisbon, Portugal	2004
3 <sup>rd</sup> WFFP General Assembly	Kisumu, Kenya	November 2004
4 <sup>th</sup> WFFP Coordination Committee Meeting	Hong Kong	December 2005
4 <sup>th</sup> WFFP General Assembly	Negombo, Sri Lanka	December 2007
Global Conference on Small-Scale Fisheries	Bangkok, Thailand	October 2008
29 <sup>th</sup> COFI Session	Rome, Italy	March 2009
30 <sup>th</sup> COFI Session	Rome, Italy	February 2011
5 <sup>th</sup> WFFP General Assembly	Karachi, Pakistan	April 2011
31 <sup>st</sup> COFI Session	Rome, Italy	June 2012
4 <sup>th</sup> WFF General Assembly	Kampala, Uganda	November 2012

32 <sup>nd</sup> COFI Session (Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines endorsement)	Rome, Italy	July 2014
6 <sup>th</sup> WFP General Assembly	Cape Town, South Africa	September 2014
41 <sup>st</sup> CFS Session	Rome, Italy	October 2014
42 <sup>nd</sup> CFS Session	Rome, Italy	October 2015
COP 21; Zone of Action for the Climate (ZAC) (parallel)	Paris, France	December 2015
33 <sup>rd</sup> COFI Session	Rome, Italy	July 2016
43 <sup>rd</sup> CFS Session	Rome, Italy	October 2016
COP 22	Marrakech, Morocco	November 2016
5 <sup>th</sup> WFP General Assembly	Salinas, Ecuador	January 2017
44 <sup>th</sup> CFS Session	Rome, Italy	October 2017
COP 23	Bonn, Germany	November 2017
7 <sup>th</sup> WFP GA (20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary)	New Delhi, India	November 2017
33 <sup>rd</sup> COFI Session and political trainings	Rome, Italy	July 2018
45 <sup>th</sup> CFS Session	Rome, Italy	October 2018
COP 24	Katowice, Poland	December 2018
46 <sup>th</sup> CFS Session	Rome, Italy	October 2019
COP 25	Madrid, Spain	December 2019
34 <sup>th</sup> COFI Session	Online (Rome)	February 2021
47 <sup>th</sup> CFS Session	Online (Rome)	February 2021

### **Appendix 3: Glossary**

**Agroecology** – A method of agricultural production that depends on and enhances biodiversity, in order to facilitate integrated agroecosystems both within and around farming areas. It also promotes economic relations centred on alternative distribution systems and diverse social institutions that support small-scale producers (for example, farmers' markets and cooperatives).

**Climate justice movements** – Collective struggles involving local, national and global alliances of small-scale producers, environmental organizations, and others concerned with the ethical and political elements of climate change, and which focus on equality, human and collective rights, and historical responsibilities for climate change.

**Climate politics** – The formal and informal structures, practices and processes constituting climate governance (related to preventing, mitigating and adapting to the risks posed by climate change), and the actors (movements, researchers, governments) engaging with (negotiating, establishing, disputing and reinterpreting) these structures, practices and processes.

**Committee on Fisheries (COFI)** – Established in 1965 as a subsidiary body of the FAO, it is currently the only international intergovernmental forum that examines fisheries and aquaculture issues at the global level, negotiates agreements and instruments, and makes recommendations to governments, regional fisheries bodies, NGOs, fishworkers, and the international community. The COFI seeks to supplement, rather than replace, the work of other organizations in the fisheries and aquaculture field.

**Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** – Established in 1974 as part of the UN to serve as an international intergovernmental forum for reviewing and following up on policies related to the production of and access to food globally. Since its 2009 reform, the CFS has become one of the key global governance and policy-making spaces for movements focusing on food issues and food sovereignty. It is based on a multi-stakeholder approach, through which it collaborates with and coordinates diverse stakeholders, and develops and endorses policy guidance and recommendations on a wide range of topics related to food security and nutrition.

**Conference of the Parties (COP)** – After the 1992 adoption of the UNFCCC, the COP first met in Berlin in 1995, and is now the principal global decision-making body on national emission limits and climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. It meets every year to review the Convention's implementation and related legal instruments and negotiate various institutional and administrative measures intended to improve its implementation. The main task for the COP is to review national communications and emission reports submitted by individual Parties, and assess the effectiveness of the measures being taken and progress being made toward achieving the objectives of the UNFCCC.

**Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** – A specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts against in both developed and developing countries. It acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate arguments and debate policy, and is a source of information for improving agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, and ensuring good nutrition and food security.

**Agrarian justice movements** – Collective struggles involving local, national and global alliances of small-scale farmers, fishers, marginalized rural working people, and others concerned with democratizing access, ownership, and control of land, water and other natural resources.

