

**Patches, Silos, Networks: Women's Ways of Leading in South
African Fisheries Value Chains**

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Acknowledgements and Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the women from all scales and roles in South African fisheries.

Sonder vroue, sal daar nie 'n vissery wees nie!

I am very grateful to the women who agreed to in-person and digital interviews. I am also grateful to the women and men who shared their stories in online media; I hope that I have honoured everyone's original intentions in sharing their stories.

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Abstract

Patches, Silos, Networks: Women's Ways of Leading in South African Fisheries Value Chains

Women's contributions to fisheries have often been made invisible. Their leadership in general and in fisheries has also not always been recognised, especially if it is informal or more "behind-the-scenes".

The aim of this study is to contribute to the gap in the women and fisheries literature on what leadership roles women play in the South African fisheries value chain. While it is more widely known that women play diverse roles within the fisheries value chain, the leadership roles they play (at various scales) are currently less well-known. This research involved finding women to interview from the various "patches" in the value chain. Without the generation of new relationships/leads occurring in the background, it would not have been possible to find particular patches. When the research was pivoted to digital research due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the "patches" seemed more adrift, and possibly more "siloes", than ever. However, three common threads emerged that showed how these patches are not so isolated after all. The threads were: Networks and relationships; lineage, blood and sustainability; and acts of pioneering, innovating and self-empowerment. Interviews were semi-formal, with most in-person, one done via the messaging service WhatsApp, and one done via email. Digital research consisted of collecting Instagram posts, finding relevant news articles, looking at newsletters, and industry body-related media.

Women in fisheries are situated within various networks and "patches" of knowledge. This dissertation has drawn on the notion of "patches" as a central concept. Underlying this were the sub-themes of gender and market access (in this case, markets for marine resources). It is clear that while different women in different patches may not necessarily know each other or interact with each other, the patches themselves still have an effect on each other. This is especially true in the case of how the Covid-19 pandemic affected small-scale fisheries. Effects higher up the value chain meant that small-scale fishers were negatively affected. Thus, fishing industry patches do not seem to exist in silos. Specifically, women in the fisheries value chain are not in silos either. Both print and online media can still allow women to find out where women are working in the value chain, and for which companies or organisations. Such media can also allow women in fisheries to develop knowledge about each other.

Firstly, technology, including digital newsletters, allows for women to extend themselves and enrich themselves with relationships with or knowledges of, other people. With the proliferation of both online media and cell phone access in South Africa, parasocial relationships may be formed. These parasocial relationships may help women in fishing to know "who's who" and also for consumers desiring a more transparent buying experience to form a type of relationship with each other, through learning about people's stories.

Fishers encountered both in real life and online tended to come from a long history of working in fisheries themselves, as well as coming from multi-generational fishing families. While not all of the women interviewed are leaders in formal positions and/or formal organisations, their knowledge of species, fish processing and other areas was something that seemed to be valued within fisheries-related spaces. This is one factor that indicates the importance of keeping the fishing lineage going into the future for fishers. Fishers were also concerned about the effects on them which were caused by changes at the commercial level, such as a decline in market access due to Covid-19. Keeping a fishing livelihood going, both for this generation and the next, is something very important to the fishers encountered throughout this research.

The diversity of jobs women held, both those personally interviewed and those interviewed in digital publications, was significant throughout this research. Some women are in supportive spaces that allow them to pioneer new paths for women in the fishing engineer, such as being a boat skipper or engineer. Women are gradually making their way up through middle management and to executive management levels. However, it is also important to consider the intersections of women's identities, e.g. socioeconomic status, geographic location, and education obtained. Different approaches to empower different groups of women can help the process of women's empowerment in fisheries to be inclusive.

Key Words: Women in fisheries; gender; small-scale fishery; commercial fishery; patches

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Abbreviations

CFFFA: Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements

CLSA: Coastal Links South Africa

CUS Model: Coasts Under Stress Model

DEFF: Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (formerly DAFF)

FINSA: Fishing Industry News Southern Africa

ICSEAF: International Commission for the Southeast Atlantic Fisheries

ICSF: International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

IRP: Interim Relief Permit

ITQ: Individual Transferable Quota

IUU: Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

MLRA: Marine Living Resources Act

MSC: Marine Stewardship Council

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NPO: Non-profit organisation

PLAAS: Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies

SADSTIA: South African Deep-Sea Trawling Industry Association

SASSFC: South African Small-Scale Fishers Collective

SSF: Small-scale fishing

SSFs: Small-scale fishers

TBTI: Too Big To Ignore

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

WCRL: West Coast Rock Lobster

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1. Introduction and Theoretical Framework

In the Western Cape, South Africa, fishing is a multi-generational livelihood that plays a significant role in providing employment, food security and purpose to coastal communities (Paterson et al., 2014; Sunde & Isaacs, 2008). However, involvement in these livelihood practices are differentiated between men and women. I experienced this for myself during my Honours fieldwork in St Helena Bay where it was made clear that the women in small-scale fisheries (SSF) I spoke to, felt undervalued by the current practices of South African fishing policy. Women made nets, repaired nets, gathered intertidal species, made processed products such as dried fish and dried seaweed, and owned boats. One woman described the humiliating experience of having her fishing permit application ripped up by an official right in front of her because her particular role did not fit the common idea of a “fisher” going out to sea. Women have historically played an important but neglected role in the industry (Harper et al., 2017; Harper & Kleiber, 2016). The contributions of women in fisheries have been overlooked in management and policy (Harper et al., 2013; Frangoudes et al., 2019). Only recently has the definition of a small-scale been legally amended to recognise the central role that women have always, in one way or another, played in the fishing industry (Policy for Small-Scale Fisheries, South Africa, 2012). Women’s critical roles in the fisheries value chain, and the need to support and protect them was highlighted in the policy (Sowman et al., 2014).

To expand on the research which I conducted at Honours level, I attempted to investigate how the women involved in fisheries at various scales cope with challenges related to earning a living and receiving recognition as a member of the industry. In particular, I attempted to investigate the topic of women’s leadership roles in the fishing industry (including fisher organisations).

1.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Gender, as noted above, has been acknowledged as playing a significant role in both commercial and small-scale fishing industries, though this acknowledgement has not always led to recognition in policy or regulation (Harper & Kleiber, 2016). Therefore, I understand gender as something that may influence the types of leadership roles women do or do not play in small-scale fishers’ (SSFs) organizations. In noting the criticisms of the “feminisation of poverty” approach in relation to fishing, Gustavsson (2020) pointed out the tendency to see women as “victims” (see Chant, 2008). If women’s identities and practices are always being

compared to men, then women's lives in fishing are not adequately understood "in their own right" (Gustavsson, 2002). Arguably, such a view of gender (i.e. women as victims compared to men as active agents) is associated with a "binary, disembodied and limited understanding of gender identities and relations..." (Gustavsson, 2020: 38). Instead, a focus of gender identities as "doings" and "performances", rather than individual traits, may be more helpful (Gustavsson, 2020). Butler (1990) argued that "gender is a verb (a process of doing and performing) rather than a noun (a thing that is, or an existence)" (Butler, 1990; cited in Gustavsson, 2020: 38). Butler (1990) has also emphasized that gender roles are unstable, breakable and can be subverted. Gustavsson argues that:

"By studying moments when gendered roles are challenged it is argued that the (un)stability of gendered roles and relations becomes visible. This perspective further allows us to highlight how everyday performance of gender identities, in particular socio-spatial contexts, are embodied processes" (Gustavsson, 2020: 38-39).

Gender is also something that is shaped by various social factors. For example, Neis et al. (2013) see gender as a factor in differentiating how the decline of fish stocks affects people in the fisheries value chain. Gender and fisheries research has shown the diversity of gender relations in global fisheries (Nadel-Klein & Davis, 1988; cited in Neis, 2005). Diversity in gender relations can be attributed to ecological diversity, "variations in the extent to which local relations have been transformed by the penetration of corporations and commodification, and to differences in history, policies and the effects of resource and environmental degradation" (Neis, 2005: 7). This diversity is also linked to differences in culture and class, and differences in household structure (which relates to kinship structures), to relations between households and the wider community, and to varying sexual division of labour (Neis, 2005). Research on women in fishing has been documenting the multiple reproductive roles that women play, but has not sufficiently analysed what women's changed contributions to fishing mean to these women – and how gender relations and identities are renegotiated with, and (re)shaped by, changing roles and practices" (Gustavsson, 2020: 36). Gender is also the socially constructed characteristics and opportunities that come with being male and female. It is also about what behaviours society deems appropriate for men and women. This social construction starts at birth, and "[b]iological distinction is...transformed into social identity" (FAO, 2017: 3), which makes "gender".

Thus, gender can be understood in many ways depending on different contexts and constructions, which can be material or ideological (Biswas, 2011). There has also been a

period in which gender was arguably “diluted” in its use in fisheries literature; the term was widespread but not often explained (Biswas, 2011). At times when gender was explained, “there was little consistency or rigour regarding its use” (Biswas, 2011: 55). The focus here will be on the “doings” of gender. It is also acknowledged that gender may not always be closely tied to biological sex (Oyěwùmí, 1997).

Global perspectives: Women in Fisheries

“Women in fisheries” is a research topic with a substantial body of literature (e.g. FAO, 2017; FAO, 2018; Harper et al., 2013; Harper & Kleiber, 2016). The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) had a comprehensive section in their *State of the World’s Fisheries* report (2018) about gender and fisheries. Areas of further research were also noted: “[R]esearch on women in fisher organizations is still scarce” (FAO, 2018: 159).

Globally, women’s contributions to fisheries are often undervalued: Where gender intersects with fisheries and economics, the current system masks costs of production via discounting or undervaluing women’s labour (Harper & Kleiber, 2016). Unpaid work is especially undervalued; the true costs of fisheries is thus not fully realised. The contributions by women are substantial, but there are also significant gaps in understanding gender inequality in the fisheries sector, and there is a need for improved gender-disaggregated data to inform fisheries policy (Harper et al., 2017). There have been positive policy changes relating to African women in fisheries, but there are areas which still need work (Sunde, 2016). For example, “[a]s the fisheries in South Africa and Mozambique go through rapid changes, communities adapt to coastal resource use in distinctly gendered ways” (Mbatha, 2013: 2). Women’s contributions have been overlooked in management and policy, and including women in decision- and policy-making process is important in creating poverty alleviation and food security strategies in the face of global change (Harper et al., 2013). Without gender-disaggregated data (e.g. catch activities), the ecological impacts of women’s unique fishing activities cannot be fully accounted for (Harper et al., 2015). In Africa, Asia and the Pacific, women make up the majority of the labour force in seafood processing plants, but these contributions often go unacknowledged (Harper et al., 2013).

Alonso-Población and Siar (2018) also found a lack of acknowledgment and political power in their overview of the literature on women in fisheries. The main focus was on providing insights into women’s roles in organisations and collective action. It seeks to understand what

blocks and constrains women who participate in fisher organisations as members and leaders; identify instances of women's successful participation in organisations and how these examples could be scaled up in other situations where there are numerous constraints; and "identify good practices that promote and strengthen women's participation in a meaningful and effective way" (Nayak, 2018: 8). Institutions at various levels play a role in driving women's leadership in fisher organisations; e.g., regional administration induced a positive transformation for shellfish gatherers in Galicia, Spain. Policy change was accompanied by the need for the organisation of women who were not previously organized. Women were also trained in managerial and technical skills. Brazilian women presented their challenges to the state via the *Articulação de Mulheres Pescadoras*; being able to represent themselves in this way has been important in women gaining new rights (Alonso-Población & Siar, 2018).

Similarly, Raemaekers and Sowman (2015) included fishers' recommendations, including which stakeholders' involvement were necessary to achieve the recommendations. However, Nayak (2018) noted that Alonso- Población and Siar included little of the material published by women in journals such as *Samudra* and *Yemaya*, published by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF). "Grey literature"¹ and non-online material was also excluded. Important issues which have significant implications for women's organising were not fully acknowledged (Nayak, 2018). For example, women in India and South Africa faced backlash from the male-dominated leadership when they raised their voices. This point is important to bear in mind when researching women's leadership roles in small-scale fisher organisations, in that it helps to complicate dichotomies of "victim/empowered woman". Another aspect of the "women in fisheries" literature which needs to be acknowledged is that on the exploitation of female fish workers in the context of the globalization of fisheries.

Major transformations have taken place in the fishing industry over the past three decades (Neis, 2005). There has been local and global ecological change, with ecosystems experiencing overfishing's effects, the increase of intensive aquaculture, and coastal and benthic degradation (Neis, 2005). Knowledge production and fisheries management has also changed, which reflect changes in the main legal, political and ideological frameworks governing fisheries (Neis, 2005). Changes in the environment interact with changes in patterns

¹ "Grey literature is published informally or non-commercially, or remains unpublished. It can appear in many forms, including government reports, statistics, patents, conference papers and even non-written sources such as posters and infographics. Grey literature usually has not been peer reviewed, but may still be good, reliable information" (Monash University Library, 2021). Monash University Library. 2021. *Grey Literature: What is grey literature*. Available: <https://guides.lib.monash.edu/grey-literature/whatisgreyliterature> [2021, March 3].

of ownership and control. How this “ecological revolution” is unfolding is also mediated by gender and globalization (Neis, 2005). Women and men experience representation at various levels of the globalization processes and institutions very differently, and the results of the “ecological revolution” also impact on women and men differently. Women in different groups are affected unevenly, but the effects are substantial (Neis, 2005). Globalization has also affected the casualization of jobs, which includes the fishing industry (MacDonald, 2005; Nayak, 2005a; Nayak, 2005b). In 1996, the ISCF Women in Fisheries Programme, through the National Fishworkers’ Forum (NFF), conducted a hearing on the problems that women migrant workers were experiencing in fish processing plants in India (Nayak, 2005a). Migrant workers worked “under sub-human conditions in processing plants in distant areas” (Nayak, 2005a). Several plants adopted a casualization policy in response to pressure to regularise the sector; plants sub-contracted as many of the processes as possible.

Nayak interviewed a plant worker, Sreedevi, who described the poor working conditions (e.g. no protective gear, resulting in numb and bleeding hands) and meagre pay she received. Labour laws are changed to suit new labour practices which favour casualization of labour, which in turn aids movement of work from the northern countries to the southern countries, where labour standards “are flouted at all levels” (Nayak, 2005a). When researching women in fisheries, it is acknowledged that some women work in exploitative conditions within the fishing industry, which is in itself exploitative of human bodies, natural resources and ecosystems.

Additionally, raced and classed elements in fisheries interactions and work conditions must also be acknowledged, as well as the privileges or lack thereof that come with being geographically located within the Global South or Global North. Work in the book *Changing Tides* showed that many of the exploited workers were brown, poor women from the Global South (in their case, India). Fikes (2005) wrote of the raced elements of interactions between Cape Verdean immigrant women and the Portuguese men who sold fish at a Lisbon, Portugal fisheries facility. Another layer of identity that came into play was how the women were immigrants, which in some cases had implications for how they were perceived and or treated in Portuguese society. Race acted as a form of currency, in this case: This was because of the context of the market, in which “raced information” was deployed (Fikes, 2005).

African Perspectives: Women in Fisheries

There can be both problems and the positive aspects in South African fisher women's lives (Groenmeyer, 2014). This project adds to the relatively substantial body of literature featuring small-scale fishing communities on the West Coast (e.g. Raemaekers & Sowman, 2015; Norton, 2015; Paterson et al., 2014; Schultz, 2010). Groenmeyer highlights the gendered aspect of work via the "triple shift" concept, wherein women are responsible for formal paid work, and reproductive work such as childcare or elder care. Such gendered aspects of work are an example of the importance of "gender mainstreaming" in fisheries policies and fisheries project management (Lentisco & Alonso, 2012). A report on a Women in Fisheries workshop in Lamberts Bay showed gendered aspects of work and discrimination (Sunde, 2010). Women fisher leaders from the Western and Northern Cape participated, with a focus on the South African small-scale fisheries draft policy. Women described gendered experiences and violence that women in fisher communities face. Workshop participants devised practical strategies for incorporating gender equity into fisheries policy. Solution-orientated work is a productive accompaniment to work that critiques or alerts readers to particular questions and/or issues.

Other reports and papers (Alonso-Población & Siar, 2018; FAO, 2017; FAO, 2018) have also noted the way that women often have unique time burdens compared to men, which may restrict the time they can devote to fishing and/or fishing-related activities. FAO (2017) points out that "[i]n most developing countries, women work longer hours than men when both paid and unpaid work are taken into consideration. Much of women's work is dedicated to domestic tasks that are less visible and unpaid, as well as to low-productivity subsistence farming, besides the time they dedicate to social and community duties (FAO, 2017: 4). Women from South African fishing communities came together at a workshop (organised by Masifundise Development Trust) to debate the small-scale fisheries policy's failure to account for abuse and violence against women (FAO, 2017). Women in Asia, Oceania and Europe have both made progress and faced challenges (FAO, 2017). Case studies show that women play diverse roles within the industry, which may help to dispel stereotypes about women's roles (FAO, 2017). Women's challenges have been acknowledged; making visible the blockages and/or failures raises awareness of what still needs to be done to achieve gender equity in fisheries (e.g. FAO, 2017; Alonso-Población and Siar, 2018).

Coastal fishing communities in the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem² experience vulnerability, and the primary importance of marine resources for coastal livelihoods is acknowledged (Béné et al., 2007; Sunde & Isaacs, 2008). South Africa's West Coast relies on abundance of this upwelling system for fishing purposes, and the Western Cape has the highest numbers of small scale fishers compared to the other coastal provinces. In South Africa, the importance of the fisheries has been recognised by the Equality Court (May 2007)³, and via the establishment of the Policy for Small-Scale Fisheries (promulgated in June 2012). This Policy recognizes the human rights aspect of small-scale fisheries, and, importantly, expands the definition of a fisher to include those who are secondary processors, sellers, and merchandisers. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the role of the FAO's *The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) and other international instruments in influencing the Equality Court's decision and the Policy for Small-Scale Fisheries. However, it is notable that South Africa sent delegates to the 30th session of the Committee on Fisheries, which was the beginning of the development of the SSF Guidelines (FAO, 2013).

Access to resources is a central area of contention, and it is a particularly gendered issue globally and in South Africa. With the Policy for the Small Scale Fisheries Sector in South Africa (known as the Small-Scale Fisheries Policy), one of the benefits is described as “[c]lear benefits for women, in fishing communities, from both fishing and [the] value chain” (Masifundise Development Trust et al., N.d: 2; see also Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012). The policy aimed to ensure that women and men get equitable benefits from the fishing sector. It stated:

“Women have always played a key role in the pre- and post-harvest activities and in some communities, women are the primary harvesters of intertidal resources” (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012: 19).

Masifundise et al. (N.d.) summarised key gender rights points from the policy:

“The role of women in the management plans, co-management and [community-based legal entities] should be based on promoting economic empowerment and changing practices that hindered women's rights to access, benefit from resources, employment, economic opportunities and decision-making. More specifically, small-scale fisheries policy must ensure that women are:

² African BCLME countries include Angola, Namibia and South Africa.

³ “Equality courts are specialised courts designated to hear matters relating to unfair discrimination, hate speech and harassment. The Equality courts were extended to the magistrate's courts primarily to bring access to justice to the marginalized and vulnerable citizens to assert their rights” (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2021). Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. 2021. *Equality Courts: Frequently Asked Questions*. Available: https://www.justice.gov.za/eqcact/eqc_faq.html [2021, March 6].

1. Empowered to exercise their rights to participate in the management of marine resources'
2. Trained to participate in the marketing, tourism, aquaculture, and additional coastal economic opportunities;
3. Equally represented on institutional structures” (Masifundise et al., N.d.).

