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Green market for small people: Markets and opportunities for upgrading in small-scale fisheries in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

This article examines responses of small-scale fishers and traders to a proposed fisheries management initiative in Indonesia. The responses of these local actors demonstrate both opportunities for upgrading in the fisheries value chain and challenges for more sustainable fisheries management. Small-scale fisheries are the least regulated natural resource sector in Indonesia, but recent initiatives attempt to address problems of over-fishing, poverty and livelihood insecurity. This article examines one such initiative, the Lesser Sunda Sustainable Fisheries Initiative (LSSFI), and attitudes towards it held by local fishers. The LSSFI combines market incentives and support with a Territorial Use Rights in Fisheries (TURF) system and reserve. Fishers generally viewed market-based incentives positively, seeing them as enhancing their livelihoods and freeing them from debt-based patronage relationships. In contrast, fishers had mixed responses to the TURF-reserve proposal. Those who were less mobile agreed to the TURF-reserve, while those who fish distant coastal waters as well as adjacent areas were opposed. An additional barrier to the acceptance of TURF-reserves is that most small-scale fisheries in Indonesia exist as an open access resource and confidence in the ability of the government to enforce reserve areas is low.

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1. Introduction

Small-scale fisheries are very important in Indonesia. They contribute more than 80 percent of fish production, provide employment for over 7.3 million people [1] and yield significant government revenue [2]. Yet small-scale fisheries are in a critical condition. Many of the country's fish stocks are already overexploited, while poverty and livelihood insecurity are widespread among 'dependent' fishers—namely those who are locked into a debt patronage relationship with traders. Indonesian fisheries thus exemplify a local case of a global crisis in fisheries diagnosed decades ago: 'All around the world, from the coldest Arctic regions to the warmest tropical seas, there is a crisis in the world's fisheries. Quite simply, there are too many people chasing too few fish' [3].

Indonesia's Marine and Fisheries Minister has stated that the majority of fish resources in all of Indonesia's fisheries management areas are either fully or over-exploited [4]. The Indonesian

Statistics Bureau estimates 7.87 million fishers are living below the poverty line [5]. In some locations, the number of fishers in a state of poverty is increasing [6]. The problem of poverty is exacerbated by overfishing, reduced productivity of fisheries and conflict [7]. Coral reefs and mangroves are seriously threatened by destructive fishing, pollution and climate change. Mangrove conversion to aquaculture and plantations has reduced the coastal productivity for fishing. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events has reduced possible fishing days for the coastal poor.

These circumstances call for a better and more innovative approach to fisheries management, one that tackles both resource sustainability and fishers' welfare. The goals of sustainability and more equitable distribution of value correspond with the concerns of environmental, social and economic upgrading along a value chain [8]. The case examined in this article explores the contributions that value chain analysis can make for an understanding of local fishers' responses to a proposed local marine governance arrangement. The approach and findings also speak to emerging debates in the value chain literature regarding the importance of social relations and context-specific, local perceptions. As set out by the editors of this special issue, the literature on value chains, particularly the Global Production Networks (GPNs) perspective,

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recognizes the importance of social relationships as a form of informal institution that structures actor behaviour and can thus influence capacities for upgrading [8,9]. The field remains divided, however, over precisely how such social institutions operate [10]. There is also on-going debate over the conditions under which the 'embeddedness' of market players in relational networks and social institutions is productive [11,12]. The research presented here shows that opportunities for upgrading are structured by social relationships and local embeddedness, in ways that underline the socially-constitutive role of informal institutions.

The substantive goal driving the research is to understand the responses of local fishers to a 'progressive' governance arrangement. The case study aims to contribute to the literature on upgrading within value chains by undertaking a close-grained contextually-based examination of local responses to a particular initiative. The aim is also to demonstrate that a value chain approach that takes the relationships between buyers and sellers in a value chain as a starting point for analysis has utility for understanding fisheries resource management outcomes.

In the analysis that follows, the researchers find evidence that the quality of relational ties linking players in the local fisheries value chain affects fishers' ability to capture value. Non-market ties are also a reason why some are cautious about the market incentives and support offered under the new governance arrangement. Resistance by some fishers to the introduction of the initiative's reserve element reflects their concerns that reduced access will undermine their livelihood, but their resistance is also shaped by two broader social and political dynamics. The first is a lack of normative fit between the concept of limited catch or reserve areas and socially-entrenched understandings of a right to access the fisheries resources. The second is a low level of trust in the government's ability or willingness to enforce restrictions, reflecting an institutional context in which implementation failures are common.