**Fisheries justice movements** – Collective struggles involving local, national and transnational alliances of small-scale fishers, fishing communities, and their allies, who are concerned with issues of inclusion, equity, human rights, democratizing access to and control of natural resources, and the politics of climate change

**Fisheries politics** – The formal and informal structures, practices and processes constituting fisheries governance (related to the production, circulation and consumption of fish), and the actors (movements, researchers, governments) engaging with (negotiating, establishing, disputing and reinterpreting) these structures, practices and processes.

**Food politics** – The formal and informal structures, practices and processes constituting food governance (related to the production, circulation and consumption of food), and the actors (movements, researchers, governments) engaging with (negotiating, establishing, disputing and reinterpreting) these structures, practices and processes.

**Food sovereignty** – The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.

**Voluntary Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines)** – The first international instrument dedicated entirely to the small-scale fisheries sector, which represents a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development. They were developed for small-scale fisheries in close collaboration with representatives of small-scale fishers' movements through an FAO-facilitated process.

**International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty** – An international network founded in 1996, which brings together hundreds of organizations and movements representing farmers, fishers, agricultural workers and indigenous peoples, as well as NGOs, and provides a common space for mobilization that links local struggles and global debate.

**Small-scale fishers** – People that fish to meet food and basic livelihood needs, and/or are directly involved in harvesting, processing or marketing fish. They typically work for themselves, without hiring outside labour; operate in near shore areas; employ traditional, low-technology or passive fishing gear; undertake single day fishing trips; and are engaged in the sale or trade of their catches.

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** – An international environmental treaty implemented in 1994, which aims to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere by setting non-binding limits on emissions for individual countries and contains no enforcement mechanisms. It outlines how specific international treaties (for example, protocols or agreements) may be negotiated to specify further action towards the objective of the UNFCCC.

**World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)** – A mass-based social movement of small-scale fisher people from across the world, founded by a number of mass-based organisations from the Global South. WFFP was established in response to the increasing pressure being placed on small-scale fisheries, including habitat destruction, anthropogenic pollution, encroachment on small-scale fishing territories by the large scale fishing fleets, illegal fishing and overfishing. Years later, climate change was added to the list of threats that WFFP addresses in its work

**World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)** – An international organization that brings together small scale fishers' organizations for the establishment and upholding of fundamental human rights, social justice and culture of artisanal /small scale fish harvesters and fish workers, affirming the sea as source of all life and committing themselves to sustain fisheries and aquatic resources for the present and future generations to protect their livelihoods.

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## Biography

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Elyse Noble Mills is a PhD researcher in the Political Ecology research group at ISS, where her research focuses on the politics of transnational fishers' movements and global fisheries. She also has an MA in Agrarian and Environmental Studies from ISS, and a BA in International Development Studies from York University in Canada. Some of her earlier research focused on EU fisheries policy; the role of the EU in global land grabbing; agricultural investment in Southeast Asia; young farmers' access to land in the Global North; and the bioeconomy. She is also a Programme Associate for the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), working with fishers' organizations in national and international processes.



## Education

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- **(2016–2021)** International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University  
PhD Researcher in the Political Ecology Research Group. The Hague, NL
- **(2012–2013)** International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University  
Masters in Development Studies, Major in Agrarian and Environmental Studies,  
Specialization in Agriculture and Rural Development, graduated with *Merit*. The Hague, NL
- **(2009–2012)** York University Toronto, CA  
Bachelors (Honours) in International Development Studies, Focus on Latin American and  
Environmental Studies, graduated *Summa Cum Laude*.
- **(2005–2006)** University of King's College Halifax, CA  
Foundation Year Programme and Honours Journalism Programme.

## Experience

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- **(2021 –Present)** International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) The Hague, NL  
Programme Associate, coordinating campaigns, strategy and events
- **(2019)** Masifundise Development Trust (MDT) Cape Town, SA  
Visiting researcher and archivist, building a digital fishers' movement archive
- **(2019)** Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) Cape Town, SA  
Visiting researcher
- **(2018–2021)** International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) The Hague, NL  
Programme support intern, contributing to campaigns, strategy and events
- **(2017–2019)** Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) The Hague, NL  
Secretariat co-coordinator and programme support
- **(2015–2018)** Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies (ICAS) The Hague, NL  
Co-coordinator, researcher, social media administrator and programme support
- **(2015–2018)** Journal of Peasant Studies The Hague, NL  
Social media administrator
- **(2015)** Spanda Foundation The Hague, NL  
Development research intern
- **(2014–2018)** Transnational Institute (TNI) Amsterdam, NL  
Freelance researcher and copyeditor
- **(2014–2015)** BRICS Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies (BICAS) The Hague, NL  
Researcher and grant recipient
- **(2011–2012)** Pueblito Canada Toronto, CA  
Programme support and administrative intern