The Policy for Small Scale Fisheries explains the difficulties that many fisher women had in applying for fishing rights (i.e. permits). It was mainly women in the Northern and Western Cape who were impacted by Government’s move to encourage women to apply for fishing rights during the medium-term (2002) and long-term (2005) application rounds. These women were allocated quotas in the commercial West Coast Rock Lobster (*Jasus lalandii*) and line fishing sectors in the medium-term period. A significant number of women did not have personal fishing experience, but due to being quota holders they saw themselves as legitimate fisheries stakeholders. This complicated the Long-Term Rights Allocation Process, “as these women believed that they were entitled to rights” (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012a: 19-20). Those who were unsuccessful in the long-term process looked to the Interim Relief (2007 and 2008) as a means of income. Most of those women had worked in processing plants previously before plants closed (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012a). Coastal towns held few opportunities for different forms of employment, so most people rely on fisheries as a primary income source (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012a). Notably, the section on gender rights in the Policy for Small-Scale Fisheries arguably aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in specific ways: Goal 5 on Gender Equality aligns with the Policy’s *Gender Rights* section, while the Policy as a whole aligns with Goal 14 on Life Below Water (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development)⁴.

There are various issues facing women in fisheries, such as being excluded from policy-making decisions, discrimination, and a lack of recognition of the roles they play in the fisheries value chain (e.g. Alonso-Población & Siar, 2018). The gap in the literature mentioned by the FAO (2018) is not surprising given how gendered the Western Cape fisheries are, in terms of activities undertaken, and cultural splits in terms of who was traditionally considered a fisher by law. Such issues prompt the following question: In what ways have women’s diverse roles in the fishing industry changed since being recognized by South African law? The latter question is posed in light of an expanded definition of “fisher” in South African law, which now includes fish processors, which has often been a job done mostly by women. Here,

⁴United Nations. N.d. *The 17 Goals*. Available: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> [2021, March 6].

“diverse roles” refers to the different fishing jobs women do, such as catching near-shore species, boat fishing, cleaning fish, or making nets.

This is based on my Honours research⁵, during which I met several women who play such diverse roles in the small-scale fishing industry, from administering fishing permits, to owning a fishing boat, to making nets, to organising for fishers’ rights. It was clear that these women played an important part in the formal fishery and in the fishery-related wider community. The woman who facilitated a focus group with women, and helped to organise individual interviews, also started a business named *Weskus Maandjie* (West Coast Basket), which promoted women’s seashore gleaning activities and craft products. She is also involved with The Collective, an organisation which fights for the rights of small-scale fishers to access marine resources. Despite the clearly active roles these women undertook in relation to fishing livelihoods, a common issue raised by the women I interviewed was a lack of recognition under the current small-scale fisheries policy, despite the expanded definition of “fisher” that the SSFP recognises. For example, in the Western Cape, women still struggle to get permits (e.g. if they want to be something other than a fish processor); at a 2010 workshop, women from the Western Cape and Northern Cape related how interim relief permits had been given mostly to men (Sunde, 2010).

My research looked at women’s roles at various scales of fisheries value chain, specifically around the issue of leadership in related organisations and the issue of access to resources, in light of the expanded definition of a ‘fisher’. My main objective was investigating if this expanded version of a socially constructed term – “fisher”, in this case – had translated into real changes in the gendered-dynamic of the Western Cape fishing industry. Thus, I mainly tried to find out what roles women are playing in the wider fishing complex, and if they are able to enact agency in relation to expanded ideas of leadership. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, further questions were added to accommodate digital research on the pandemic’s effect on SSFs. Topics I explored with participants included why women chose or why they were given a specific role, and what barriers there were to women taking on leadership roles in fisher organisations. I soon found out that the women who participated in my research were not necessarily part of formal fisher organisations. I looked at the question of general hindrances

⁵ The topic of this research was the effects of a lobster reserve on small-scale fishers’ livelihoods and cultural practices. All the fishers felt excluded from decision-making processes around marine resources to an extent, while women felt doubly excluded because activities such as net-making were not recognised by the government as fishing activities. Fonto, L. 2018. The Effects of the Lobster Reserve on Livelihoods and Cultural Practices of Fishers and Fish Workers in St Helena Bay. Honours Thesis. University of Cape Town.

to taking up a leadership role. I also asked women who they were connecting with, and why, so that I could get an idea of what women's networks looked like. I asked if the roles available to women in the fishing sector had changed over the years, which seemed to be the question with the most similar answers. While a question about the expanded definition of "fisher" in the SSF Policy was not always relevant to all, it did prompt some participants to talk about their experiences and opinions in relation to fisheries policy. A related question was whether changing policy had led to concrete changes in how women were accessing marine resources, and if women's current roles gave them agency or authority in the decision-making process around access to resources. The Covid-19 pandemic then prompted a pivot in my research to digital methods. Seeing the response from an organisation involved with small-scale fisheries then prompted the question of how the Covid-19 pandemic is impacting people who depend on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods⁶. Since numerous interconnections exist in the fishing sector as a whole, I looked into what the effects "higher up the chain", e.g. on industrial-scale fishing, meant for small-scale fishing in the face of Covid-19.

"Coasts Under Stress"

Ommer (2010) proposes the framework of "coastal social-ecological stress" to address these "wicked problems" (Jentoft & Chuenpagdee, 2009), which could relate to fishing. This approach involved examining the various factors that lead to stressed ecosystems, which in turn had negative impacts on communities who relied on natural resources. Ommer et al. (2009) argue for the need for a

"multi-disciplinary, multi-scale and interactive 'worldwide system of pelagic fisheries' analysis, one that identifies the feedback processes between climate and other global changes, but that extends to include people and human community survival..." (2009: 1133).

The concept of "resilience" ties in here: Neis et al. (2013) suggest the concept of "resilience" as a framework for examining the problems facing small-scale fishing communities. In terms of social-ecological systems (of which small-scale fisheries are one), resilience means that the system can recover from shocks, adapt and self-organize. A resilient livelihood is one which is

⁶ See <https://www.plaas.org.za/plaas-webinar-covid-19-impact-on-small-scale-fisheries-in-south-africa-and-beyond/>.

also sustainable; such a livelihood is resilient to stress, can cope with a crisis, and can absorb environmental and economic disturbances (Neis et al., 2013). Additionally, Neis et al. (2013) argue that the longer-term resilience of small-scale fisheries is most influenced by the factors of being household-based, reliant on kinship networks, and intergenerational transfers of knowledge, resource access, and fisheries-related property. Networks and social relations can be deeply gendered within and between a generation (Neis et al., 2013). A lack of resilience in fishing outcomes has been a trend in a globalizing world, with increased employment precarity (Howse et al., 2012). I will be using the interrelated concepts of the Coasts Under Stress (CUS) Model, and small-scale fisheries resilience. While the critiques of resilience are acknowledged (Luthar et al., 2000; Olsson et al., 2015), the term is useful in that it allows for a discussion of how systems absorb, adapt or change according to shocks or stressors.

These concepts acknowledge the interconnected issues in fishing, and weave an awareness about complexity, especially in a fishing industry with as complex a history as South Africa's. I used a model that addresses "coastal social-ecological stress" and uncovers linkages between the "main drivers of social-ecological health in both human and environmental communities" (Ommer et al., 2010: 478). The restructuring associated with globalization has been generally recognized to have created rapid and profound social, economic and political change both in and beyond industrial countries, and the growing literatures on globalization, the dismantling of the welfare state, industrial change and neo-liberalism all speak of the advent of a 'new industrial divide'" (Ommer et al., 2010: 478). However, less attention had been paid to restructuring's effects on the natural world via natural resources being organised to suit national and global economic needs.

I use Neis et al.'s (2013) work on relationships between fisheries resilience and management to argue that it is important to take into account gendered aspects of small-scale and industrial fisheries, especially as it relates to resilience of fisheries. While the authors focus on small-scale fisheries, their work is arguably relevant to various scales because it takes note of the relationships that are needed to keep fisheries functioning. When the authors defined the concept of resilience in fisheries, they noted how "livelihoods in small-scale fisheries are often based on a diversity of species and stocks and on a diversity of other productive activities" (Berkes, 2003: 16; cited in Neis et al., 2013). Key factors in the longer-term resilience of SSF include reliance on kinship knowledge, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and fisheries-related property (Neis et al., 2013). Networks and social relations are gendered (intra- and inter-generational), and can be diverse, dynamic and exploitative. The household basis factor of SSF

means that women and youths' engagement often plays an important role in resilience; SSF resilience is influenced by these relations (Neis et al., 2013).

Analysing Networks of Women: Overlapping "Patches" of Knowledge

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015) describes how forms of knowledge are formed in patches, i.e. separate, but not totally divorced from each other. I wanted to look at leadership roles, but realised that leadership was not something that could necessarily be pinned down. Groups are not always formalised. In light of changes in the fishing industry, and to the Policy for Small-Scale Fisheries, what might I be seeing in terms of women's involvement in the industry on the Cape Peninsula? Are women operating in patches, or silos? Or is there a network? An interesting question to ask would be what those different kinds of relations mean to both myself as a researcher and to the women themselves in terms of women empowerment. The idea of "patches" also picks up on the idea of informal leadership. What does the idea of patches mean for small-scale fisheries, especially for the inshore sector? Since few small-scale fishing permits have been awarded at the moment, many fishers in the Western Cape are working in the commercial inshore sector in the meantime [M. Norton, personal communication, 25 October 2019].

I used Lowenhaupt-Tsing's (2015) idea of "patches" of knowledge in relation to matsutake mushrooms to form the theoretical basis of analysing women's networks in the fisheries value chain. The translational aspect of mycology⁷ is present because scientific insights are drawn from many different ways of life. Translation refers to "articulations between humans and those nonhumans working with humans, such as technologies; through translation...networks of action emerge that include humans and nonhumans equally" (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015: 308; Latour, 2005).

In the case of my research, "patches" apply to women who are in fisheries, but at different scales (e.g. small-scale, "mid-scale" and industrial scale). These patches may be "mobile" in the same way as Lowenhaupt-Tsing's (2015) mobile mushroom knowledge. Through online and print media, women may read about each other's doings, thus making the activities in a patch "mobile" in a way. Translations in these patches could be between humans and other humans, or between women and fish, and even marine plants (e.g. seaweed). Bearing in mind that networks might emerge in "messy" ways, whether between humans or between

⁷ A branch of biology that studies fungi.

humans and non-humans, is helpful as a reminder to be alert to unexpected happenings in the fisheries value chain. In complicating human and “other-than-human” relations, Lowenhaupt-Tsing’s (2015) concept of “patches” helps to acknowledge the complex assemblages of humans, “other-than-humans”, and the environment which shape everyday realities. These entanglements show up in the way that some fishers view their connections to the sea, with it being “in the blood”, or part of social life (Paterson et al., 2014; Sunde, 2010; America et al., 2020). Patches also apply to how, as an academic and a woman researching fisheries, I am inserting myself into networks and/or patches. Fisheries research in the Western Cape is itself a network, although a patchy one of researchers (men and women) that connect communities, dots and people, and helped to shape the field as I apprehended it.

Translation in the sense of the Western science model generates “patches of incoherence and incompatibility in science” (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015: 218). Separate bodies conducting research, review, etc. can create persistent patches. These patches are not isolated, but are rather examples of the open-ended gatherings which Lowenhaupt-Tsing calls “assemblages”. This concept of assemblages serves as a reminder that while entities such as the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) seems to be in a silo as its actors make policy on fishing, for example, they are still connected by a thread of some kind to the women on the ground selling fish, supervising workers, etc. While there may be “incoherence” – some women felt left behind the government, there is still a spore-like thread between these groups because of how, for example, policy has very real impacts on everyday life.

From the beginning of modern matsutake science, there was a willingness to listen to peasant experience; matsutake was at a position of intersections of vernacular and expert knowledge. Similarly, there has been dialogue between vernacular knowledge and the academy when it comes to fisheries, at least in South Africa (e.g. Anderson et al., 2013; Raemaekers & Sowman, 2015; Sowman & Raemaekers, 2018). This sort of productive research echoes the sentiments of Ommer et al. (2010) on the usefulness of interdisciplinary research in managing fisheries resources.

Just as asking about relations between matsutake, oaks, pines and people would be ideal in a matsutake-inhabited landscape, so is asking about relations between people, climate, and marine organisms. A fish such as Cape bream, for example, does not seem to be a lone, scalable product in reality; an accounting for “companion species” is necessary in managing these fish as it is in managing matsutake. Lowenhaupt-Tsing (2015) illustrates the importance

of “relational forests” via her vignettes of human and non-human; it is arguably just as important to think about “relational oceans” and/or “relational coasts”.

Women in Leadership Roles

In formulating, conducting and analysing my research, I noted the “matters of concern” (Stengers, 2018) of the research participants, i.e. issues that community members want to talk about and/or investigate. I was conscious of not imposing what I thought was worthy of pursuing onto people. My intention was to incorporate the participants’ own research agendas into my research; thus, some of my interview questions changed when it came to women leading more formal organisations such as a fishers’ rights group. Some of the conversations leaned more towards a “behind the scenes” type of leadership. In order to understand very particular iterations of leadership, I approached the idea of “women leaders” in a non-essentialising way. In this research, my understanding of “leadership” was shaped by how I saw that people can be leaders without being in a typical leadership role. Thus, they can be in a leadership role without it being institutionalized. This complication of what it means to be a leader informed how I approached the FAO’s (2018) statement of there being a “gap in research” on women’s leadership roles in fisher organisations. Through this research, my understanding of this “gap” is that there is not always an acknowledgement of leadership roles that are more “social capital”-based roles than institution-based roles.

I define ‘leadership’ as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members” (House et al., 2004, cited in Jogulu & Wood, 2006: 237). This definition is used because it can also be applied to women in fisheries. The 70s saw the emergence of a theory to explain differences in the leadership styles of political leaders through the terms “transactional leadership” and “transformational leadership” (Jogulu & Wood, 2006)⁸. Transactional leaders tended to focus more on completing tasks, while transformational leaders tended to focus on developing subordinates’ potential (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). Gender stereotypes may influence how successful women are perceived to be as leaders; women who were in industries perceived to be more “masculine” (male-congenial environments) were considered to be less likely to

⁸ Women’s styles of leadership generally fit into a model centring collaboration, cooperation, lower levels of leader control, and intuition-based problem-solving, which closely aligns with “transactional leadership” theories (Jogulu & Wood, 2006).

succeed as leaders (Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra, 2006). “Gender role congruity” denotes the congruity between gender roles and other roles, including leadership⁹.

Women have often taken on roles seen as “suitable to feminine stereotypes”, e.g. roles involving care, or that emphasise social interaction (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Men have more often been associated with leadership roles than women. Consequently, leadership is assumed to be more congruent with masculine gender roles than with feminine gender roles (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Gender roles have played a role in the language used by women in socially powerful positions e.g. women managers in Tokyo, Japan (Dubuc, 2012). Women have used their fisher organisations to lobby for fishers’ rights in the face of loss of incomes, vessels, and homes (Hall-Arber, 1996). Asian immigrant women working mainly in the USA garment industry came together through Asian Immigrant Women Advocates to develop skills, learn about their rights as women and workers, and develop leadership skills (Chun et al., 2013).

Leadership can also be informal. Such leadership may take place within an organisation that does not have legal recognition, even if this fact does not exclude them from being involved in economic, political, or social processes (March & Taqqu, 2018 [1986]). Informal leadership can still have a powerful influence on an organisation (Herda-Rapp, 1998). Previously, research on social movement leadership had focused mostly on formal, visible leadership, which consequently meant studying male leadership (Herda-Rapp, 1998). In contrast to Jogulu and Wood (2006) and Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra (2006), Herda-Rapp’s study was not in the context of a formal, corporate setting. The private setting of the household can also be place of complex interplays of gender and age when it comes leadership or simply being “in charge” (Roseman, 1999); e.g. “individuals...draw on the discursive themes of both social hierarchy and egalitarianism in continually negotiating their own positions and those of their co-resident kin” (Roseman, 1999: 117).

I looked not only at the formal leadership, but also looked into how informal leaders exert influence. The household was also included because households do not exist separate from society, and may be both shaped by, and shape, wider societal structures. I included these examples of informal leadership to ensure that I was using an inclusive concept of leadership to acknowledge the gap in understandings of leadership that can exist when considering how

⁹ “Characteristics typical of leaders are usually defined in agentic, instrumental terms, which are ascribed more strongly to men. In addition, men, more than women, are concentrated in roles that emphasize power, competition, or authority” (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006: 51).

women lead. Women have also moved into the entrepreneurship sphere, in fisheries and elsewhere. Women are arguably the backbone of the Ghanaian fishery (Overå, 2005). A mobile commodity in the form of fish harvested by foreign boats provided new opportunities for women in the Ghanaian fishing industry¹⁰. The fact that by-catch is being used also has the positive side-effect of mitigating one of the most egregious effects of an ever-globalizing fishing industry, namely the wastage of non-targeted species. Additionally, there is a hierarchy among women fish traders, which results from the variation in income and social status (Overå, 2005). A brief overview of studies on women in entrepreneurship showed that female entrepreneurs generally have high levels of education, but may lack management skills; they are also likely to have had entrepreneur fathers (Jakhar & Krishna, 2020). Top motivating factors for women to enter into entrepreneurship included wanting to build wealth and capitalizing on business ideas (Jakhar & Krishna, 2020). Challenges may sometimes be related more to entrepreneurship itself than gender. However, other literature showed that obstacles included a lack of interaction with successful entrepreneurs, and a lack of social acceptance of women entrepreneurs (Jakhar & Krishna, 2020). In India specifically, women entrepreneurs faced numerous problems, some of which directly related to gender (e.g. banks not wanting to lend to women despite statistics showing their higher rates of repayment compared to men) (Jakhar & Krishna, 2020). Interventions at various levels of government, and those by the private sector, can contribute towards growing numbers of female entrepreneurs in India (Jakhar & Krishna, 2020). Women's entrepreneurship may have become better understood due to the understanding of entrepreneurship embracing gender, but there has arguably been inadequate attention paid to women in developing countries (Küçükaltan, 2020). This has resulted in an unclear picture of women entrepreneur's practices. Studies in the Turkish and Chinese contexts pointed out that "cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic aspects play a vital role for women entrepreneurship" (Küçükaltan, 2020: 25). The Cultural, Administrative, Geographic and Economic (CAGE) analysis technique was used to examine the context in which Chinese and Turkish women entrepreneurs work. Broadly speaking, the importance of relationships in China is shown in the term *guanxi*, which refers to the norms of reciprocal relationships. Guanxi is important to entrepreneurship, because it "explains behavioural foundations, such as risk-taking and trust, and helps to elucidate the extent of equality by gender groups" (Küçükaltan, 2020: 29). There has been prominent government

¹⁰ Part of the analysis is drawn from: Fonto, L. 2020. Individual Essay. Coursework for AXL5409F. Department of Anthropology, University of Cape Town.

support policies for women's entrepreneurship, such as subsidised training, and loans (Küçükaltan, 2020). In Tukey, particular societal relationships such as belonging to the same school or group, are considered important relationships in social and business contexts (Küçükaltan, 2020). Additionally, there has been a long history of women in entrepreneurship in Turkey (Küçükaltan, 2020). Yousafzai et al. (2019) introduce various new directions in research on women in entrepreneurship, which includes research that not only investigates structural-level issues such as gender inequality, but also that which looks at factors beyond gender (e.g. gaining status and family resource access). One of these papers focuses on Nepalese female entrepreneurs "opens up avenues to recognise how the diverse experiences of responding to business-family demands stem from the paradoxical expectations of different types of institutions" (Yousafzai et al., 2019: 171). Women's entrepreneurship is sometimes affected by social relationships that do not favour them. They can still use their agency to address poverty, however, through being change agents in social-relational sense (in addition to an economic sense) (Onyango & Jentoft, 2011). Women in Tanzania used their practical wisdom or prudence (termed *phronesis* by Aristotle) in the process of creating and running the Tweyambe Fishing Enterprises in a way that benefitted them and their community (Onyango & Jentoft, 2011). While this research is not directly related to entrepreneurship, it is still useful in the context of women working outside of formal corporate structures within the fishing industry.