The next section introduces the case, methodology and approach used. Section 3 summarizes some of the characteristics of the fisheries industry and its value chain in the area relevant to the LSSFI. Section 4 describes the specific measures involved in the initiative, together with the reactions and attitudes of local fishers and traders. Section 5 discusses the underlying factors that will influence the LSSFI's ability to provide for more sustainable fisheries management as well as better incomes for small-scale fishers.

2. Methods

The researchers explore the question of how local stakeholders responded to the Lesser Sunda Sustainable Fisheries Initiative (LSSFI), which represents an attempt to address problems of poverty, livelihood insecurity and overfishing in a particular locality in Eastern Indonesia. Community-based governance arrangements with a strong 'co-management' element that includes all stakeholders are important if resistance to implementation is not to undermine management attempts [7,13,14]. In methodological terms, this translates into a commitment to context-specific analysis of local social institutions and the perceptions of local fishers (which are not necessarily homogenous, even at the local level) that drive governance outcomes [15–17]. Taken together with the theoretical importance of social relations as informal institutions, this argues for a close-grained study of relationships and understandings in a specific context, which can be considered as a 'social field' that captures 'both the interconnectivity and the time-spatial context' of actor learning, innovation and practice [18].

In the case in question, the LSSFI combines market incentives and support with a Territorial Use Rights in Fisheries (TURF) system and reserve. A TURF is 'a spatial form of property rights in which individuals or a collective group of fishers are granted

exclusive access to harvest resources within a geographically defined area' ([19]: p. 97, [20]). It aims to establish a market-driven sustainable fisheries management system around the bays of Sumbawa Island, as depicted in Fig. 1.

The LSSFI was proposed in 2011 as a public-private partnership involving an international non-governmental organization, The Nature Conservancy (TNC); a joint venture company, Bali Seafood International (BSI); two universities, the University of California at Santa-Barbara (UCSB) and the University of Mataram in Lombok; and Indonesian government agencies².

The LSSFI is the first of its kind in Indonesia and faces a number of challenges to its implementation. TURF-reserves are new to Indonesia, where small-scale fisheries generally operate under open-access governance systems, available for exploitation by anyone fishing with small boats³. Small-scale fisheries, particularly in Eastern Indonesia, are dominated by a number of mobile ethnic groups, including the Buginese, Butonese, and Macassare (together known as BBM). Fishers from the BBM ethnic groups operate almost everywhere in the Indonesian archipelago, reflecting the acceptance by many local people of fishing by 'outsiders' in the waters off their settlements.

In order to investigate responses to and prospects for the LSSFI, the researchers gathered data using direct observation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) during four periods of fieldwork in the area between August and December 2012⁴. The researchers conducted ten FGDs in total: two in Waworada, five in Cempi and three in Sanggar. Representatives of fishers, traders, village governments and elders participated. The interviews involved almost 100 subjects representing the same groups as the FGDs. The researchers made their observations during four spells of fieldwork.

3. Characteristics of the LSSFI's target location: Fisheries in the Lesser Sunda area

3.1. Types of fish, vessels, gear and fishers

The LSSFI targets the fisheries in a specific area around Sumbawa Island in Eastern Indonesia, principally the bays of Waworada, Cempi and Sanggar (Fig. 1). Fisheries in Waworada, Cempi and Sanggar bays are dominated by small boats. Only about 10 percent of the fishing boats were bigger than 5 gross tonnes as 2012. Most of the vessels larger than 5 gross tonnes were associated with purse seine and tuna fishing.

The size of the vessels and the type of fishing gear is associated with specific fishing grounds. Small boats mostly operate close to the bays, while big boats exploit fishing grounds further afield as they can operate in rougher conditions and have the engine capacity to travel further. Hook and line and long lines target reef fish and tuna; purse seine and lift nets are used for small pelagic fish; gill nets are for various coastal-dwelling species and swimming crabs; fish traps are used either for coral reef fish or mud crab; and tremmel nets are for shimp. Fig. 2 shows the gill net fishing ground in Cempi Bay and Fig. 3 shows the Waworada purseiners' ground.

² These agencies are the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) and district government fisheries offices of East Nusa Tenggara, Bima, Dompu and Sumbawa Besar Districts.

³ Legally, the term 'small-scale fisheries' refers to fisheries associated with the operation of fishing vessels of five gross tonnes or less.

⁴ The findings relate to the LSSFI in the form that it was presented to local stakeholders at the time of fieldwork in 2012. Since then, the collaboration between TNC and BSI has ended, for unspecified reasons. Both BSI and TNC continue their operations in the area.

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