

Transnational Fishers' Movements and the Politics of Global Fisheries
Dissertation Abstract
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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.