Dissertation Layout

In Chapter 2, I discuss my research methods and ethics, and how these were impacted by the conditions in my fieldwork sites, as well as the Covid-19 crisis. In light of Covid-19, I had to pivot to digital methods of research to an extent. I discuss the methods I used and why, as well as the ethical implications. I have also highlighted the ethics of secondary research, which has more ethical complications than some have been led to believe (Lupton, 2020). The following overarching themes will be explored in the analysis chapters:

Chapter 3 examines the theme cluster of pioneering/innovating/self-empowerment or self-reliance – in particular the theme of women succeeding, leading or asking for improvements to current policies/structures based on these ideals or characteristics. This chapter also explores the idea of women in fisheries, and how the concept of patches (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015) may be applied to bring together seemingly disparate threads. The

concept will also be used to explore how experiences of women may overlap at both the same and different scales of the fishing sector.

In Chapter 4, I show how the application of the patches idea is helpful in analysing women's networks, and how technology may aid in connecting these patches. The following theme cluster is explored: Networks and/or relationships - online; through social or business relationships; regional; activist; academic; professional; research; technological (cell phones; social media; buying apps; online activism; media); the relationship built through stories (e.g. accessing a fisher's story through a QR code).

Chapter 5 explores the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on small-scale fishers in the Western Cape via a case study of ABALOBI. It also notes how relationships can be extended beyond the physical realm via technology. This theme cluster is centred on ideas of lineage, blood, sustainability: passing the knowledge, position or company on to the next generation; fishing being in the blood, and more than a livelihood; the idea of leaving something for the next generation, including resources or a way of live, and the idea of environmental sustainability, SASSI and conscious consumerism, small-scale and local purchases.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, and points to areas of further research.

2. Research Methods and Ethical Considerations

2.1 Research Methods

My 'field site' was determined by a "multi-sited approach" (Nadai & Maeder, 2005), in light of possible difficulties in gathering participants in one venue. The "site" itself could be the network of relationships between women. Doing research in complex societies means that ethnography may not be centred on one place (Ibid.). The contours of the "observational site" emerge during the research process as the ethnographer follows participants "across multiple sites that turn out to become relevant in the light of the research question" (Ibid: 4). For Nadai and Maeder (2005), ethnographic sites are conceived as "social worlds" which constitute shared activities and concerns. While multi-sited ethnography is "comparative by nature" (Nadai & Maeder, 2005), it does differ from comparative ethnography. While comparative ethnography could be seen as comparing communities or locales, for example, and looking for similarities and differences, multi-sited ethnography tends to lean more towards having one focus area which is studied across multiple sites (in this case, women's leadership roles in fisher organisations). This multi-sited approach was an advantage when the COVID-19 pandemic caused South Africa to go into lockdown, necessitating a pivot to remote research methods only.

My research sites were all physically in the vicinity of Cape Town. When it came to in-person interviews, I interviewed some women who worked in Hout Bay; I met up in the Cape Town central business district (CBD) with a woman who worked in a fish factory in Stikland; I travelled to Buffeljagsbaai on the East Coast of South Africa. I made some initial observations in Kalk Bay while buying fish in the harbour there, but did not get an opportunity to conduct interviews. In light of restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic (see below), I conducted an interview on the messaging service WhatsApp, and did digital research on the image-sharing application Instagram and elsewhere on the internet.

These different "social worlds" and the variety of methods I used could themselves be thought of as patches. I used interviews, observations and text-based sources to gather data, and applied a gender perspective and network analysis to find patches of women's leadership. It is not just the different geographical locations or different methods that make patches a relevant concept to my research methods. Patches are relevant here because the patches brought together in this research can be described as "assemblages" which come together in "patterns or unintentional coordination" (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015: 23). The patches are not directly

connected to each other, but there is a thread that runs through all of them. Even where online research was done, the activities discussed were still mainly centred in the Western Cape.

Qualitative Data

Individual Interviews: I conducted interviews with individuals, and also with a pair of women (who knew each other) The women were mostly over the age of 30. Some of the women spoke extensively on their history in the fishing industry; thus, life histories came into play in some interviews in an organic way. While I attempted to find women in leadership roles, I also tried to bear in mind how women were leading “behind-the-scenes” at all levels of the industry. The interviews themselves did not come about as a result of a neatly planned schedule of when I would interview whom; instead, the interviews appeared unexpectedly, like mushrooms after rain (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015). However, like mushrooms, these interviews did not come from nowhere. Lowenhaupt-Tsing describes how beneath the forest, “fungal bodies extend themselves in nets and skeins, binding roots and mineral soils, long before producing mushrooms” (Ibid.: 8). These “hidden collaborations” came in the form of my supervisor directing me to a contact of hers, sending me links to videos, academic articles, or an online newsletter. The two people I have mentioned in the acknowledgements were themselves like the activity below the forest floor that eventually produces mushrooms.

All of the in-person interviews were recorded with interviewees’ explicit consent, and then transcribed manually. Most of the interviews were conducted in English, or a combination of English and Afrikaans. Where questions were answered in Afrikaans, I have provided a translation¹¹.

Analysing Patches and Networks: This method was used at the same time as I was going about finding people who would agree to be interviewed; these two methods were “entangled with” and “interrupted” each other, which mimics the “patchiness” of the world of matsutake mushrooms which Lowenhaupt-Tsing (2015) describes. I attempted to establish who women were/are connecting with, e.g. fishing co-operatives and fishers’ unions. I analysed why women were connecting with particular people and/or entities, and why they are making such connections. I drew networks at various scales: The women interviewed in the *Fishers’ Net* newsletters (published by Masifundise Development Trust/Coastal Links); the women interviewed in the South African Deep-Sea Trawling Industry Association (SADSTIA) media

¹¹ See Appendix 2 for longer passages in the original Afrikaans.

clippings; and the women associated with the ABALOBI organisation/application. The SADSTIA clippings were collected on the SADSTIA website under the section News and Updates, in the subfolder Media Clippings. The profiles of “Leaders of Tomorrow” were published by Fishing Industry News Southern Africa (FINSAs), an online publication¹². One of the SADSTIA clippings was originally published in the *Weslander* newspaper. *Weslander* is a bilingual local newspaper that’s sold every Thursday in Vredenburg, Saldanha, Hopefield, Paternoster, Stompneus Bay, Velddrif, St Helena Bay, Langebaan, Langebaan Way, Aurora, Redelinghuys, Elands Bay, Porterville, Piketberg, Lambert’s Bay and Moorreesburg.

With *Fishers’ Net*, I sampled newsletters that specifically mentioned women’s struggles. The end result was a Google Drive folder with 15 newsletter PDF files; the oldest newsletter was from 2007, and the most recent was from 2018. In the case of the SADSTIA clippings and *Fishers’ Net* newsletters, there was already information in the public domain which answered my research questions, which is why certain people were mentioned in patches, but not personally interviewed. I analysed this data manually, tried to recognise patterns that emerged, and looked for why they emerged (see Corbin & Strauss, 1990)¹³.

Participant Observation: In my research, I did a type of “hanging out” which involved social interactions with participants, while at the same time making careful observations of how and why social actions were occurring between myself and participants, and/or between participants themselves. Atkinson (2017) posits that ethnographers need to consider the nature of organised social interaction itself, which consists of what people actually do and how they do it. He goes on to argue that we do not study social encounters just in order to observe individuals. Instead, “we focus on the interaction order, as Goffman (1983; cited in Atkinson, 2017) called it, precisely because it is a mode of social organization. Encounters between social actors have their own intrinsic organisational properties that cannot and should not be reduced to individualised actors and acts” (Atkinson, 2017: 3). Social interactions have particular codes of practice, conventions, and rituals (Atkinson, 2017). These can contribute to producing particular power dynamics (e.g. asymmetry between men and women). Being aware of the

¹² FINSAs is “dedicated to the commercial fishing and aquaculture industries in South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia”, according to its website.

¹³ Grounded theory allows the researcher to recognise patterns in the data, which then informs subsequent interviews. Reasons for the emergence of particular patterns of human action can be ascertained. “Actors are seen as having, though not always utilizing, the means of controlling their destinies by their responses to conditions” (1990: 5). This allows a view of social actors as both having their own agency to respond to conditions, and of being influenced by events which are not directly within their control. In this way, I can acknowledge both the individual actions and social structures related to women’s roles in fisher organisations and/or fishing communities.

importance of social interactions is relevant to my research because of the gendered issues already discussed. It is not enough to say that particular gender roles I encountered are socially constructed; instead, I prompted myself to notice what kinds of interactions served to reinforce such roles. I was careful not to interrupt people's daily tasks as far as possible. I asked for interviews at the Hout Bay harbour at times when people did not appear to be busy, and was careful to accommodate people's schedules when meeting in person.

"Inquisitive Observation": Bestor (2004) used this term in researching the Tsukiji fish market (Tokyo), where there were numerous tasks he could not participate in, such as chopping up tuna (and nor would participants want him to do certain tasks). I used this when not doing formal interviews, but nonetheless observing the environment and how people interacted (e.g. in Buffeljagsbaai and Kalk Bay).

Digital Research: This method is both entangled with in-person interviews, and interrupts it as well, both metaphorically and literally. Useful vignettes appeared at unexpected times, which meant that this method did not follow a neat, "logical" schedule either. The "patches" generated by the digital and in-person research are connected in their own way, but not intentionally. I followed the ABALOBİ Instagram account to see how the organisation is responding to the early stages of Covid-19 pandemic. I chose to follow this organisation because it had positioned itself as an alternative to a system in which small-scale fishers tended to benefit the least from their catch, while people higher up the value chain (e.g. middlemen and restaurant owners) benefited the most. I observed the efforts of the organisation ABALOBİ to keep the supply of fish going out, thus allowing fishers to continue earning some income. These efforts included their Covid-19 statement (e.g. hygiene measures put in place), and update posts on Instagram. I collected Instagram posts from 21 April 2020 to 31 May 2020, from the ABALOBİ Instagram account, @ABALOBİ_app. Such update posts included how to order whole fish from their app, as well as screenshots showing the catch of the day and other seafood products for sale. In relation to women in fisheries, the "ABALOBİ Pantry" component of the organisation has been operating, wherein women sell processed marine products, as well as other food products such as *suurvygie* (sour fig) jam. I also read their Impact Report based on the years 2018-2019, which provided information on how ABALOBİ included gender in its approach to fisheries technology.

The second component of digital research was following the news for articles on ABALOBİ and on small-scale fishers affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which I began in April 2020, and continued until June 2020. When it comes to news articles on small-scale fishers, and the above-mentioned ABALOBİ organisation, I first examined what people had

already put into the public domain to see if my research questions are answered before requesting an actual interview. For South African and African news on small-scale fishers and Covid-19, I collected articles from the websites of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFFA), and Too Big To Ignore (TBTI)¹⁴.

Where people's names are out in the public domain, I used them in screenshots of Instagram posts, in my network analysis, and in news article quotations. I note in the following section my decisions around using names when such names were not in the public domain.

2.2 Ethical Considerations

Using a lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) was useful in making myself aware of my positionality as a researcher¹⁵. A listing of identities is not necessarily useful in itself; Yuval-Davis (2006) argued that social divisions are irreducible to other social divisions. However, experiencing the world as a member of a particular grouping does not negate how forms of privilege and/or oppression are “constructed and intermeshed in other social divisions (for example, gender, social class, disability status, sexuality, age, nationality, immigration status, geography, etc.)” (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 195). Attempting to essentialise ‘womanhood’ for example, as a specific form of oppression in an additive way leads to conflation of identity politics narratives with positionality descriptions (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Additionally, these narratives may reflect a dominant discourse around a particular identity (in this case, women), which renders more marginalized group members invisible, and implies one “correct” way to be part of that group (Ibid.). I am aware that the category of “woman” does hold the same meanings for me as it does in different contexts, and that not all groups of people subscribe to the Western notions of “women”; these notions may often be taken for granted (Oyèwùmí, 1997).

Nonetheless, remaining conscious of my positionality, and avoiding inserting personal narratives over people's own narratives (Mngomezulu, 2016) are what I used to avoid “radical alterity” (Keesing, 1994) when presenting ethnographic facts on ‘people's cultures’.¹⁶ People's own voices need to come across in the ethnography. When incorporating interviews in

¹⁴ Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements microblog: <https://www.cffcape.org/news>

Too Big To Ignore news hub: <http://toobigtoignore.net/covid-19-and-small-scale-fisheries-2/>

¹⁵ I am a white, able-bodied, culturally- and (mostly) materially-middle-class woman with a university degree from the “prestigious” University of Cape Town.

¹⁶ Fonto, L. 2016. *Exploring How Anthropologists May Avoid Othering in Telling People's Stories: An Examination of Positionality and Language*. AXL3400F Coursework Essay. University of Cape Town.

Afrikaans into this research, I was conscious of how translations from another language into English may be distorted, thus misrepresenting what is being said (Povinelli, 2001). The ethnographer is always implicated in her work (Mngomezulu, 2016). I made the choice to be an overt presence as an ethnographer (Söderqvist, 1991) in the written ethnography as far as possible by carefully explaining particular choices in research techniques, which could in turn explain how research turned out.

People were fully informed of the purpose of the research, and how the research would be used. I tried to make myself known as a researcher as soon as possible – Bernard (2006) urges anthropologists not to be an “inconspicuous participant” when they are actually observers “who [want] to participate as much as possible” (2006: 390). During my research, I kept in mind that practical ethics might have needed to come into play during the research process itself, where the “right thing to do” is decided based on the best available information at the time. I kept in-person interviewees anonymous, and used full names only if they were in pieces published in the public domain. The reason why I have kept the individual interviewees anonymous is because I originally told in-person participants that their words would be kept anonymous. The participants I interviewed in person seemed to be satisfied with this arrangement. I acknowledge that using real names could have been an option; using real names could help descendants of interviewees find their words at a later stage (Morrow et al., 2014). At the time, keeping individual interviewees anonymous seemed like the best choice, especially given the power dynamics between myself and some of the participants (e.g. white privilege¹⁷, class privilege). Where people have the same job title, I used initials¹⁸ to differentiate between interviewees’ comments.

Several researchers encountered poaching and other “illegal” activities within fishing communities during their research (e.g. Brill & Raemaekers, 2013; De Greef, 2014). I did not encounter mentions of such activities this time around (unlike Honours research), although I was prepared in the case of it happening (e.g. knowing the DEFF and CrimeStop phone numbers).

While I was in the middle of trying to recruit more participants from the Hout Bay harbour, COVID-19 cases increased in South Africa. According to the World Health Organisation, Covid-19 symptoms can appear, on average, 5 to 6 days after exposure, and the

¹⁷ I understand white privilege to mean that while I may face individual hardships, my life has not been harder specifically because of my skin colour.

¹⁸ Since people were saying similar things to what I’ve heard and read other fishers say, their words do not seem so controversial that adding an initial would potentially cause harm.

appearance of symptoms can range from 1 to 14 days (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021). Thus, a person could be infectious but asymptomatic. The WHO has also advised precautions such as physical distancing. Continuing to do in-person research thus became riskier, both for participants and myself. That is not to say that participants would have had Covid-19. I thought that it was best to manage the variables that I could control, and so I decided that it was best not to travel to places and thus risk potentially infecting participants.

Shortly after that, in February, lockdown measures were announced in South Africa as a way of curbing the spread of COVID-19. Thus, I decided to pivot to digital methods of research, which included following the efforts of the organisation ABALOBI to preserve the link between small-scale fishers and the market despite the pandemic. I also followed news articles related to small-scale fishers and the pandemic.

In light of doing digital research, I needed to consider new ethical dimensions of my work. For example, Morrow et al. (2014) refuted the idea that secondary analysis poses few ethical challenges. It is important to interrogate one's use of online data for responsibility towards the source and possible misinterpretation. What story were the participants in the original research trying to tell? In what ways can research on a different topic that uses the original research avoid distorting participants' stories?

Lupton (2020) noted that social research has been done online for many years and makes a helpful point:

“You will also need to consider the ‘affective atmospheres’ of conducting any kind of social research in a pandemic, when normal routines are disrupted and many people are feeling uncertain and worried, or are ill or caring for ill family members. People may be living in environments where they are subjected to harassment, violence or surveillance by other family members. Privacy issues are very important to consider in these contexts (Lupton, 2020: 19)”.

Those who are confined during lockdown, and bored but healthy, may be enthusiastic about joining a research project. It is important to consider the target participant group when deciding how to move forward. Using online data collection methods involving material that people uploaded needs a careful consideration of ethical issues, since people did not generate it after giving full consent (Lupton, 2020).

I experienced using different forms of ethics depending on different methods of research, all while keeping within the ethical guidelines of Anthropology Southern Africa¹⁹. In the case of interviewing fish sellers in Hout Bay, there came to be an implicit understanding that buying fish constituted a “fair exchange” for taking part in an interview. For other interviewees, providing refreshments was considered fair. In my experience, it is an implicit rule that one cannot turn up “empty-handed” if one is hosting someone or taking up their time in some way. Thus, providing refreshments as a “good host” would, or supporting a local business, were the two main forms of acceptable exchanges for taking up someone’s time for an interview.

¹⁹ <https://www.asnahome.org/about-the-asna/ethical-guidelines>

3. Pioneering Fisherwomen, and Coming Together Across the Value Chain

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to look at women's experiences in fisheries, especially with regard to leadership roles. I wanted to find out if there were patterns within women's experiences, in particular if the women worked in the same scale of the fishing industry. While some women had experiences and/or opinions in common, there were still differences between women, even if they were from what could be considered the same "patch" (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015) in the fishing industry. This chapter will also be looking at two cross-cutting themes that are also relevant to the Covid-19-related part of this research, namely "gendered aspects of the fisheries value chain" and "market access for women (especially those in SSF) along the value chain".

Gender did not come across a "non-issue"; my current understanding of gender as it relates to the women in fisheries I interviewed is that gender is socially constructed in different ways, especially in relation to socioeconomic class. Stories of women's experiences will show how gender affected their lives in ways that were different to men. These social constructions arise from the social interactions among women and men that came up in interviews and digital research.

"Patches" of Women on Various Scales

While women may be in different patches, the patches themselves are not in silos because of the entire fishing industry being "caught up in the friction of global connection" (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2005). While mobile technologies (e.g. cell phones) do not guarantee women's knowledge of each other, they could still find out about what other women are doing via networks (discussed below). The means of finding information about what women are doing in the South African fisheries value chain may be "easier" than in the past, but there are questions of access to internet connections, etc. It appears that empowerment of women takes different forms at different scales of the fishing industry; it does not mean that if networks are somewhat separated from each other that no empowerment is taking place. "Empowerment" is used here to mean a situation where women have access to the resources they need to gain new knowledge, harness existing knowledge in new ways, and have at least some agency in fisheries-related decision-making. However, there are still questions around who can access various opportunities and why. This chapter looks at themes that are also relevant to the Covid-

19-related part of this research, namely “gendered aspects of the fisheries value chain” and “market access for women (especially those in SSF) along the value chain”.