## Publications, Reports and Blogs

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- (forthcoming 2021) E. N. Mills. The Politics of Transnational Fishers' Movements. *Journal of Peasant Studies*.
- (2020) A. Yeboah Gyapong, A. Shah, C. Lamain, E. Mills, N. Bruna, S. Coronado and Y. Sekine. Resource Grabbing in a Changing Environment. EADI/ISS Blog Series. [Available here](#).
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- (2016) S. Borrás, P. Seufert, S. Backes, D. Fyfe, R. Herre, L. Michele and E. Mills. *Land grabbing and human rights: The involvement of European corporate and financial entities in land grabbing outside the European Union*. Study commissioned by the European Parliament, Brussels. [Available here](#).
- (2015) E. Mills. *The Bioeconomy: A Primer*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute and Hands on the Land. [Available here](#).
- (2013) E. N. Mills. *The Political Economy of Young Prospective Farmers' Access to Farmland: Insights from Industrialised Agriculture in Canada*. Master's thesis/ISS working paper. [Available here](#).

## Selected Presentations, Seminars and Workshops

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- (2021) Workshop: 'Resource Grabbing: Drivers, Impacts and Responses in an Era of Climate Change' at the EADI conference *Solidarity, Peace and Social Justice* – International Institute of Social Studies, NL.
- (2020) Presentation: 'Exploring the Politics of Global Fisheries and Fishers' Movements' at the POLLEN Biennial conference *Contested Natures, Power, Politics, Prefiguration* – University of Brighton, UK.
- (2019) Seminar: 'Is there space for small-scale fisheries in the blue economy?' at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), Cape Town, South Africa.
- (2019) Presentation: 'Fisheries Politics in the Context of Contemporary Food Systems and Climate Change: Key Issues, Social Movements and Political Events' at the conference *MARE People and the Sea Conference X: Learning From the Past, Imagining the Future* – University of Amsterdam, NL.
- (2018) Presentation: 'Dynamics of overlapping global food, climate and fisheries politics: Interconnecting issues, movements and events' at the conference *Development and Agrarian Transformations: BRICS, Competition and Cooperation in the Global South* – University of Brasilia, Brazil.
- (2018) Lecture: 'Development of global fisheries: Industrialization, privatization, conservation' for Masters level course on *Global Political Ecology* – International Institute of Social Studies, NL.

- **(2016)** Presentation: ‘Dynamics of transnational “fisheries justice” movements: Framing their implications for food and climate politics’ at the conference *Agro-Extractivism Inside and Outside BRICS: Agrarian Change and Development Trajectories* – China Agricultural University, China.
- **(2015)** Presentation: ‘Targeting Southeast Asian land: The drivers and impacts of Chinese-led agricultural investments’ at the conference *Rural Transformations and Food Systems: The BRICS and Agrarian Change in the Global South* – Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), South Africa.
- **(2015)** Presentation: ‘Chinese Agricultural and Land Investments in Southeast Asia: A Preliminary Overview of Trends’ at the conference *Land Grabbing: Perspectives from East and Southeast Asia* – Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

### Conference Organization and Support

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- **(2019)** Volunteer coordinator and logistics support for the *MARE People and the Sea Conference X* – University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- **(2018)** Co-organiser/Secretariat of the international conference *Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World* – International Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands.
- **(2017)** Volunteer coordinator and logistics support for the *MARE People and the Sea Conference IX* – University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- **(2016)** Co-organiser/Secretariat of the international colloquium *Global Governance/Politics, Climate Justice & Agrarian/Social Justice: Linkages and Challenges* – International Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands.
- **(2016)** Logistics and registration support for the *Monsanto Tribunal and People’s Assembly* – International Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands
- **(2015)** Logistics and registration support for the *MARE People and the Sea Conference VIII* – University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- **(2015)** Co-organiser of the international conference *Land Grabbing: Perspectives from East and Southeast Asia* – Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

### Awards

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- **(2016-2021)** PhD Fellowship holder (International Institute of Social Studies)
- **(2014)** Research grant recipient (BRICS Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies)
- **(2013)** Graduated with *Merit* (International Institute of Social Studies)
- **(2012-2013)** Scholarship fund for excellent students (International Institute of Social Studies)
- **(2012)** Graduated with Honours, *Summa Cum Laude* (York University)
- **(2010-2011)** Undergraduate excellence bursary (York University)
- **(2005)** Entrance scholarship (University of King’s College)

### Diplomas and Certificates

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- **(2019)** Integration Diploma for Dutch Language (The Netherlands)  
Diploma for completing all Dutch integration exams
- **(2018)** Kickstart (The Netherlands)  
Certificate in ‘Dutch Level A2’
- **(2015)** University of Groningen (The Netherlands)  
Certificate in ‘Dutch Level A1’ (online course)
- **(2015)** University of Groningen (The Netherlands)  
Certificate in ‘Introduction to Dutch’ (online course)
- **(2014)** Université de Genève (Switzerland)  
Certificate in ‘International Organizations Management’ (online course)
- **(2014)** University of Copenhagen (Denmark)  
Certificate in ‘An Introduction to Global Health’ (online course)