

The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Geography Symposium - GEOMED2013

## Artisanal fishermen contribution for the integrated and sustainable coastal management - application of strategic SWOT analysis

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### Abstract

This study evaluates the contribution of artisanal fishermen that live in small-scale fishing communities, for the coastal integrated and sustainable management. Generally, there is almost no dialogue between these professionals of the small-scale fishing, the scientific community, the technical experts, as well as policy-makers related with the coastal areas management. This conjuncture compromises the implementation of integrated and sustainable management plans, for which this study should contribute. The approach was performed as an interdisciplinary exercise, essentially using qualitative methods; it was based on a dialogal methodology, the interview, semi-structured, directed to a panel of privileged informers. The small-scale fishing communities studied have different frameworks and are located in several NUTS II of the Portuguese territory. The Strategic SWOT Analysis was performed to the categories which emerged from the qualitative content analysis of the interviews. The study of the categories "Artisanal fishermen" and "Associativism" allowed their characterization and the establishment of Strategic Recommendations and Strategy Supporting the Political Decision-making related with integrated and sustainable coastal development. When included in feasibility studies, the artisanal fishermen's proposals can permit the implementation and execution of management plans, more efficient and connected to the reality; in the present case, an inclusive perspective to the littoral integrated and sustainable development.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of GEOMED2013.

**Keywords:** Artisanal Fishermen; Integrated and Sustainable Coastal Management; Small-scale Fishing Communities Resilience; Strategy Supporting the Political Decision-making; SWOT Analysis.

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## 1. Introduction

The geographical location of Portugal in a transition area for warmer ecosystems - in the southern limit of boreal species, in the western limit of many species with Mediterranean affinities and in the northern limit of subtropical species - explains the high species diversity reported in the fishing landings. So, the fishing gears used by artisanal fishermen are diversified and still largely hand-made. The small-scale fishing practiced by artisanal fishermen, whose catches are destined for direct human consumption, has locally high economic and social importance, through the stability and opportunities of employment that it can create. It uses small-scale vessels with overall length under 12 meters (Afonso-Dias et al., 2007:1), which currently means 90% of the national professional fishing fleet. Similarly to the artisanal fishermen, these vessels have high mean age, which aggravates the security conditions, once they usually operate in more coastal area, up to 6 miles. The small-scale fishing communities where this activity is practiced exist throughout the extensive Portuguese coast, 942 km on the mainland, and more two broad archipelagic zones. Artisanal fishermen have here a unique and important role to play in defining management strategies for these areas. As said an academic interviewed: “it’s with them that we learn because they live on the sea”.

Small-scale fisheries employs more than 90% of the world’s 35 million capture fishers and livelihoods of about 357 million people are directly affected by small-scale fisheries (FAO, 2012:91). In Portugal, precise quantification of the number of artisanal fishermen is difficult due to their mobility between different fishing segments. Overall, there is 48% loss of fishermen registered in the period 1986-2007 (Pinho, 1998:37-41; Viegas, 2012:41). Women are not always recognized by men as fishery workers, although there are fisherwomen, women shipowners and women that prepare the fishing gears.

The present economic crisis has only accentuated some chronic difficulties of the small-scale fishing communities, particularly their isolation, the fishery scarcity and the lack in renovation of professionals in the sector, due being considered a discredited profession. The artisanal fishermen in active still face the traditional difficulty of integration in alternatives activities to the fishing. This circumstance is being further exacerbated by increasing urban pressure that threatens to mischaracterize their typical communities, which have a vast immaterial heritage, both historical and cultural, increasingly threatened by powerful pressures from diverse origins, and that require urgent actions aiming its preservation (Viegas&Tedim, 2012:2). The prospective analysis scenarios constructed for these small-scale fishing communities, based on the principle: “what we’ll have tomorrow depends on the choices of today” (Moniz, 2000: 158), are not very encouraging. Urgent actions are needed in order to provide the fishermen with all conditions which allow them to make the right choices in shaping their future, once the small-scale fishing is an identity that should not be ignored. Above all, is required a deep cultural change to safeguard the most valuable resources in the fisheries sector: the human resources (Jentoft, 1997:91; Moniz, 2000:166).

The implementation of coastal management plans is always very problematic because it involves distinct and often antagonistic interests. That’s why becomes increasingly consensual the need for another attitude that allows a holistic, integrated and sustainable approach, promoting greater participation of key stakeholders in the process. The fishing management model should be transformed and become integrated and sustainable, safeguarding also environmental, social and cultural aspects, and not only the economic one.

On the perspective of an integrated and sustainable development plan for coastal areas that include small-scale fishing communities, was done a characterization of profiles of artisanal fishermen, central actors in these communities. Also was done the assessment of the nature and extent of the vulnerabilities and of the capacities evidenced by the artisanal fishermen, aiming the application of a new analytical methodology which could allow the definition of strategic recommendations, as well as strategies to support decision-making on coastal management. The matrix of the SWOT analysis - acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities - is considered an essential tool in organizing plans and in defining strategies for decision-making. It’s a prospective and strategic analysis based on the maximum attributed to Sun Tzu (500 B.C.), considered one of the greatest military strategists of all time: “the thought precedes action, strategy is the intelligence in action”. The application of this kind of analysis provides privileged information, one pillar of the strategic thinking: “concentrate in the Strengths, recognize the Weaknesses, catching the Opportunities and protecting themselves from Threats”. This privileged and classified information is considered essential for planning political strategies, in this case, integrated and sustainable coastal

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