By “patches”, I mean networks of people with knowledge in the same area (in this case, different areas of fisheries), that may be connected personally, or by association in the same industry. Some of these patches have emerged via my observations, while some may exist as a result of commercial activity. Women might not consider themselves part of a patch I observed. Some of these patches may not be connected geographically, but the people in it may be aware of other’s work, e.g. the women mentioned in the *Fishers’ Net* newsletter may be aware of each other’s work, even if they have not met up in person. I identified patches through formal organisations, in this case, Masifundise Development Trust (Masifundise) /Coastal Links South Africa (CLSA)²⁰, the South African Deep-Sea Trawling Industry Association (SADSTIA) and ABALOBI. Some of the women mentioned by ABALOBI have been mentioned by *Fishers’ Net*, or appear to be aware of Masifundise/Coastal Links’ work, e.g. the Fisher Leader I interviewed. Those involved in fishing co-operatives also appeared in ABALOBI and *Fishers’ Net* media. By SADSTIA, I mean a coalition of fish trawling companies, who fall within smaller clusters (see below). I chose these groupings because the women had something in common by virtue of being associated with the same organisation. The groups oriented towards small-scale fishing (Masifundise/Coastal Links and ABALOBI) offered an opportunity to “virtually network” through women reading about other women’s work in the Masifundise/Coastal Links *Fishers’ Net* newsletter, ABALOBI Instagram posts, or on the ABALOBI mobile phone application (in particular the ABALOBI Pantry section). Members of Masifundise/Coastal Links and ABALOBI are aware of the work of ICSF, and some had met and/or worked with the late Chandrika Sharma, a prominent ICSF activist from India. For example, Naseegh Jaffer, Director of Masifundise, shared how a bond developed between him and Sharma during their “joint role of coordinating the international civil society participation in the negotiations for Guidelines for Small-scale Fisheries” (Masifundise, 2014). In 2002, Sharma worked to link Masifundise staff and fisher leaders with fishers around the world, and encouraged South African women fishers to use *Yemaya* as a platform to speak out (Masifundise, 2014). She also invited a Masifundise staff member and a community leader to

²⁰ From the Masifundise website: “This marks the next phase in the organizational history of Masifundise (2012-2017) – its expansion into all four coastal provinces, a unique institutional arrangement between itself and CLSA, in which Masifundise acted as both a support and secretariat to CLSA as they collaborated on a mix of strategies – lobbying, advocacy, protest, and publicity – to translate the paper rights promised in the SSFP into tangible rights, with socio-economic benefits, for fishers across the four provinces”. Available: <http://masifundise.org/about/> [2020, June 12].

travel to India to “participate in training on international human rights and other instruments in support of fish workers” (Masifundise, 2014). Due to Sharma’s efforts to link Masifundise and South African fishers to other fish workers engaged in advocacy and to ICSF’s ongoing advocacy work, Masifundise and the Artisanal Fishers’ Association of South Africa were able to use a variety of international instruments when developing legal arguments supporting South African fishers’ struggles (Masifundise, 2014). When Masifundise and Coastal Links took legal action against the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the ICSF Secretariat “took an active interest in this court case, publishing information about the case in SAMUDRA and informing others about this case” (Masifundise, 2014). ICSF also supported Masifundise in various activities, such as:

“...[E]nabling Naseegh Jaffer and Rose Shoshola to travel to India to share information about resource documentation; inviting Jackie Sunde to participate in a review of ICSF’s gender strategy and in linking Masifundise to other fishworker organisations in Southern and Eastern Africa at the ICSF workshop in Dar es Salaam in 2006” (Masifundise, 2014).

In 2008, ICSF lent support to the first Women Fishworker’s Workshop, and also enabled traveling to Zanzibar for Coastal Links members, so that they could network with other organisations from the Southern and East African region (in preparation for the International Small-scale Fisheries Conference in Bangkok in October 2008).

“At the Bangkok Conference Naseegh Jaffer was part of the civil society working group tasked with developing the Bangkok Statement which was subsequently adopted by small-scale fishers all over the world and formed the basis for further advocacy towards an international instrument for small-scale fisheries” (Masifundise, 2014).

In this context, Serge Raemaekers met Sharma, and later became an associate member of ICSF. He expressed admiration for the way Sharma networked with many people on many different issues. Individual fishers also had close relationships with Sharma, such as Salie Cyster, who was the first chairperson of Coastal Links. He acknowledged Sharma’s commitment to SSF’s struggles. Norton Dowries of Langebaan recalled Sharma’s kind nature and commitment. Solene Smith and her husband Sammy from Langebaan fondly remembered Sharma since the WSSD. Nico Waldeck (who has also worked with ABALOBI) remembered Sharma’s dedicated work at the Convention on Biodiversity in Hyderabad, India. She lent her help to him with the preparations for the following day’s media event.

Additionally, Dr Jackie Sunde, who has worked with ICSF and ABALOBI, has written for the *Yemaya* journal and ICSF. Two examples of Sunde’s work for ICSF are two

monographs for the Samudra Monograph series on small-scale fishing and fisheries governance.

The networks between ICSF and Masifundise/Coastal Links, ICSF and *Yemaya*, and ICSF and ABALOBI could be considered the “meta-level patch”²¹ of networks.

SADSTIA is a commercial (large-scale) fishing-orientated organisation where “SADSTIA’s members participate in a sustainable and well-managed Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)-certified fishery, produce food, sustain 7 300 jobs and contribute an estimated R6.7 billion to the South African economy each year”²². The members fall into the medium- and large-scale commercial fishing industries. SADSTIA has various functions, including enabling sustainable fishing, and engaging with stakeholders such as the government and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

ABALOBI (an isiXhosa word for “small-scale fisher”)²³ is an Africa-based, fisher-driven social enterprise and non-profit organisation (NPO) with global ties. ABALOBI is the name of the mobile app suite that SSFs use, which was co-developed by fishers themselves. ABALOBI seeks to empower SSFs via co-developing and using information and communication technologies (ICTs). The organisation believes that “seafood should be ecologically responsible, socially fair and fully traceable”. It partners with SSFs in providing responsibly harvested, low-environmental-impact fishing methods. The Marketplace suite connects SSFs’ harvests and products to chefs and consumers. This improves “the fisher’s value chain, and the quality and traceability of seafood” (ABALOBI ICT4Fisheries [ABALOBI], 2020). Its “From Hook to Cook” system has a suite of apps that “enable the processing and marketing of fish and other marine resources with an ecological and social Story in a manner that is fully traceable along the value chain” (ABALOBI ICT4Fisheries [ABALOBI], 2020).

The Masifundise Development Trust is a fisher organisation which started in 1980. It has close ties to CLSA. It had to change focus with the changing times in South Africa, such as the democratic transition in 1994²⁴. In 2001, Masifundise positioned itself as the sole development organisation working in the area of small-scale fishing, and in 2004, it became registered as an independent trust that would support small-scale fishing communities in “mobilizing, lobbying, and advocating for legal recognition and sustainable livelihoods

²¹ This term is borrowed from Dr Katia Frangoudes, in her report on my MA thesis, dated 4 January 2021.

²² SADSTIA. N.d. *What is SADSTIA and what does it do?* Available: <https://www.sadstia.co.za/about/what-is-sadstia/> [2020, July 21].

²³ The organisation’s name is stylised in capital letters.

²⁴ The “About” section of Masifundise/Coastal Links is available at: <http://masifundise.org/about/>

through social agency and self-organization” (Masifundise website, footnote 20). Masifundise formed an alliance with Coastal Links, an SSF movement from 16 Western Cape coastal towns, and their partners, to mobilise and advocate for the inclusion of SSFs as legally-recognised category of fishers within the Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA).

I have chosen to look at these three organisations in terms of patches of women and their knowledge because the organisations have in common being in the fisheries sector, but are interesting in their differences, in terms of scale of fishing sectors concerned. SADSTIA’s most notable difference to ABALOBI and Masifundise/Coastal Links is that SADSTIA focuses on commercial/industrial fisheries, while the latter two focus on small-scale fisheries. While ABALOBI and Masifundise/Coastal Links both focus on small-scale fisheries, the former focuses on a technology-based approach to fishers’ empowerment, while the latter focuses on a rights-based approach to fishers’ empowerment. These foci may seem quite different at first, but arguably these organisations are working towards the same goal, which is empowering small-scale fishers to be able to make a sustainable (Folke, 2016) livelihood from fishing. Notably, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), International Commission for the Southeast Atlantic Fisheries (ICSEAF) and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) are highlighted in SADSTIA’s history. MSC focuses on sustainable fishing good management, which is similar to ABALOBI does, but unlike ABALOBI, does not explicitly mention the social dimensions (working conditions, work contracts, labour, etc.). UNCLOS is related to the international law of the sea (as applied to the 200-mile zone of jurisdiction held by a country), and refers indirectly to sustainable fishing.

In beginning to look for prominent women in the fisheries sector, I came across Celeste Diest, who is the CEO of Impala Fisheries, a mid-sized fishing company. In following up on her work profile, I came across the SADSTIA website. Once there, I found out about the various women involved in companies that were a part of SADSTIA. Three main patches (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015) of women in fisheries value chains were observed: The Coastal Links/Masifundise patch with its and *Fisher’s Net* networks; and SADSTIA with its own publications celebrating women’s achievements in fisheries, and the women associated with the ABALOBI organisation.

These patches seem to have networks within them. The *Yemaya* newsletter which is published by the ICSF focuses on women in fisheries. While *Yemaya* was not part of the network analysis per se, it is still important to note in the analysis. From previous research, I had noted that various South African women in the fishing industry were mentioned in the pages of *Fishers’ Net* newsletter, in addition to being mentioned in the Africa sections of the

Yemaya newsletter. Since *Yemaya* has an international outlook, I decided to focus on the South African-based *Fishers' Net* for tracing more likely networks.

The ICSF (*Yemaya*) and Coastal Links-Masifundise (*Fishers' Net*) patches did have some overlap, in that they are both activist groups, and focus mainly on women in secondary processing activities. Women associated with *Yemaya* seem to know of each other, at least regionally and via the pages of the newsletter. For example, Sunde (2016) noted that African women in fisheries were brought together via the work of *Yemaya*, where she explained in one of the newsletter's issues how African women had made progress over the years. The *Yemaya* newsletter is published in English, French and Spanish, which could aid in more women knowing of other women's activities in the global fishing industry as a whole. SADSTIA is a business collective, and their publications focused mainly on women in management roles, and in the capture fisheries. For example, there was a SADSTIA promotional video on Celeste Diest, the CEO of Impala Fisheries, and the publications featured a fishing boat engineer and a female boat skipper.

"Meeting" the women

The women I interviewed had long histories in the fishing industry, and some came from multi-generational fishing families. A woman who works as a factory supervisor said,

"I started in fishing through my mother; I left school very early; I didn't even reach high school. I started during the school holidays casual with her, and obviously that became the norm. Left school, went to work with her; I was about 15 at the time, and that's how I started in fish. Obviously, it's circumstances at home; nobody chased me to go to school; it was "fine, you're going to work". So that's how I started out in fish" (Factory Supervisor, 14 December 2019).

The first two Fish Sellers I interviewed were friends and colleagues who had each worked in the industry almost as long as I had been alive. "D" had worked in fisheries for 27 years, while "E" had worked for 20 years. "D" said that her family introduced her to the industry, but the two women were now building on the family business themselves; they were "going back to that roots" to create a business in the present. Another Hout Bay Fish Seller, "J", had worked at Speciality Seafoods for 29 years, but also moved into other industries because of the difficulties of working in cold storage for long hours.

A Fisher Leader from Arniston said that her family inspired her to go into the fishing industry; she was born in a fishing family within a fishing town. She has been involved in

gaining better recognition for SSFs in DEFF's Policy for SSFs²⁵, and has been inspired by what other fisher communities are doing to preserve their cultures and traditions²⁶.

A woman who held a crayfish permit was from Buffeljagsbaai, with its long and rich history of fishing and gleaning for intertidal species. She held her initial individual permit for 10 years, before making a new application. No one told her that she could not go out to sea because she was a woman. She had male fishers catch the crayfish itself, but was involved in accessing it by going on the boats; her gender did not influence her access to marine resources.

A Sales and Marketing Manager said that women have proven themselves in various sectors within their occupation that they can lead. She got her role by “moving up the levels”, after having started at the company she works for in 1996. She had seen women prove themselves in various roles, and prove that women can lead.

I “met” other women via getting to know them online. An interview with Celeste Diest told of how Impala Fishing was established by her father, Harry Cottle (SADSTIA, 2019a). Until 2002, she worked alongside him. They have a 50% stake in wet fish trawler Okombahe in 2008; it was a turning point for Celeste. She then took a more upfront leadership role, because she was “not very comfortable taking a back seat in a business that we were part of”. Her children work with her – her daughter Natasha is CFO, while son Kurt works with them too. “It's important that we carry on that legacy and impart whatever I know but in the same breath, the younger generation also has new angles and new ideas that they bring along and we learn from one another in that way” (SADSTIA, 2019a).

Sea Harvest (SADSTIA member, cluster “head”)

Sea Harvest was the first fishing company in SA to offer women the opportunity to work at sea. Johanna Loos, Anna Toontjies and Celeste Swartbooi were some of the first women to take up this opportunity (SADSTIA, 2019b). “Johanna was one of a group of 30 women who in 2007 were trained and prepared to work in Sea Harvest's ship-board factories” (SADSTIA, 2019b). Loos plays a mother-like role – nicknamed “Mumsy” by Toontjies, who

²⁵ Masifundise. 2016. *Anxiety, Disbelief Over Small-Scale Registration Lists*. Available: <https://www.masifundise.org/anxiety-disbelief-over-small-scale-registration-lists-2/> [2020, August 21].

²⁶ Masifundise. 2016. *Western Cape Fishers in Exchange Programme Visit to Kosi Bay*. Available: <https://www.masifundise.org/western-cape-fishers-in-exchange-programme-visit-to-kosi-bay/> [2020, August 21].

said Loos looked after her when she got seasick during the start of her sea work. Toontjies says that Loos smoothed the way for other women to work at sea.

“We are like a family and comfortable with each other... we can talk to our captain, he is always there to solve our problems.”

-Anna

“There is no woman bosun, mate or skipper. That is the next step for us, to get training, to be given a chance.”

-Celeste

“I would watch the fishermen coming from sea, and thought to myself, if the company gives me the opportunity I would love to work at sea.”

- Johanna (SADSTIA, 2019b).

FINSA has published profiles of SADSTIA-associated professionals under the heading “Leaders of Tomorrow”, several of whom are women. Palesa Molelle is a product development manager at Sea Harvest²⁷, a cluster member of SADSTIA. She is part of the SADSTIA network, as well as alumnae of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Chief Marine Conservation Inspector Buyekezwa Polo is involved in DEFF’s efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing²⁸. She was involved with the DEFF Hout Bay offices, which deals with the complex problem of managing the WCRL stock situated in the waters off Hout Bay. Polo could be said to be part of the SADSTIA network, and the DEFF network.

Lavrika Singh is a production scientist, who was the convener of the Demersal Scientific Working Group (DSWG) of the then-DAFF (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) at the time of reporting.²⁹ Like Buyekezwa Polo, she is associated with the DEFF network.

Adri Uys, utilities engineer, I&J, was involved in water-saving efforts during the height of the drought.³⁰ Her family has a background in fishing. She could be said to be part of

²⁷ FINSA. 2017. *Leaders of tomorrow: Profiling young professionals in the South African fishery* (April 2017). Available: <https://www.sadstia.co.za/media-clippings/leaders-of-tomorrow/> [2020, June 23].

²⁸ FINSA. 2017. *Leaders of tomorrow: Profiling young professionals in the South African fishery* (December 2017). Available: <https://www.sadstia.co.za/media-clippings/leaders-tomorrow-3/> [2020, June 23].

²⁹ FINSA. 2018. *Leaders of tomorrow: Profiling young professionals in the South African fishery* (February 2018). Available: <https://www.sadstia.co.za/media-clippings/leaders-tomorrow-4/> [2020, June 23].

³⁰ FINSA. 2018. *Leaders of tomorrow: Profiling young professionals in the South African fishery* (August 2018). Available: <https://www.sadstia.co.za/publication/leaders-of-tomorrow-7/> [2019, December 16].

a small patch – the Uys family fishers – and a network – UCT alumnae and academics, and SADSTIA. I&J is a cluster member of SADSTIA.

Of 8 Committee members of SADSTIA, one is a woman: Fisokuhle Mbatha, Research Assistant (SADSTIA, N.d.b). “[she] holds an honours degree in Ocean and Atmospheric Science from the University of Cape Town and recently submitted a thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for a Master’s Degree in Applied Marine Science, also from UCT” (SADSTIA, N.d.b).

Lucinda Krige is the first woman to qualify as a chief engineer in the South African fishing industry, and works for Sea Harvest. She describes her journey:

“It took Krige five years of theoretical training and work experience to secure a chief engineer’s qualification. On almost every ship she sailed she was the only woman on board and she says she received phenomenal tuition, support and encouragement from her male colleagues, especially the engineers, skippers and mates she worked with” (SADSTIA, 2019c).

Krige is part of the Sea Harvest network, which is an environment where women are being given opportunities to do jobs other than processing fish in factories.

SADSTIA has also reported on the Lucas brothers of Combined Fishing Enterprises, where Basil Lucas is nurturing a future fisher leader in the form of Basil’s daughter, Bianca:

“[T]he brothers are nurturing the interest and talent of Basil’s daughter Bianca Brophy whom they hope will continue their legacy in fishing.

“She is going to take over our company when we retire and she’ll bring up the next generation,” he says. “Bianca will be the fourth generation in fishing and we don’t see the lineage ending there.”” (SADSTIA, 2019d).

There are various ways in which women are “patched”. These include being part of industry bodies such as SADSTIA. Some women are alumnae of tertiary institutions such as the University of Cape Town, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and various international universities. When I mention people being alumnae of particular institutions, I do not necessarily mean that they are actively involved in activities such as alumnae events. Being alumnae of certain institutions could be something they have in common with people (particularly women) in the South African fishing industry. Women may also be part of a broad patch which could be called “the South African fishing industry”. This big patch is arguably made up of smaller patches such as commercial fishing and small-scale fishing; smaller patches may interact with each other in real life, or be an “observed patch” in that women who are not in the same patch can still read or hear about each other’s activities.

Obstacles and opportunities

A Factory Supervisor worked at what she described as a “small company”; she supervises fish packing work where

“the company gives us work to with specifications; they want it cut in a certain way; we do it for them, and we charge them for the work, and all the product goes back to them. We did at first do our own stuff, but it didn’t work out; the market – we couldn’t handle the market. I’ve got a supervisor role; I’ve got 20 people working under me; that’s why I say we’re very small” (Factory Supervisor, 14 December 2019).

The Factory Supervisor noted that it was “tough for women” depending on where one works. In her company, she has multiple roles and she stated that at larger companies such as Sea Harvest or I&J, a person would have one role to play. Playing multiple roles can make her job harder at times.

Fish Sellers “E” and “D” work in Hout Bay at a fish market shed, where they market fish bought off the fishing boats to customers, as well as filleting – or “*vlekkings*” – the fish.

Fishe Seller “J” had been in the fishing industry a long time. The work eventually took a physical toll:

“Straight service without broken service; it's a very long time. My eldest daughter, I don't even have her, I was start day there '76, and um, working there for 29 years and 8 months. And they also closed down. And after that, I come work here by Fish 4 Africa, it's now Glory Bay, but I come work here by Fish 4 Africa for 11 years. You can ask the people there; they know me very well. And I worked there for 11 years. In 2017, and I thought, "No man, I had now *enough* of the fish, because all that cold storage and all that *stuff* that make it [inaudible] and all that stuff. And I had enough of the fishing and I went to Triple A Travel, and I'm working there now, there's no, it's not with fish, it's agents and all that stuff. So I'm happy now there, so there's no cold anymore, but weekends I help these people out here” (Fish Seller “J”, 15 February 2020).

The Factory Supervisor said that she was not part of a fisher organisation. However, she did describe the obstacles in her way in implementing a big project to do with meeting requirements to be able to pack snoek (*Thyrsites atun*) for a certain company:

“[...] [H]e [an auditor at the company] has requirements from his bosses, so he can't be lenient towards my boss maybe throwing out there; we don't have the money to implement because there's a lot of things you have to put in place. He explained to me that he has requirements, obviously, and he must please his boss. Later on, [if] there's a food safety issue, it comes back to him [...] So he explained that to me, which tells me, he's there to help. Because I can phone anytime if I'm struggling. Because this system I'm putting in place; obviously I need special

people from outside; people that know chemistry, microbiology [...]. What I feel there - and I don't know if I can mention that - but I feel he's a little insensitive in the sense that he doesn't know how big this plan is - the plan I'm busy with. He doesn't know if I'm competent enough to cope with everything; or, um, knowledge obviously, when I'm stuck at microbiology and all that; I don't know that stuff. Chemical stuff. I don't know. So obviously I need, from outside I need help, and at this moment, he's forcing me to get it done, get it done, and he's not ready to listen to all the little details that it entails for me to get there, understand? So that's where I'm at now. I'm so excited, but because I don't have much schooling, I'm actually excited to make this plan work, because it will be a milestone for me [...]" (Factory Supervisor, 14 December 2019).

The most contrasting answer was from a fish marketer, who noted that her company had a young, female CEO, who was also the first female CEO in the company. The Factory Supervisor noted a lack of training necessary to advance higher. The Fisher Leader from Arniston said that at the moment, she is the leader of the fishing community in Arniston. Several obstacles that she faced included:

- “Divides in the community through the Department caused by the distribution of fishing rights.
- Updates, in this case, new entrants
- Discrimination against women
- (Fishing) legislation
- Finances
- Politics
- Training
- Access to opportunities” (Fisher Leader, 11 June 2020)

For her, the things/people that helped her to be in a leadership role were that a person can be born a leader with the support of family and the fisher community. When it came to being in roles she wanted to play in fisheries, other fishers helped, and various NGOs, organisations and companies created the opportunity for her to attend various workshop training (such as at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies [PLAAS], ABALOB I etc.).

For the Sales and Marketing Manager, “[m]en inherited / dominated the leadership rolls [sic], historically, they were the fishermen and by educating themselves, elevating their status within the fishing industry. Hence the fact, that women were not that visible, because they started as packers/fish factories, etc.” (Sales and Marketing Manager, 17 July 2020).

Fishing lineages were both a barrier and a help to women. Fishing might be the only work they know, or the contacts they have could help them in getting jobs. For example, Celeste Diest and her children became involved in the fishing industry via the family’s fishing legacy, as did Bianca Brophy. Networks may help to provide gender empowerment for some women,

but not all of them. Where different scales of the fishing industry are “siloeed”, particular forms of empowerment may not be available to women at particular scales. While pioneering women should be celebrated, there can be hardships; being the first female CEO could mean having one’s leadership skills scrutinized, for example. The women ship engineers at Sea Harvest were often the “only women there”, and thus carry the burden of paving the way for other women.

Roles for women over the years

Roles have not changed that much, according to the middle-aged participants in the project. Age is mentioned because different generations may have had different experiences of what roles are considered “suitable” for women, based either on their own experiences or experiences of others. The Factory Supervisor and Fish Sellers “D” and “E” did not think that roles for women had changed much over the years.

The Crayfish Marketer, who sat in on the interview with the Crayfish Permit Holder, noted that:

“There are women in management roles in the fishing industry. For us, can I talk about us now; Premier Fishing, we currently have a female - it's the first time that we have a female CEO. So, ja. So as management has changed, we can talk about Premier Fishing, I'm not sure about the other companies, but with us, I think it's the first time that, ever since I've been working with that company, 32 years, it's the first time that we have [a] female [CEO]” (Crayfish Marketer, 21 February 2020).

Similarly, the Sales and Marketing Manager noted that women’s roles had changed “due the demand of equality within the industry”. She added that women’s roles had “changed drastically”. She also noted that Premier Fishing now has its first female CEO, and that women can move up the ranks. Additionally, the company has a programme known as “Voorskot”, which is for previously disadvantaged fishers, and involves the company assisting the fishers with an advance payment.

According to the Fisher Leader,

“We are also now part of decision-making. Women are not obliged to go to sea but (they can) if they want. Women are recognized as fishers and also play the role of leaders, although there is still discrimination in some towns” (Fisher Leader, 11 June 2020).

The Patterns Within the Patches

It seems that for South African working class and poor women, the roles that they play in the fishing industry (small-scale or large-scale) have not changed much, if at all. The international literature (e.g. Alonso- Población & Siar, 2018) shows not only a diversifying set of roles that women are playing, but also an acknowledgement of the diverse roles that women were playing all along.

Of the women's stories from the industrial fishing sector, there seemed to be a pattern of the "competition" type of feminisation, which is "when women vie with men for equal employment opportunities and in all aspects of social and political life" (Inhetveen & Schmitt, 2004; cited in Gustavsson, 2020: 37). It is also important to heed Inhetveen and Schmitt's warning that processes of feminisation cannot necessarily be generalized, and are dependent on particular times, places, and spaces (Inhetveen & Schmitt, 2004; cited in Gustavsson, 2020). It is also possible that the processes of women in industrial fisheries moving into roles that were more often occupied by men could fall into more than one category of feminisation. It also appears to be the case that women moving into what have been "men's roles" is what constitutes ideas of "women empowerment" in the industrial fishing industry. Here, the work was not precarious, and did not seem to be poorly paid, thus these cases did not fit into a "feminisation of poverty" narrative. The most noticeable changes in women's roles in the fisheries value chain this seem to be through industrial fishing's large corporate companies.

In contrast, the women's stories from the small-scale (even "mid-size scale") mostly fit into a pattern of women's roles changing very little over the years. Where women had the chance to become leaders (e.g. Sarah Niemand, Hilda Adams, Rovina Europa), the training needed to empower them to take on different roles existed in an NGO/activist patch. A question that arises is whether the different patches (e.g. small-scale fishing and industrial fishing) need to come together. On the one hand, the needs of women in small-scale fisheries and those in industrial-scale fishing seem different. On the other hand, women may face similar problems in areas such as gender discrimination, whether they work in small-scale fisheries (e.g. Sunde, 2010), or in the corporate world (e.g. Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). From the data I collected, the women at various scales seemed to support each other, and there were also supportive men around some of the women as well. The existence of supportive men arguably emphasizes the need for men to contribute towards combatting gender discrimination; it is not just a "woman's problem", but something that men can help to solve as well. Lastly, the women's experiences above related to empowerment and agency in relation to work and participation in fisheries organisations. Examining empowerment and agency in relation to family and community is beyond the scope of this research, but could also contribute to

determining what further actions or resources would ensure more women are better capacitated to become agents of change.

4. Keeping the Lineage Going: Continuation of Small-Scale Fishing Despite Policies and (later) a Pandemic

An expanded meaning of “fisher” could mean different things for women in the fishing industry. As seen above, the fishing legislation in South Africa has often excluded SSFs, and excluded women in particular ways. The management of the entire fishing sector in South Africa is governed by the Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998 (MLRA). However, the Small Scale Fisheries Policy notes that:

“the existing approach to fisheries governance which allocates individual rights through a long-term rights allocation process has historically and, with exception of one or two sectors like traditional line fish, been orientated towards the export driven, commercial fisheries sector in South Africa;

the fact that Small Scale fishers are not a recognised category of fishers in the legislation that regulates access to, and the consumptive use of, marine living resources [...]” (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012).

The Factory Supervisor had serious questions to ask of the government:

“[B]ut the definition to me is just policy that says so because if you take the small, small little dorpies that depends on fish for a livelihood - um, they struggling, hey. They struggling a lot. So, um, it's in the policy being more recognised, but how? How are they recognised? I watched a documentary where, um, poachers, they were busy poaching because, um, the quotas they were getting were so little, and we can't survive. And that's why we stealing, and stuff like that, you understand? Um, which makes you think, um, what does the government think, how are those people surviving? Um, because their livelihoods are dependent on the sea, uh, on that fish, and how are you giving that little to them. Obviously, they're gonna steal, because they don't know anything else; [inaudible] like me, this is what I learnt from my father, I have a family to support, and blah, blah, blah. Do you understand?” (Factory Supervisor, 14 December 2019).

Fish Sellers “D” and “E” became animated when the subject of government policy was brought up:

“But we, are all these years in the fishing, ne? But we haven't got nothing. We go to Parliament, and fill forms in, and pay for the forms, and pay that and pay that, but we still got nothing” (Fish Seller “E”, 25 January 2020).

“If they can come in here and see what's going on. The people who must get it here is the people who want to work with the fish. Now they give for other people, that work in the kitchen by - there by madam's kitchen and everything, and that is not right” (Fish Seller “D”, 25 January 2020).

“There's a lot of ladies here who've got that interim [permit] who don't work with fish; they don't know how to work with fish. We still work with fish all these years and we haven't got nothing” (Fish Seller “E”, 25 January 2020).

In contrast, the Crayfish Permit Holder was not affected by the Policy for Small-Scale Fisheries, because she is an individual permit holder. Buffeljagsbaai collectives were more affected by policy changes, especially in terms of getting onto lists of bona fide fishers.

For the Fisher Leader, this change in policy meant that women received recognition from Government to own and manage a right and be part of decision making. Similarly, the Sales and Marketing Manager said that for small-scale fishers, women can now process and/or market their own fish and finance the development of their own businesses. For her, these changes also meant better opportunities for women.

There were improvements to women's environments in the case of SSFs, but not necessarily their financial circumstances. But women were very informed about the issue of fishers' rights, and knew that someone with educational privilege should "speak to the Minister". Men were mostly supportive to women. That is important, considering Gustavsson's (2020) observations about gender. In attending to key criticisms of feminisation as it relates to agriculture, Gustavsson notes that in studies of the "feminisation of poverty", the focus on women takes away attention from men and gender relations (Gustavsson, 2020; Chant, 2008). Feminisation has not accounted for gender relations, men and masculinities. Other research (e.g. development studies) showed a need to look beyond binary ideas of gender in theorizing feminisation (Chant, 2008; Gustavsson, 2020). This argument highlights how binary ideas of gender exist in "feminisation of agriculture/fishing". There is a need to account for "gendered power relations and the potential (co-)existence of processes of masculinisation in reviewing the literature on women in fishing" (Gustavsson, 2020: 38).

In this case, looking at the positive interactions between women and men can highlight that there is not always a simple binary of "women as the victims, men as the oppressors". There is also the question of whether parts of the fisheries value chain (e.g. boat engineer, boat skipper) are becoming more "feminised". Broadly, "feminised" can mean instances where women took up work that they did not do previously, or when working conditions became "more insecure, precarious and flexible" (Gustavsson, 2020).

There are questions around whether stereotypically "feminine" behaviours were accepted in the women who advanced up the chain at Sea Harvest, and at Premier Fishing.

Agency and Access

On the whole, women did not have much say in accessing marine resources; it was more often men who held fishing permits and decided who could access what. But for the Crayfish Permit Holder, she could access marine resources quite easily compared to others interviewed so far.

For the Factory Supervisor, she did not play a role in accessing resources. For the Fisher Leader, being a woman influences access, restrictions and regulations on species, and zone and land.

“We as women mostly work with rocky vertebrates such as seafood that gets us off the rocks and access to species is limited and we only get post office permits to a certain limited that you may not even sell for everything you take out of the sea or fetch you must have a permit and there are certain species that you are not allowed to fetch” (Fisher Leader, 11 June 2020).

The Sales and Marketing Manager said that she has agency in accessing marine resources “[b]y monitoring day to day fishing and collecting information to enhance their [fishers’] abilities (Sales and Marketing Manager, 17 July 2020).

The Factory Supervisor said that when it comes to who gets what (of marine resources), things go through the channels, via the “man at the top”. Fish Sellers “D” and “E” noted how women in Hout Bay do not own boats or fishing permits, nor do they have fishing companies. Women do not have much say in who gets access to marine resources. Fish Seller “J” is an experienced and skilled fish worker, and had the opportunity to work in an industry other than fishing. She did not get to say who could access resources, but still had the “social capital” of being known by various companies in Hout Bay as a good worker. The Crayfish Permit Holder seemed to have a bit more flexibility than others, even if she did not have a hand in allocating permits.

Women generally do not decide who can access resources, and when. Fish Sellers “D” and “E” stated that they buy fish off of fishermen’s boats. Fikes (2005) observed the layered dynamics of women buying fish from men, especially along racial and class lines. Factory Supervisor 1 was not entirely sure of her answer to this question, but noted that decision-making around resources “goes through the channels, and the man at the top”; those at the top are not the people that she is regularly in contact with.

In contrast, the Fisher Leader’s observation was that women have agency through being representatives of fishing communities at various levels; being the Chair or in executive management positions; being local marketers; being administrators; being small business owners such as seafood restaurants, art and crafts shops etc.; and being the host or facilitators of fisher workshops. In a similar vein, the Sales and Marketing Manager noted that women do have agency, and “it is proven that they go beyond their duties because their livelihood depends on it” (Sales and Marketing Manager, 17 July 2020).

The Fisher Leader had the following to add about her role as the Chairperson of the Arniston chapter of Coastal Links:

“There are several positions that we as women now hold in the fishing industry, but still the women are the minority in the issue of rights and works. I would like to see one day that we as fishing women get more opportunities to access more rights. Also get the necessary training to successfully manage our fishing villages' fishing industry businesses. So many marine resources there are that we as women can utilize and for everything we need permits. It will be a privilege for the Government to grant access to true fishermen men and true bona fide fisherwomen to land, finance and species and reopening of certain MPAs.

It will bring a change to the protection of the sea and species because true fishermen have a connection with the Sea and will protect it because it is their everyday life and the culture of their lifestyle fishing etc. Going from generation to generation. It is our traditional right that we as fishermen now struggle to exercise with all the restrictions and regulations of various departments.

Let us stand together to lead a good and comfortable life as fishing communities” (Fisher Leader, 11 June 2020).

The Fisher Leader spoke to the positive changes for women in fishing, and also of obstacles still faced in access and recognition. Changing roles and continuing obstacles is something that came up in the global context of women in fishing as well (Alonso-Población & Siar, 2018). In others' research (e.g. Nayak, 2005b) and my own, women did make reference to difficult working conditions that they faced in the industry, even if this was not explicitly asked in the research questions. Mention of such conditions came up in reference to the SSF Policy, and when women talked about the roles they play, and their history in the industry. The tough conditions of working in a cold storage environment was eventually enough to make one of the fish sellers leave that part of the value chain. Two other fish sellers talked about the tough financial times faced by poor people in the small-scale fishing industry. In the recent past, women have experienced poor working conditions in fish processing jobs, for example, shrimp processing plants did not provide women suitable insulation against the cold (Nayak, 2005a). Women working in processing plants in Chile experienced various health symptoms as result of their occupations, such as “headache, mental fatigue, physical fatigue, bone pain, hand pain, visual fatigue, back pain, sore feet or legs and stomach pain” (Díaz, 2005). Women who processed snow crabs also experienced health symptoms, most prominently “crab asthma” from processing snow crabs (McCay, 2005).

While the concept of the “feminisation of poverty” has received valid critique, it still useful when examining the casualization of labour and precarity. Such aspects are especially notable in the face of a globalizing fishery, where the effects may be both racialized and gendered. An example is the salmon canning industry in British Columbia. In this industry, labour forces were both racialized and gendered, with workers paid according to their race and

gender identity. It was assumed that women, especially women of colour, were inferior to men. Further, the struggles of men and women in the fish plants of the past hold significant lessons for global fish workers in the present; the lessons are more pertinent in the face of mobile capital and fish. British Columbian struggles “show the central role of the search for cheap wage labour in the capitalist development of the world’s fisheries” (Muszynski, 2005: 98). In order to have a “critical globalization theory”, historical case studies are needed to show the realities of labour, and also people’s resistances and struggles (Muszynski, 2005). More research is needed on women’s seasonal work, access to capital and resources and labour conditions in fishing households (Frangoudes et al., 2020).

The “casualization” of labour in the fishing industry is thus a significant part of the globalization of, and thus increasing mobility of, fish as a commodity. Muszynski links this macro factor of globalization to the decline of the British Columbian salmon canning industry. It is important to understand fisheries’ historical context in order to understand the “racialized and gendered impacts of globalization” (Muszynski, 2005: 98) in the present. The shrimp processing industry in Bangladesh, India, has also undergone casualization. Women make up the majority of casual labour in an industry that has aimed to profit from an international demand for shrimp (Nuruzzaman et al., 2014). Women have few benefits, and no opportunities for promotion. While working conditions in the factories have improved somewhat, more improvement is needed (Nuruzzaman et al., 2014). Additionally, health issues facing women and men making a living from marine resources needs more research (Frangoudes et al., 2020).

In addition to the gendered effects of globalization, the Covid-19 pandemic is another challenge with gendered implications. There have also been particular effects of the pandemic on women in fishing communities. Rovina Europa, the Chairperson of the Arniston Coastal Links chapter, offered her opinions³¹. Europa called the effects on women a “double threat”. It is not just the lockdown that impacts women, but also being part of a household, women are responsible for food, and are responsible for teaching children (R. Europa, observations in PLAAS, 2020). Extra burdens have been placed on women. There are significant roles that women play in the pre-harvest sector, in terms of preparing the men to go and fish, and also in the post-harvest sector, e.g. cleaning fish. Women also want to use other products from the land, such as shells for the jewellery that they are making; women use different activities that they are currently struggling to do. They used to have a market for these goods, but do not

³¹ Rovina Europa gave her opinions in Afrikaans, and webinar host Moenieba Isaacs translated what she was saying afterwards. I have used Isaacs’ translation here.

currently have such a market. This limits the income that women can bring in for the household (R. Europa, observations in PLAAS, 2020). Europa also spoke about women in KwaZulu-Natal and their challenges with harvesting mussels in the intertidal zone; in doing this, they risk fisheries inspectors and officials catching them, confiscating their catch, or arresting them. In Arniston, many people in the community are dependent on social grants. These grants are not sufficient, but are an important part of supporting people and livelihoods. Food parcels have been distributed in the community, but not everyone gets them. Not everyone (who needs a grant) gets a grant. There is a need for the food parcel and social grant system to be expanded, which is an important issue (R. Europa, observations in PLAAS, 2020).

There are also challenges with the market for SSFs' catches. Europa is an interim relief permit holder for WCRL. Because the Covid-19 lockdown, there was a ban on exporting, and therefore there was a ban on exporting WCRL to China. The fishing livelihoods of many SSFs depend on the marketing agents who are normally around at the time of Chinese New Year. SSFs have been left alone in the lockdown system. This whole process is making SSFs powerless – they are not having sufficient income, and are not able to get the income that they were getting before the lockdown. As Charles America mentioned earlier in the webinar, Europa also spoke about the interim relief fund – there were actually no funds allocated to support the SSFs' loss of income. Europa made a plea to the DEFF Minister (Barbara Creecy) to support SSFs in terms of markets for their catch, infrastructure, etc. She was asking for support for not only fishers, but also women in particular (R. Europa, observations in PLAAS, 2020).

Lastly, men's views have been included (although women are the focus) because gender relations and masculinities are important to understand (see Gustavsson, 2020). Besides untangling essentialised approaches to gender, understanding how various masculinities function could also contribute to attend to gendered power relations and “the potential (co-existence of processes of masculinization in reviewing the literature on women in fishing” (Gustavsson, 2020: 38).

Women Who Keep the Lineage Going

Thus, locally and internationally, women in fisheries (who rely on the coast for a livelihood) are under stress to varying degrees. The coastal ecosystem and the humans who are dependent on those resources (Ommer et al., 2010) affect each other. I used the ethos of an interdisciplinary approach to acknowledge that in managing the environment, discipline-based

science (natural and social) is insufficient because, “in a world fraught with complex problems, the combined wisdom of many disciplines, in partnership with participants in resource sectors (for example fishers, managers and policy-makers) is becoming an important way to reach necessary goals (Ommer et al., 2010: 479). The various sectors in the fishing industry make up an “integrated resource base” which supports the local community and industrial fishing; this “integrated resource base” contributes to the “interdependent ecological and social health of [the] coast over time” (Ommer et al., 2010: 480). The concept of social-ecological health can arguably aid in thinking about the interdependence in ecology and society, which includes “the capacity to create and/or withstand stress” (Ommer et al., 2010: 484). Society and the environment are multi-layered, and there may be problems with scaling up or down, whether it be from national policy to the ability of people in remote areas to access nutritious food (Ommer et al., 2010).

There are certain patches of knowledge that seem to exist at the same scale; e.g. women in the Hout Bay small-scale fishery, and women in the Buffeljagsbaai small-scale fishery. While I did not specifically ask which women the participants know in the fishing industry, people did know about issues facing the groups of women in fisheries. In the case of knowing what is affecting the industry as a whole, women exist within overlapping patches of knowledge, but the patches may begin to separate when looking at different scales.

While men were not the focus, they are nonetheless notable players, and masculinity could be an important area of further analysis. Most of the women I encountered were connecting with a mix of genders, and noted that there were supportive men within the industry. This was especially true of women in leadership positions (e.g. Coastal Links leader or factory supervisor). Where men dominated the access to marine resources, this seemed to be framed in way where this was not due to deliberate ill-intent by men, but a product of government policy as well, e.g., the government recognising mostly men as fishers, even if a broader range of roles is included in policy.

Just as fishers have been keeping their lineages going despite policy obstacles, they have now been keeping the lineage going despite a pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has had particular effects on SSF communities. These effects are tied to earlier effects due to globalization. The ways in which fish has been commodified has entwined with new forms of human mobility (e.g. rapid air travel) that may not be available to everyone.

Human mobility has been entwined with the movement of commodities in various ways over the years. In South Africa, fishers along the West Coast have been known to travel from places such as St Helena Bay all the way to Port Nolloth to catch lobster and snoek (Fonto,

2018). Lobster is a particularly mobile commodity – fishers in the small town of Buffeljagsbaai sell their catch to buyers in China and Japan through fish marketers (personal observation, February 2020). As the lobster has become more mobile, it has become caught up in the “friction of global connection” (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2005); sales of lobster to China had decreased for the fishers from Buffeljagsbaai due to the Covid-19 outbreak, thus greatly reducing their income (personal observation, February 2020).

Covid-19 has had a major impact on SSF in Africa, and in South Africa in particular. The effects in Africa seem to have a gendered dimension. For example, in Mballing, Senegal, women fish processors asked the government for funding to aid in their coping with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. A spokesperson, Maguette Diène, explained that women were suffering huge financial losses because of being unable to sell fish products which they had processed (Agence de presse sénégalaise, 2020). Women in Ivory Coast small-scale fishing organised under the banner of Union of cooperatives (USCOFEP-CI). Micheline Dion Somplehi, president of USCOFEP-CI, pointed out that SSF women could not stop their activities, otherwise families would be hungry (Philippe, 2020).

In an article for PLAAS (America et al., 2020) veteran fisher and activist from Ocean View Charles America is quoted on how the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted ongoing issues in fishing communities. For him, it shows the insignificance and severe neglect of SSFs as a “legitimate fisheries resource user-group” (America et al., 2020).

America sees the fishing policies as unsuccessful, and there is lack of implementation; his discontent with this is centred on the privatisation of fishing rights through the Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system (America et al., 2020). Community welfare, conservation and equity are side-lined in the ITQ system, which focuses on economic efficiency.

Women said that they cannot use certain zones, or cannot access the market directly; men experience the problem of market access at the level of class instead of gender – they cannot access the market because they are working-class men. In this case, it appears that the problems women experienced pre-Covid-19 as a result of gender are affecting men during Covid-19 as a result of socioeconomic class.

The lack of justice and secure tenure of fishing rights is an ongoing issue in small-scale fishing. While small-scale fishing rights have been allocated in the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal while many in the Western Cape are still operating on interim relief permits, which are not genuine rights. These interim relief permits (IRPs) often contribute to locking fishers into exploitative agreements with middlemen and other entities

(America et al., 2020). Some fishers rely on lenders and fish marketers for financial assistance, which creates a cycle of debt (America et al., 2020).

In many Western Cape fishing communities, WCRL is the sole reliable source of income during the season. WCRL is traded along a value chain to China, where WCRL is in high demand (America et al., 2020). A large portion of South African WCRL goes to the Chinese market. Role players higher up in the value chain receive higher revenue during the Chinese New Year, while SSFs make little money, despite the risks of this activity (America et al., 2020). While benefits are unfairly distributed, the income from WCRL helps SSFs to cover some short-term household expenses (America et al., 2020). Using the patches lens (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015) shows that while men in the small-scale fishing patch may not be connected to men in other small-scale or even industrial-scale patches, the patches still affect each other. Fishing industry patches thus do not seem to exist in silos.

America, like the fishers in Buffeljagsbaai mentioned above, were feeling the impacts of Covid-19 before the WHO declared a global pandemic, and before the South African government's declaration of a national lockdown. Because of Covid-19, food imported into China decreased, travel was restricted and/or banned, as well as celebrations or visiting public places. These changes dramatically impacted on the WCRL price. China's announcement of an immediate and comprehensive live animal import ban did not bode well for local WCRL suppliers. Traded WCRL are live animals, which meant a halt in about 90% of lobster exported to China. Fishers' incomes were negatively affected, and the local market was oversupplied. The abalone market experienced similar effects. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) froze South African exports (America et al., 2020). At the time the article was written, it was unclear how the near-shore fishing season extension would help fishers, who often plan their income in advance.

America sums up the challenges of responding to Covid-19 lockdown regulations and limitations:

“Food production, legal entities, community systems, and state fisheries management seem to be equally hamstrung by the Covid-19 pandemic because it (the Department of Environment Fisheries and Forestry) had absolutely no idea nor contingency plan in place or in mind” (C. America, observations in America et al, 2020).

Local fishers' problems and tasks have become a larger burden. America said that SSFs need to illustrate the “compromised situation in which we as traditional artisanal fisher peoples find ourselves due to the added complications facing us”. This is due to the lack of knowledge or

understanding of SSFs' way of life, fishing and food production. A fisher's situation may also be further complicated due to gender – the Fisher Leader mentioned women being in the minority of those holding fishing rights. Women use various marine resources, but need permits to access them (Fisher Leader, 11 June 2020); access to these marine resources arguably becomes more urgent in the face of Covid-19-related job losses.

America et al. suggested what the government can do to support fishers during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond, e.g. clarify who fits the category of small-scale fisher; lift bag limits for SSFs on sustainably harvested species (this relates to the Fisher Leader's point above); ban commercial trawlers "targeting snoek and other key small-scale line fish species before small-scale fishers can access it" (America et al. 2020). The authors also suggested ways to repurpose the oversupply of fish as food, and argued for the implementation of a Covid-19 basic income grant.

In a publicly-available webinar by PLAAS, America also discussed the impacts of the globally-linked industrial markets on SSF (Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies [PLAAS], 2020). In the webinar, there was a question about the flow of fish through the usual value chains, and if big companies were still buying. The geographical activity of snoek made it difficult to comply with Covid-19 regulations (e.g. housing and accommodation). Snoek is a mainstay of SSFs in the Western Cape. Fishers now have an opportunity to catch snoek and make a living. Once fish is available in high quantities, then there is a lower selling price out of the boat, and on to the marketer. This is the point where the value chain becomes contradictory: There is no value added to the product, but the price is inflated by the time it ends up with the consumer. The public buys from a *langana*, who has inflated the price tenfold sometimes. (America, observations in PLAAS, 2020).

Big companies are buying high nutrition food that could go to SSFs (America, observations in PLAAS, 2020). Big companies supply the middle-class through the retail sector. It is not only the industrial fishing sector that is supplying the retail sector – middle-men make up a sector themselves, and micro-manage certain aspects of the fishing sector, where they buy on behalf of big companies. These big companies have the resources to purchase fish at bargain prices. Some of these companies wait until there is a shortage of fish, then release them at exorbitant prices (America, observations in PLAAS, 2020).

Even before South Africa's first confirmed case of Covid-19, fishers in Steenberg's Cove, St Helena Bay (West Coast) felt the effects³². This fishing community was already

³² Cf. the observations from Buffeljagsbaai above.

dealing with decades-old economic woes, and in recent years was dependent mainly on SSF for livelihoods, especially the four-months-long west coast rock lobster (WCRL) (*Jasus lalandii*) season that runs from mid-November to mid-March (Christianson, 2020). The Steenberg's Cove WCRL quota decreased each year; it is now down to 64kg. Incomes dropped more than \$400. Shameera Daniels (West Coast Rock Lobster Association) said that in the 2018-19 season, China imported 95% of South African WCRL. As Covid-19 in China forced a shutdown of its markets, the South African authorities told the Steenberg's Cove SSFs to stop fishing WCRL. Community members had no income for over two months. Many fished at night (in defiance of the order) to feed their families, even if the WCRL price was a fraction of the usual figure (Christianson, 2020). Mathilda Papier is the authorised representative for Steenberg's Cove lobster fishers, and both of her sons are SSFs. She said,

“When there is fish they are happy, when there isn't fish they are happy. I can't see them doing any other kind of work. Their souls are in the ocean” (Christianson, 2020).

Hiram Achilles said that he does not want his son to become a fisher because of the state of the fishing industry. In early January of 2020, a DEFF administrative error meant that no WCRL could be harvested for a week, which left Achilles with no income for that week. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 outbreak ended the harvesting season shortly after the error was fixed (Christianson, 2020). At the time of reporting, nearshore fishing was continuing. Quinton Kamfer, Gregory Stofberg and Christian Adams had gone out to do nearshore fishing for WCRL. In a 9-hour fishing trip, the men caught 60kg of lobster, which was a good amount for the area they were in. The fishermen were unhappy about not being able to fish in areas where lobster is more abundant (Christianson, 2020). Adams is a third-generation fisherman and also the Chairperson of the South African Small-Scale Fishers Collective (SASSFC) which fights to improve the condition of SSFs (Christianson, 2020). Stofberg illustrates Covid-19's grave impacts on SSFs:

“Our livelihoods come from the sea. We don't have any income. No fish, no pay” (Christianson, 2020).

In April 2020, SASSFC was continuing its exchanges with DEFF because while fishers could go fishing, many people in fishing communities were still without an income, and needed food assistance (CFFA CAPE, 2020). Besides being a means of livelihood, it is clear that fishing is a way of life. The women working with the ABALOBBI Pantry project come from

a lineage of fishers, just as the men do. While the situation is undeniably difficult, fishers and/or fishers' rights activists are pioneering new ways of doing activism, and/or innovating with regards to fisheries products. E.g., Rovina Europa, Charles America and Naseegh Jaffer appeared in a webinar that could reach many people at any time, thus using technology to extend their relationships with other people even in their physical absence from the same physical space as others (Nymannjoh, 2020).

“Parasocial” relationships can be built via social media, and activism can be carried out partly online, as the ABALOB case study shows. By “parasocial”, I mean a relationship where one person may learn details about another person's life, while not being known to the latter.

Case Study: ABALOB and Serving Small-Scale Fishers During the Covid-19 Pandemic

On 22 March 2020, ABALOB released a statement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasised the team's health and safety, and it “recognise[d] the severe impact that COVID-19 is likely to have on the safety, livelihoods and food security of such communities characterised by poor socioeconomic resilience” (Raemaekers, 2020).

I draw attention to the paragraph about health and safety in fishing communities:

“Safeguarding fisher communities – food security and health

We recognise the severe impact that COVID-19 is likely to have on the safety, livelihoods and food security of vulnerable fishing communities characterised by poor socioeconomic resilience. [...]

We are re-purposing some of the ABALOB cold chain and logistics capabilities to support the exchange of fish between and within fisher communities along the Western Cape coastline:

1. **Food security across communities:** The fishing communities are actively trying to support each other to secure access to sources of nutritious fish according to seasonal and regional flow (e.g. fishers in Lambertsbaai will send snoek to the South coast communities when the snoek run starts, while Struisbaai fishers are planning to send yellowtail [*Seriola lalandi*] or silvers [*Argyrozona argyrozona*] to various West coast communities, depending on species availability)
2. **Food security within communities:** Within their own communities, fisher groups are exploring the establishment of Community-Supported Fisheries, with the intention of providing quality protein to households in need, care centres for the elderly, and to the many children who now do not receive Government- or NGO-subsidised meals at school as a result of school closures.
3. **Call for donations:** Please consider donating to the public benefit arm of ABALOB in order for us to subsidise the above initiatives – all funds raised

will go directly towards these community-based activities with audited financials available.” (Raemaekers, 2020).

There have also been government and corporate efforts to assist fishers. On 3 May 2020, Jarita Kassen wrote that the DEFF will this week distribute “over 10 000 food parcels to small-scale fishers in South Africa. DEFF’s Albi Modise said that large fishing corporates are assisting with relief efforts. Registered SSFs from the Overberg and South Cape benefited from 1500 food parcels; subsequently, Cape Town Metro, West Coast and Northern Cape fishers would benefit, and finally Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal fishers (Kassen, 2020).

A reporter for Fishing Industry News SA (FINSA) wrote on 14 April 2020 that Oceana Group was distributing “care packs, product and food parcels not only to staff but also needy communities in South Africa” (FINSA, 2020). Oceana Group was also in the process of defining what support was needed in Namibia and the USA. Oceana Group donated funds to acquiring medical supplies, and made 146 000 litres of water available per day from its plant at Amawandle Pelagic, Laaipek (FINSA, 2020). Sea Harvest donated funds to benefit the Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital, and provided an activity book for children (FINSA, 2020).



Figure 1. Instagram post from @sapoctable, Thursday 30 April 2020.

Various Instagram accounts posted pictures of fish ABALOBI delivered after changing strategy. The account @sapoctable posted the image in Figure 5. The organisation describes itself as follows on its website: “SA POC is a group that fosters opportunities for skills exchange, networking and collaboration for people of colour in the food and beverage industry, and related creative industries on the continent.

It functions as a platform for all those wanting a seat at the table to talk about the constant marginalisation of African food, culture and voices, especially in the food and beverage industry” (SA POC, 2020). It is interesting that preparing fresh fish is described as a “privilege”. When many people are hungry during this lockdown, getting fresh seafood can seem like a privilege. In Hout Bay (where I live), too many people are going hungry, or are eating less than ideal amounts. In a seaside town, seafood should arguably be a right, not a privilege.

Stone (2020) reported on ABALOBI and its efforts during Covid-19. She sums up the situation facing the ABALOBI-associated fishers:

“Until the restaurant trade came to a brutal halt in late March, small-scale fishing initiative ABALOBI was facilitating the supply of traceable responsibly caught fish from traditional fishers to chefs at more than 350 Cape Town restaurants. The impact of Covid-19 has meant a quick pivot to home delivery to maintain a basic income and stimulate food security initiatives for traditional fishing families (Stone, 2020)”.

According to Nico Waldeck, ABALOBI’s Community Engagement Officer, Lambert’s Bay:

“For us as fishers, it was a big moment when Covid-19 arrived. If you’re not allowed to fish, it means you’ve suddenly cut off your income, and it is not only you; it’s your household” (Stone, 2020).

Lambert’s Bay is one of the fishing communities in which ABALOBI has become a “lifeline” for fisher families (Stone, 2020). Middlemen are a “drain” in the selling process. The ABALOBI app has various components in addition to the Marketplace, where originally restaurants (and now mainly the public) can buy fish. In the Fisher component, fishers can check weather conditions, plan trips more accurately, log their catches, and report on finances (Stone, 2020).

When restaurants started to close in mid-March, ABALOBI still worked with restaurant customers who had switched to home delivery. After President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a national lockdown, ABALOBI founder Dr Serge Raemaekers and his team had to adapt both the logistics and financial models of the organisation rapidly. ABALOBI uses the Community Supported Fishery (CSF) model. The fishers who are catching for the purpose of home deliveries can now afford to keep some of their catch for local deliveries within their communities, “offering fish locally at what could be regarded as a heavily subsidised affordable price” (Stone, 2020). The endpoint would be interconnectivity between communities: E.g., extra stock of Lambert’s Bay snoek could travel to fishing families in Struisbaai, while yellowtail could be transported back to Lamberts Bay using ABALOBI’s logistics system (Stone, 2020). ABALOBI introduced the home delivery system to Cape Town and its Southern Suburbs at the end of March.

Stone described ordering fish through the ABALOBI Marketplace mobile app. She ordered Cape bream (*Pachymetopon blochii*), caught by fourth generation fisher Wilfred John “Wilow” Poggenpoel from Lamberts Bay. He has been fishing for nearly 40 years. Poggenpoel owns and skippers a traditional wooden two-person “bakkie” boat called *Nadine*, named after his youngest daughter. Additionally, “Cape bream is an important species in a variety of smaller-scale fisheries along the western and Northern Cape coasts. It is traditionally caught by line fishers as part of a basket of species they rely on for their livelihoods” (Stone, 2020). Stone read Poggenpoel’s story via scanning a QR code on the app. While Stone had not met Poggenpoel at the time of buying his fish, she was still able to learn his story and form some kind of relationship with this fisher, even though both people were physically absent from each other’s lives. Once again, technology is a way to extend people’s relationships with other people.

ABALOBI is also helping home chefs to adapt to filleting whole fish, with videos posted on social media on filleting. Stone (2020) notes that the pleasure of cooking whole fish at home is not the only motivator in shopping for fish via ABALOBI Marketplace: Raemaekers firmly stated that ABALOBI was pivoting its operating model “...because there are no social protection mechanisms in fishing communities” (Raemaekers, quoted in Stone, 2020). Raemaekers stated that the SSFs ABALOBI works with cannot access the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) or other government support programmes; fishing is a means of survival. However, fuel is expensive, which makes it “impossible to just go fish for food security” (Raemaekers, quoted in Stone, 2020). Waldeck explained that before catching any fish, a fisher must spend between R600 to R1 000 on petrol, bait, and other supplies. Fishers cannot feed

their families without a marketplace (Stone, 2020). Stone explained how ABALOBI is keeping its workers and fisher partners safe. Strict hygiene and sanitation standards were amplified. For example, in the community quality control (QC) centres, fishers were not entering those areas, and box handles were disinfected. The QC team wore protective equipment, and added security protocols on hand washing, gloves and masks. When doing deliveries, drivers disinfect cooler box handles before and after a handover, and then take a photo as proof of delivery. Raemaekers was adamant that fishing families be protected, because of minimal access to healthcare in fishing communities:

“We have taken every precaution not to bring our Cape Town staff in contact with the fisher communities, to minimise the risk of potential contamination. While this is hard in a programme where we have very close relations with the [fishers] we work with and have to wave through a window or chat on WhatsApp, it’s absolutely critical” (Raemaekers, quoted in Stone, 2020).

Such hygiene measures acknowledge the structural inequalities in South Africa that can make some communities more vulnerable to Covid-19 than others. The addition of pantry items via the ABALOBI Pantry section acknowledges women’s diverse roles in the fisheries value chain. Such items include *bokkoms*, pickled fish and sour fig jam (Stone, 2020). Selling these items provides another source of income for fisher families. Loss of income is not the only negative impact on SSF communities. There are distressing cultural and social impacts, such as the loss of physical contact through social distancing.

“We as human beings depend so much on each other. We want to embrace each other, but we are not allowed to. We’ve touched our food with our hands; suddenly you are scared to do it. In smaller communities, you see each other all the time. Especially fishers, we normally come together and talk about the fish, where they are biting... but we see the bigger picture. We want to support our president, our country. It’s a small step that fishers are taking, and it will support the bigger call” (Waldeck, quoted in Stone, 2020).

Raemaekers noted the multiple pressures on SSFs, such as climate change and the pandemic; there is a need to “revert to hyper local marketplaces”. He believes that “a digital marketplace with home deliveries can save people and livelihoods” (Raemaekers, quoted in Stone, 2020).

ABALOBI might not be a solution by itself, if other structures of inequality are not dealt with. For example, some fishing communities were still financially vulnerable in the face of Covid-19 (Kassen, 2020). The enthusiastic response from the public to buying sustainable, small-scale fish is positive. As at 14 May 2020, there were more than 100 posts on Instagram

tagged #Fishwithastory. In dealing with inequalities in the fishing industry, the “friction of global connections” (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2005) must be kept in mind alongside national and local factors. The small-scale fishers in Buffeljagsbaai who rely mainly on west coast rock lobster for an income are affected differently by the changes in international supply chains compared to Premier Fishing as a corporate entity, for example. Of course, Premier Fishing’s income might be affected by the knock-on effects up and down the “inter-local” supply chain. The people caught up in these instances of friction sometimes seem to get lost among the multiple news stories going on at once in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. With posts such as those telling the stories of Sarah Niemand and Jeffrey Fraser, the “numbers” of small-scale fishers affected by the pandemic are humanised. The PLAAS webinar mentioned is also important in humanizing numbers. The three panelists – Charles America, Rovina Europa, and Masifundise Director Naseegh Jaffer – offer varying viewpoints on the problems facing SSFs, and give a clearer picture of what is happening in particular communities. ABALOBİ’s theory of change (Fig. 4) also serves to make visible parts of the fisheries value chain that may be obscured as very different parties come together in the patches that constitute the value chain (either permanently or temporarily). This process of traceability adds to the visibility of the small-scale, wild-caught fishing part of the chain. The issue of market access for small-scale fishers is thus something that ABALOBİ takes very seriously; this is enhanced by their being aware of the gendered implications of this as well in explicitly acknowledging these issues and including the products that women are producing along the value chain.

The SA POC at the Table post calling receiving fresh fish from ABALOBİ “a privilege” makes more sense when viewed alongside America’s observations on fish prices being oriented towards retail customers. A person who can order fresh fish for delivery from the comfort of their home does have a certain amount of socioeconomic privilege. Meanwhile, the people who catch fish for a living are being excluded from their own food source in some cases if they cannot afford store-bought fish. In a *The Hook* newsletter from June 2020 (produced by Masifundise), it is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has shown the “fault lines in South Africa’s food system” (Gwebani, 2020). Only small-scale permit holders received food parcels, which also exposes the faults in the implementation of the Policy for SSF; many genuine fishers were left out of the food parcel distributions (Gwebani, 2020). “Permit holders” means SSFs who were successful in applying for rights; i.e. they met the criteria in the Small-Scale Fisheries Policy. Women and young people were especially negatively affected. This also makes the inclusion of women’s value-added products in the foodstuffs for sale on the ABALOBİ app more significant – in the face of men in the community losing income, the

income gained from women selling these products could mean the difference between eating and going hungry.

The safety measures in ABALOBI's Covid-19 statement also brings up a symptom of South Africa's inequality: People in poorer communities have less access to quality healthcare. Due to South Africa's apartheid and colonial past, it is people of colour who live in communities that do not have adequate medical facilities, or who do not have the means to access adequate medical care. Timothy (2020) noted that in race-based data gathered from the USA, Black Americans were affected by Covid-19 at a disproportionate rate relative to their population in a particular city. For example: "Black residents in Mecklenburg County, in Charlotte, N.C., accounted for 43.9 per cent of the 303 confirmed Covid-19 cases locally, but Black residents make up only 32.9 per cent of the county's population" (Timothy, 2020). Some race-based Covid-19 data for South Africa is available. A report from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases on 4 718 Covid-19 patients stated that 2 288 patients' race was known; 1 458 (63.7%) of those patients were black, 436 (19.1%) were coloured, 266 (11.6%) were white and 128 (5.6%) were Indian (Nkanjeni, 2020). While the sample is small, its trend is still similar to the USA statistics above. Even if South Africans of colour are not directly impacted worse by Covid-19, the historical influences may show through with Covid-19, via co-morbidities and disease burden (e.g. tuberculosis) (A. Abrams, personal communication, 21 September 2020). In July, Reuters News Agency (2020) reported that Western Cape townships had particularly high rates of infection. This data highlights the present impacts of apartheid-era spatial policies (Ibid.).

Additionally, Indigenous people around the world have spoken about how Covid-19 has had more devastating impacts on their communities (Timothy, 2020). Specifically:

"The fear and mistrust of health systems expressed by many in Black, Indigenous and racialized communities stem from historical eugenic practices of both governments and individual doctors. These communities have experienced systemic racist violence for generations. They have recently experienced xenophobic responses to Covid-19 and historically, other health crises" (Timothy, 2020).

In South Africa, the potential of facing medical racism should also be taken into account when considering how small-scale fishers of colour are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Given these factors, the gravity of ABALOBI's health and safety measures put in place to protect small-scale fishers and their communities becomes apparent. Putting these safety measures in place is not just important for the organisation's operation, but also important because it acknowledges (even if indirectly) the unequal access to healthcare and sanitation as a result of South Africa's past.

Conclusion

SSFs are being squeezed by direct effects of Covid-19 and knock-on effects further up the chain. The “social health” of the coastal resource base is not optimal, as both the earlier section and the case study have shown. People are struggling to make a living from fishing, pay for household necessities such as food and school fees, etc. This is another example where patches within the fishing industry do not exist in silos; the fishing industry is arguably a large assemblage. Specifically, describing it as an open-ended assemblage acknowledges that unexpected situations that can happen when the networks within patches, and between the patches, all converge in an assemblage (Lowenhaupt- Tsing, 2015). Small-scale fishers such as Charles America and Rovina Europa talked about the negative effects of Covid-19 – an unexpected event – on their communities. Others such as Christian Adams and the Buffeljagsbaai fishers mentioned decreased lobster fishing income because of factors such as exports to China being disallowed, and companies further up the value chain not buying lobster.

5. Physically Apart, But Connected: Using Technology to Extend Human Relationships Across Patches

Who women connect with in the fishing industry, and why

The Factory Supervisor stated that her company was in the process of becoming co-packers for I&J, which meant that her company needed to meet certain standards in terms of hygiene and packaging protocol. Her contacts at I&J were two male auditors, one of whom was assisting her in the process (by phone), as she is training herself in the requisite processes as her “boss doesn't have the resources” to do so (Factory Supervisor, 14 December 2019). She also mentioned having a mixture of personal and professional contacts in the fish packing sector, such as a contact at an Atlantis-based packing company, where she went for an interview in 2019. It was through her contacts that she found out that she was “behind” in that she was not improving her personal financial circumstances.

The Fisher Leader said that she was connecting with “a mixture of faces and races”. She was also connecting with various sectors “because the fishing industry is also a business and needs to get good publicity to market our product” (Fisher Leader, 11 June 2020). The Sales and Marketing Manager said that women normally connect with local women’s groups to empower them with skills, or to educate themselves in order to move up the levels in a company. She herself connects with a mixture of genders. While the technology used was not specifically mentioned, women in SSF have mentioned in-person workshops (pre-Covid-19). SSFs (men and women) have connected via online seminars in the Covid-19 era, for example the PLAAS webinars.

Small-Scale Patch: Women Associated with the ABALOBI Fisher Project and Fishers’ Net

Fishers’ Net is a newsletter that was published mostly monthly by the fishers’ rights organisation Masifundise Development Trust, in alliance with Coastal Links, a small-scale fishers’ movement.

“ABALOBI ICT4FISHERIES³³ is an African-based, fisher-driven social enterprise with global reach. Our mission is to contribute towards thriving, equitable and sustainable small-scale fishing communities in South Africa and beyond, through the joint development of technology. Our approach focuses on achieving tangible milestones, driven by a suite of mobile apps, that relate to seafood traceability, fully documented fisheries, fair and transparent supply chains, and community cohesion and entrepreneurship as important precursors to launching longer-term ecological improvement actions associated with a transition towards ecological sustainability” (ABALOBI, 2020).

Within the ABALOBI project as a whole, a section called ABALOBI Pantry has been developed. To quote a post on the ABALOBI Instagram page:

“Women fisher leaders from small-scale fishing communities as far afield as Arniston on the South Coast and Lambertsbaai on the West Coast are gathered in St Helena Bay for the [ABALOBI] #WomenInFisheries Full Moon Harvest Workshop. The workshop is intended as a platform for the women to share their local knowledge about the wide variety of marine resources that they work with on a daily basis; to explore and develop the market for women’s local coastal products; to build coastal product research and development partnerships; showcase use of the ABALOBI FISHER app in capturing data to promote coastal custodianship; and – something we are particularly excited about – to co-design the new ABALOBI PANTRY [...]” (ABALOBI app, Instagram post, 17 May 2019).

The women involved in the workshop also “explored a partnership” with the Department of Food Science and Technology at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology “for innovative product development for the marine resources that they have traditionally harvested, and for post-harvest technology training [...]” (ABALOBI app, Instagram post, 17 May 2019). Such training included “good manufacturing practices, food analysis, and health and safety standards that will enhance the quality of products that they intend selling via ABALOBI PANTRY” (ABALOBI app, Instagram post, 17 May 2019).

ABALOBI’s Women Empowerment

ABALOBI has a specific gender component to their work; “redressing gender inequity in small-scale fisheries is a core component of all [its] programmes” (ABALOBI, 2020). Further, this gender component serves several functions, including: Building women’s capacity to use ICTs for marine resource management and market access; capturing data on marine resources;

³³ ABALOBI and its associated words are stylized in capital letters; where I have quoted from the organisation, I have retained the capitalized words.

disrupting unequal power relations and transforming the value chain; and inspiring young women to participate in rural food production networks via ABALOBI programmes (ABALOBI, 2020). ABALOBI is arguably carrying out the women empowerment implications of the Policy for SSF's expanded definition of a fisher on a practical level. This expanded definition is an important legislative component in moving SSF gender equality forward, even if it is one of numerous further steps required to achieve gender equality. In the case of French fisher wives, the women pushed for legal recognition of their work (Frangoudes & Keromnes, 2008); transformation in the sector is thus a result of women's organising. State institutions can nonetheless play a role in promoting women's participation in fisherfolk organisations (Alonso-Población & Siar, 2018). Frangoudes et al. (2008) noted the role of regional administration in creating positive transformation for female, on-foot shellfish gatherers (*mariscadoras*). *Mariscadoras* play a crucial role in resource management and market control (Alonso-Población & Siar, 2018; Frangoudes et al., 2008).

The launch of the Pantry component of ABALOBI Marketplace in 2019 served the objective of increasing gender equity in small-scale fisheries. ABALOBI Pantry is a milestone in one of ABALOBI's themes, namely empowering women in fisheries (ABALOBI, 2020). Additionally, "ABALOBI Pantry was specifically developed for traditional marine and coastal resource-based products produced in coastal fishing communities" (ABALOBI, 2020: 43). Most of the people who make these products are women. Pantry was originally aimed at chefs, specifically exposing chefs to communities' post-harvest products. Pantry is also playing a role in "expanding the ABALOBI MARKETPLACE offering into an Urban Community-Supported Fishery" (ABALOBI, 2020: 43). This project gave women the agency to make decisions, since they co-designed the Pantry concept at a Cape Town workshop in March 2019. These seven women from five coastal fishing communities discussed creating a platform for selling marine and coastal resource-based products (ABALOBI, 2020).

ABALOBI has helped women receive quality control training. Most chefs who were on the Marketplace platform wanted the fish to be cleaned at the landing sites, according to feedback. The demand for fish cleaning created employment for women in Buffeljagsbaai, Lambertsbaai and Langebaan (ABALOBI, 2020). Additionally, fishers on the South and West Coasts formally agreed on a price per kilogram of fish placed on the ABALOBI Marketplace module. The admin panel on the ABALOBI app allows for tracking the quantum of fish cleaned by the women. Five Buffeljagsbaai women have been employed in cleaning fish sold via ABALOBI Marketplace since 15 October 2018 (ABALOBI, 2020). Part-time work for 15 youths from the community was also created; they collect fishing bait, while two young women

were also paid for making ice (ABALOBI, 2020). Four women of Lambertsbaai benefited from being paid to clean Cape Bream. Two women in Langebaan earned an income from cleaning harders (ABALOBI, 2020).

ABALOBI supports communities in forming and formalising their fisher co-operatives in line the Small-Scale Fisheries Policy. Three such co-operatives are spotlighted in the 2018-2019 Impact Report, namely the Struisbaai Fishers Association, the Blinkwaters co-operative, and the Weskusmandjie co-operative. In South Africa, fishing co-operatives are registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) (see Ndlangamandla, 2020). A co-operative is a type of corporation where the employees or the patrons of the corporation have ownership and/or control of the corporation (National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International, 2019).

Blinkwaters, which includes Buffeljagsbaai fisherwoman Sarah Niemand, was a co-operative that existed before ABALOBI engagement. Co-operative members became involved with ABALOBI as a community partner via capacity-building (e.g. ABALOBI learnerships) and being active on the Marketplace and Pantry sections. ABALOBI supported the co-operative's fishing and processing efforts by supplying it with components such as weighing scales and protective clothing (ABALOBI, 2020).

Weskusmandjie is a West Coast fisherwomen's collective of seven women from Steenberg's Cove. The women come from lineages of fisher families who have relied on marine resources for food and livelihoods (ABALOBI, 2020). The women make pickled fish, sea lettuce salt, sour fig jam, and other products using traditional family recipes. These products are sold on the Pantry section of the ABALOBI Marketplace. Women have an alternative source of income from selling these products, and "celebrate their culture by sharing their traditions with the broader public" (ABALOBI, 2020: 52).

In 2019, the women trained in food safety and financial skills, and expanded their professional network to other organisations (including shellfish producers and higher education institutions). In December 2019, ABALOBI assisted Weskusmandjie in creating a comprehensive business plan via a workshop with Tsiba Ignition Academy (ABALOBI, 2020). One of the Weskusmandjie members says:

"My dream is that it through our Weskusmandjie collective it won't be necessary to think: 'where am I going to get money for food for our house?' ... I don't want a fancy life, I just want us to be able to live comfortably.'
– Sheronise Smith, Weskusmandjie (ABALOBI, 2020: 52)

The women in this programme were given a boost towards achieving their particular goals, thus giving them agency. This agency arguably makes the programme more sustainable.

Four women's biographies are in the report, namely Hilda Adams, Sheronise Smith, Solene Smith, and Sarah Niemand. The ABALOB I biographies of Hilda and Sheronise are rendered in lively prose:

1. "Hilda Adams from Steenberg's Cove in the Western Cape, hails from a family spanning three generations of fishers. She has been collecting marine resources from a young age, and fondly recalls a childhood spent fishing and living off what was harvested from the sea. Hilda works with a fisherwomen's collective called Weskusmandjie on the Cape West Coast, and is also involved in the international Slow Food Movement.
2. Sheronise Smith from Steenberg's Cove represents the third generation of fisherwomen in her family; Sheronise started harvesting marine resources at a young age, including alikreukel, mussels and limpets, for subsistence. Sheronise is a traditional net-maker and mender, and is a member of the Weskusmandjie fisherwomen's collective. She prepares a range of pickled products including pickled alikreukal and mussels" (ABALOB I, 2020: 45).

In this case, it seems that the women who harvest seaweed or shellfish participate more in the decision-making concerning access to these marine resources, in that they are harvesting directly instead of buying from men. Applying to be rights holders (usually as community-based legal entities) in order to harvest resources is still necessary (see Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012). While implementation of the Small-Scale Fisheries Policy has not been perfect, it does acknowledge women's role in harvesting intertidal species, and contributing to food security (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2012). In addition to her ABALOB I biography, Solene Smith was also interviewed by Jackie Sunde, a fisheries social scientist, in an issue of the *Yemaya* newsletter (International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, 2007). She gradually became aware of her rights as a worker before being actively involved in fishers' rights. She feels that she has always been a community-focused person, and assisted local fishers with applying for subsistence permits (ICSF, 2007). She also helped form the Langebaan Visser's Assosiasie and to apply for limited commercial permits. Smith became Association treasurer in October 2000. Problems of access for small-scale fishers were a problem at that time in Langebaan, and is still a problem today to some extent. During the apartheid regime, local fishers of colour were removed from their beachfront houses and allocated smaller houses further from the beach (ICSF, 2007). Solene played an important role in asserting women's rights and the need for gender equality in fishing; her lobbying resulted in having one woman involved in each permit. Some men disagreed initially,

but changed their minds because one of the government's quota criteria was that women are involved (ICSF, 2007).

Sarah Niemand was also interviewed by Michelle Joshua of Masifundise (2012). As well as coming from generations of women harvesters, Niemand “can trace her family's involvement in the kelp and fishing industry back four generations” (Joshua, 2012). In 2006, a Coastal Links branch was established in Buffeljagsbaai after a community member heard about Coastal Links' work. Coastal Links then learnt that numerous Buffeljagsbaai fishers had been unsuccessful in applying for long-term rights. To deal with this issue and other issues, fisher representatives from Buffeljagsbaai attended workshops and street marches, and also took up leadership positions in Coastal Links, and later the Masifundise Board. Niemand's community has experienced various challenges over the years; in 2004, there was a tsunami-like event that flooded homes and set furniture adrift in some cases. The community experienced the same thing in 2005. Fishers then noticed foreign species in their waters. At the time, Eskom (the electricity supply agency) and the South African government selected Bantamsklip on the Overberg coastline in the Western Cape as the site for a nuclear power station. Fishers feared that a nuclear power plant 3 kilometres from Buffeljagsbaai would negatively impact on coastal communities in the Overberg region (Joshua, 2012). Niemand is currently the Coastal Links community leader; at the time of the interview, she was determined to see Buffeljagsbaai recognised as a “place where traditional fishers live” (Joshua, 2012). Niemand played an important role in “lobbying to ensure that the Buffeljagsbaai fishers were included in the Equality Court ruling in 2007, which recognizes the rights of small-scale fishers in South Africa” (Joshua, 2012).

The women interviewed in the ABALOB I report and by Masifundise have created pioneering paths for themselves that can generate self-reliance not only for other women, but for their communities as a whole. There is also a strong sense of fishing being “in the blood”, and something that is more than a lifestyle. The women are also creating sustainable pathways for the next generation. In this way, it is possible to acknowledge the complex assemblages of humans, “other-than-humans”, and the environment which shape everyday realities. A particular way in which relations between humans and other-than-humans is relevant is in how some fishers tend to view their connections to the sea. According to Patterson et al. (2014), many fishers referred to a biologically-based connection to the sea, with statements such as “catching fish is in our blood our daughters and the women were part of this fishing... fishing flows freely through our veins” (Solene Smith, Langebaan in Sunde, 2007; cited in Patterson et al., 2014: 23). A woman from Lamberts Bay described the sea as something akin

to a parental figure: “Ons het uit die see opgegroeï” (“We grew up out of the sea”); she further stated that the nine children from her family were “uit die see opgegroeï” (“brought up by the sea”) (Sunde, 2010).

In Kalk Bay, ABALOBİ conducted a pilot project with a woman fish seller. Women selling fish in the harbour lost access to a cold storage facility at the harbour (ABALOBİ, 2020). I was unaware of this when my mother, sister and I visited the harbour (6 December 2019), and spoke briefly with a few of the women selling there:

Bought a fairly large yellowtail from one of three women fish sellers in Kalk Bay. The woman we eventually bought from had black-framed glasses and a leopard print jacket. She was very friendly, and said that the fish she had were “beautiful, like us [women]”.

When we came back to buy, the woman said “julle is nou weer terug” (you’re back again), and repeated the fish prices in Afrikaans.

The woman had one yellowtail, and a few bunches of small Red Roman (*Chrysoblephus laticeps*) and Cape bream (*Pachymetopon blochii*). She said she had kabeljou (kob) (*Argyrosomus inodorus*) earlier, but it was already gone. She also gets kabeljou sometimes. The fish is caught with handlines (a more selective fishing method). She said that the fishing is better in summer than in winter. The fish are smaller than they used to be. The boats don’t come in at a set time. If the fishers catch quickly, they come home quicker. They come home later if there are fewer fish, so they can catch more. The woman in leopard print said that the boats also come in in the morning sometimes.

My Mom wanted the fish cleaned and filleted, so she paid a second woman with white wellington boots to do so. I had seen earlier that there was a semi-enclosed area near the end of the fish selling space where there were basins and work surfaces.

While further conversations about women’s fishing work in Kalk Bay were not possible, the ABALOBİ report gives more insight into this topic:

“In late November 2019, ABALOBİ launched a small pilot project [...] in the popular coastal tourist suburb of Kalk Bay, Cape Town. that will run until March 2020. Kalk Bay has long been home to a small-scale fishing community who [...] have faced numerous challenges in the fishery. Women in the community have traditionally cleaned and sold fresh and frozen fish at the harbour – a popular site for tourists and locals. These women had utilised a cold storage facility at the harbour to store their fish. However, recently, this space has become unavailable to the women and they have been forced to give up their fish sales” (ABALOBİ, 2020: 60-61).

Since the Covid-19 pandemic is an event that had a multipronged effect, it makes sense to mention it in relation to an affected activity, i.e. fish-selling. Before Covid-19, Kalk Bay harbour was known to be a popular destination for tourists and locals alike (ABALOBİ 2020). Not only have international tourists stopped visiting South Africa and any of its destinations,

but locals have been confined to a smaller travel range. Women's access to the fish trade market has thus been cut off in this case. In Hout Bay, where women were also selling fish near the harbour, the market for fish has shrunk for similar reasons. For example, the harbour-adjacent restaurant Mariner's Wharf has closed, with business owner Stanley Dorman saying that "...we don't have a single tourist coming in" (Kiewiet, 2020). Cape Town Tourism head Enver Duminy stated that there are "...many tourism businesses coming to a standstill and fighting for survival due to the extensive travel bans imposed by the government as a measure to stop the spread of Covid-19" (Kiewiet, 2020). The closure of major tourist attractions is likely to have knock-on effects for various people who benefited from the tourism trade in Hout Bay, including women fish sellers.

The *Fishers' Net* newsletter is another network of women, which has some overlap with ABALOBI. Renthia van Wyk from Port Nolloth spoke about restoring trust in the ocean (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2018a). Aunty Rosie Malan, also from Port Nolloth, emphasized the importance of the fisheries value chain, which includes activities such as boat repairs. She was also trying to get government support to repair the fishing complex at the dilapidated harbour (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2018a).

Naomi Cloete from Paternoster expressed concerns about the interim relief programme. In 2002, she was chairperson of a fishers' organisation with a "small, unsustainable quota". She had to learn many roles, from administrative skills to psychological support (Sunde, 2002). At the time of the draft version of the Policy for Small-Scale Fishers being drawn up (2010), a number of women were involved in leadership roles in Coastal Links. Carmelita Mostert, Saldanha Bay, was secretary. Cathy Thomas was the executive member for Laingville. Rosaline Shosola, Lambert's Bay, was also an executive member at the time. Maria Hoffman (Pearly Beach) and Sarah Niemand (Buffeljagsbaai) occupied the same roles as Shosola (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2010).

Kesia Leonard from Paternoster is a young entrepreneur who sells fish products; she feels that young people can bring fresh ideas into the small-scale fishing sector (e.g. selling products online) (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2018b). Also on the West Coast is Cathy Thomas from St Helena Bay. In 2013, she was the chairperson for the Coastal Links chapter there (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2013a). Wanda, from Arniston, is a restaurant owner, and is involved in tourism as well. Her restaurant has been a source of job creation in her community (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2018b). Rovina Europa (nee Marthinus) is also from Arniston, and currently a Coastal Links

Leader. Sarah Niemand, like Smit, is a fisher leader; at the time of writing, she was the chairperson of Coastal Links in Buffeljagsbaai (where I conducted an interview in February 2020). She stated that three co-operatives had been reactivated, and were involved in fishing, landscaping, aquaculture, mariculture and arts and crafts (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2016a). Thozì Mthiyone is from Magubane, KwaZulu-Natal, and stressed the need for fishing rights to sustain fishing livelihoods (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2016b). Maria Hoffman, from Pearly Beach (a founder member of Coastal Links), commented on the roles and challenges of women in fisheries. She also noted that “At the moment we have no fishing rights in the area, so the people work as cleaners, contractors and the youth move out of the town to get better jobs” (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2013b, 2013c).

Christina Kopana, Eastern Cape, stated that fishing rights allocation needed to be fair, and that the government needed to look closely at what people were catching, and give them rights to those species (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2016a). Nombuso Sithole from KwaNzimakhwe in KwaZulu-Natal believed that Coastal Links members needed to stand together, and to find ways of making a living and getting [fishing] rights (Coastal Links & Masifundise Development Trust, 2016a).

While not all of these women may have met in real life, they could still read about what other women are thinking and/or doing via *Fishers' Net*. The newsletter is published in both Afrikaans and English. There is some overlap with the Coastal Links/Masifundise and ABALOBÌ patches, in that some women are associated with both. For example, Sarah Niemand is associated with both Coastal Links/Masifundise and ABALOBÌ, as is Solene Smit (interviewed in an issue of *Fishers' Net*). These patches are not isolated, but are rather examples of the open-ended gatherings known as “assemblages” (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015). Fishing industry patches do not seem to exist in silos in this case. Arguably, women coming together for a particular purpose is more coordinated than the gatherings of mushroom pickers, buyers and mushrooms themselves in the USA. Allowing for a degree of flexibility in these gatherings of women in fishing, however, gives space “to ask about communal effects without assuming them” (Lowenhaupt-Tsing, 2015: 23). This approach can also bring forth the ways that women and fish coproduce each other, outside of conventional economic ideas such as “rationalization”, where non-humans are subordinated for humans' own ends.

5.1 Stories and Connections Via Technology

An ABALOBI post on its Instagram account (Friday 8 May 2020) notes the difficulties faced by small-scale fishers in sustaining a living:

“For small-scale fishers, running a viable, ecologically sound fishing operation is not possible in the absence of a fair market and without fair incentives. A further reality is that the cost of fuel alone often exceeds the value of fishing for food security. This means that small-scale fishers cannot afford to launch their boats to feed their families, without the fight market support to back them.

Fair markets and food security thus go hand in hand [...].

While some markets merely channel fish out of communities, our learnings show that the establishment of a fair market, such as ABALOBI MARKETPLACE, serves to boost local food and nutritional security – not only due to improved earnings and socioeconomic improvement, but by ensuring that fishers can afford to keep a portion of their catch for their household and for local distribution within their community.

Food security matters, and so do your seafood choices [...]”.

While there are struggles within the small-scale fishing communities, getting the fish distributed through the right channels is helping others to avoid going hungry. Distributor of small-scale-produced food, Food Flow, made an Instagram story post featuring the stories of the fishers who had caught the fish it was distributing to others.

“Every purchase from @ABALOBI_app is #storiedseafood with a QR code that shares the story of who caught your fish, where they caught it and the methods used as well as all the info about the species of fish! #whofishesmatters”.

“Big thanks to Sarah and Jeffrey who caught the Cape Bream getting distributed by @gracieloveinabowl and @ikhayaalthemba_project to families in Hout Bay today!”

“Sarah’s Story: Sarah Niemand, known as *Saartjie*, lives in Buffeljagsbaai, a small fishing hamlet on the south coast. Sarah was born there and hails from generations of proud women harvesters. Her very first memories are of going to pick sea grass and alikreukal³⁴ from the rocks with her Ma and her Ouma. The *Blinkwater[s]* co-operative, founded by Sarah and her husband Daniel, works with the sea and the basket of local marine resources in their ecosystem”.

“Jeffrey’s Story: Jeffrey Fraser is a Traditional Nearshore Linefish skipper from the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town, and has been fishing for a living since 1996. He employs nine traditional linefishers aboard his vessel”.

³⁴ It is also spelt “alikeukel”. Its Latin name is *Turbo sarmaticus*.

An Instagram story post by @ABALOBI_app, posted Sunday 10 May 2020, showed the “catch of the day” basket of species. In addition to fish such as Cape bream, gurnard (*Chelidonichthys spp.*) and Carpenter (also known as silvers) (*Argyrozona argyrozona*), there were products which are usually produced by women in fishing communities (see Fonto, 2018). The products listed in this post included: Bokkoms biltong by Weskus Maandjie. Other Weskus Maandjie products were: Pieke bokkoms; Rollmops; Sea-lettuce salt; Suurvygie – dried (two volumes available); and Suurvygie jam. The Blinkwaters Co-op was selling Suurvygie jam. I met one of the founders, Hilda Adams, in 2018 during my Honours research in St Helena Bay. It is through women like her and Sarah Niemand that a kind of “sociality” is mediated through fish and marine products that have a long history in Cape Town fishing communities. People can not only feel connected to a common history through these products, but may feel connected to the women themselves through reading their stories. These stories are mediated via the technology of QR (Quick Response)³⁵ codes (Fig. 3). Technology is used to extend humans’ incomplete selves. Nyamnjoh (2020) uses the imagery of *juju* to explore the potential of ICTs in anthropology both during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, he explains *juju* and its likeness to ICTs:

“To be able to claim godlike attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, humans must seek to enhance their ordinary selves with extraordinary activators – *juju*. Hence, the widespread belief in West and Central Africa that, ordinary though we are as humans, our ability to be omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent can be significantly enhanced by *juju* (which includes but is not confined to charms, spells, concoctions, potions, etc.) [...]”

Thus, I liken ICTs or digital technologies to what we in West and Central Africa have the habit of referring to as *juju*. [...] The idea of digital technologies making it possible for humans and things to be present even in their absence and absent even in their presence is not that dissimilar to the belief in what is often labelled and dismissed as witchcraft and magic” (Nymanjoh, 2020).

These QR codes are thus a way of extending the ABABLOBI network, even it is a one-way extension.

³⁵ Wikipedia. 2020. *QR code*. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_code [2020, August 10].



Figure 2. Screenshot of Food Flow’s Instagram story showing the stories of the people who caught the fish that the organisation later distributed.

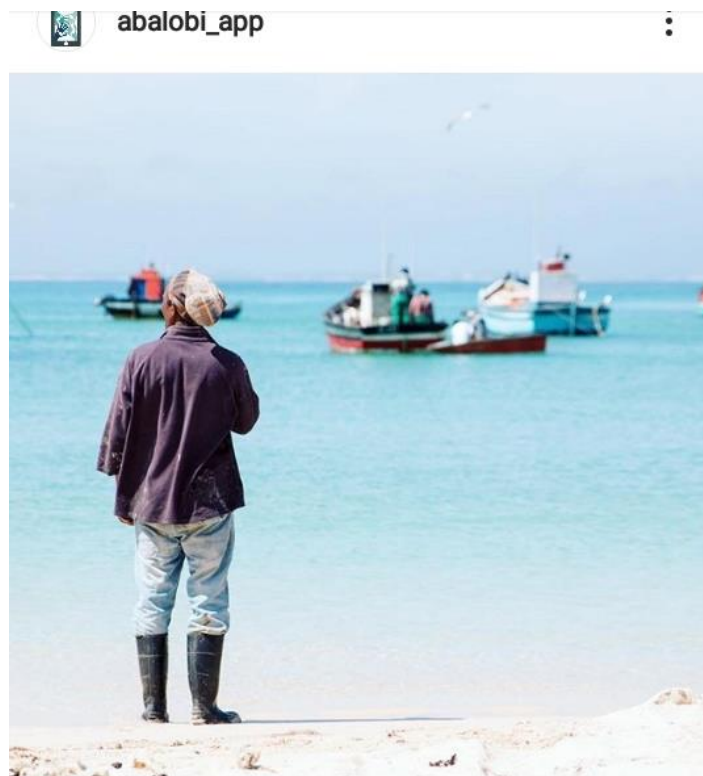


Figure 3. Photo of a fisherman taken by an ABALOBI photographer, which accompanied an Instagram post on ABALOBI’s “theory of change”.

The photo in Figure 3 was posted on the @ABALOBI_app Instagram account on Thursday 14 May 2020. It accompanied a post on ABALOBI’s “theory of change”, where the main text³⁶ read as follows:

“Enabling small-scale fishers to record their own catches and visualise their data collectively, coupled with the development of a fully traceable, storied seafood offering – to enable them to engage in the market from a position of power and increase the value of their livelihoods – will ultimately catalyse fishers’ engagement in adaptive fisheries management and promote thriving, sustainable and equitable small-scale fishing communities.

We invite you to engage with our Manifesto (#linkinbio [yellow pointing finger emoji] @ABALOBI_app) which outlines our #TheoryofChange and strategic approach, and how we intend on forging ahead to further our mission in driving social and environmental change” (ABALOBI, 2020).

ABALOBI, like SADSTIA, forms part of a network of organisations that include sustainable fishing and conscious consumerism as part of what they do. Another important player in this “sustainability” space is the South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI)³⁷, which

³⁶ I have not inserted the hashtags here, but they are captured in the original screenshots.

³⁷ See SASSI. 2020. *How SASSI helps*. Available: <http://wwfsassi.co.za/how-sassi-helps/> [2020, August 11].

aims to educate seafood consumers on where their fish comes from, how it is caught, and what the environmental impact is of the fishing method by which the fish is caught. Sustainable fishing can help to empower communities by preserving a source of income. Women's sources of income from marine plants and invertebrates, for example, are also conserved via habitat preservation. Gender is also tied into ABALOBI's story of uplifting SSFs in general. This story is arguably made up of two layers – the fishers' stories they told to ABALOBI, and the way that ABALOBI tells those stories on social media. The two fishers' stories mentioned above could then be seen as the hybrids “Sarah's story/ABALOBI's story” and “Jeffrey's story/ABALOBI's story”. There are still the elements of consumer choices and “market-driven empowerment” in play in the telling of these stories as well. In the context of South Africa's neoliberal capitalist economy, there is perhaps some limit to these two fishers' agency to an extent; at the same time, the fishers are also creating “room to manoeuvre” in this limited capitalistic context by choosing community-benefiting platforms through which to share their stories.

Conclusion

This chapter noted that networks can be made up of professional and/or personal relationships. The Factory Supervisor's professional relationship with the male I&J auditors helped in accessing an opportunity for herself and others. She, like the Fisher Leader, had mixed gender networks; interestingly, numerous men were in managerial roles. While women in the commercial sector are empowered through training and promotion – they are pioneers themselves – they are still dependent on the level of “innovation” in terms of gender that the companies choose to undertake. The Sales and Marketing Manager said that women's groups empower women with skills (which could help to access new markets). The women in the small-scale sector are empowered through access to markets, for which they rely on their own networks and the technological networks provided by the ABALOBI platform. Part of accessing markets involves learning business skills, which gives women their own agency to strive towards particular goals, thus making such programmes sustainable. Opportunities for gender empowerment exist in both sectors, but they take different forms.

Geographic locations could be seen as part of the networks, even if networks are not confined to a geographic area. Women from Buffeljagsbaai (which I visited), Lambertsbaai and Langebaan were part of both the *Fishers Net* and ABALOBI networks, whether by personal relationships or media stories. A woman fisher leader from Langebaan was interviewed in both ABALOBI and the ICSF *Yemaya* newsletter. Steenberg's Cove is home to

both the Weskusmandjie women's co-op and the male fishers interviewed in relation to Covid-19-related hardships. The idea of fishing being in the blood was shared by women and men, and emphasized the importance of keeping this legacy despite combinations of policy obstacles and Covid-19-related income decreases.

ABALOBİ's point that fair markets and food security go hand-in-hand relates to both gender and class. Women's difficulties in accessing both marine resources and markets had to do with gender, while men's access was more stymied by class.

The connections between some organisations was more apparent by their purpose – e.g., ABALOBİ and SADSTIA had in common the aim to promote sustainable fishing, and promote conscious consumerism. SASSI connected to these two because it is an important sustainable fisheries player.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to contribute to the gap in the women and fisheries literature on what leadership roles women play in the South African fisheries value chain. While it is more widely known that women play diverse roles within the fisheries value chain, the leadership roles they play (at various scales) are currently less well-known. I set out to find women to talk to from the various “patches” in the value chain. Without the “underground” generation of new relationships/leads, I would not have found my way to particular patches. When I had to pivot to digital research due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the “patches” seemed more adrift, and possibly “siloes”, than ever. However, like tiny mycelia running between mushrooms, and pine trees and mushrooms, three common threads emerged that showed how these patches are not so isolated after all. The threads were: Networks and relationships; lineage, blood and sustainability; and acts of pioneering, innovating and self-empowerment.

Women in fisheries are situated within various networks and “patches” of knowledge. This dissertation has drawn on the notion of “patches” as a central concept. Underlying this were the sub-themes of gender and market access (in this case, markets for marine resources). It was clear that while different women in different patches may not necessarily know each other or interact with each other, the patches themselves still have an effect on each other. This was especially true in the case of how the Covid-19 pandemic affected small-scale fisheries. Effects higher up the value chain meant that small-scale fishers were negatively affected. Thus, fishing industry patches do not seem to exist in silos. Specifically, women in the fisheries value chain are not in silos either. Both print and online media can still allow women to find out where women are working in the value chain, and for which companies or organisations. Such media can also allow women in fisheries to develop knowledge about each other.

Firstly, technology, including digital newsletters, allows for women to extend themselves and enrich themselves with relationships with or knowledges of, other people. With the proliferation of both online media and cell phone access in South Africa, parasocial relationships may be formed. These parasocial relationships may help women in fishing to know “who’s who” and also for consumers desiring a more transparent buying experience to form a type of relationship with each other, through learning about people’s stories.

Fishers encountered both in real life and online tended to come from a long history of working in fisheries themselves, as well as coming from multi-generational fishing families. While not all of the women interviewed were leaders in formal positions and/or formal organisations, their knowledge of species, fish processing and other areas was something that

seemed to be valued within fisheries-related spaces. This is one factor that indicates the importance of keeping the fishing lineage going into the future for fishers. Fishers were also concerned about the effects on them which were caused by changes at the commercial level, such as a decline in market access due to Covid-19. Keeping a fishing livelihood going, both for this generation and the next, is something very important to the fishers encountered throughout this research.

The diversity of jobs women held, both those interviewed by myself and those interviewed in digital publications, was significant throughout this research. Some women are in supportive spaces that allow them to pioneer new paths for women in the fishing engineer, such as being a boat skipper or engineer. Slowly but surely, women are also making their way up through middle management and to executive management levels. Seeing a woman become CEO of Premier Fishing, for example, is a positive sign. However, it is also important to consider the intersections of women's identities, e.g. socioeconomic status, geographic location, and education obtained. Different approaches to empower different groups of women can help the process of women's empowerment in fisheries to be inclusive.

The different needs of women at various scales are important to consider for projects that aim to empower women, and this nuance seems to be evident already, e.g. there were different programmes for women working with ABALOBİ versus women working at Sea Harvest. Taking into account the different forms that women's leadership takes could also help to bring more women into leadership positions, including those that are more "behind the scenes".

A point of further research could be the question of what effect formalising these patches would have, bearing in mind that there have been various forms of support for women at the different scales that cater for the different needs of the different scales of fishing. Another point that needs to be addressed further is the question around the exploitation of women fish workers within an industry that has increasingly exploited the natural world (especially on the commercial side). While some women mentioned tough working conditions such as working in cold storage for long periods, this question was not specifically addressed in the research itself, even if women's exploitation in the fishing industry was explicitly acknowledged. Lastly, examining empowerment and agency in relation to family and community could also contribute to determining what further actions or resources would ensure more women are better capacitated to become agents of change, in addition to looking at their agency in the workplace and fisheries organisations.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

General Questions

1. Why did you choose your fishing role?
1. Or why were you given your role?

2. a. Are there any obstacles that prevent you from doing any roles you would like to do in fisheries?
1. What are the things/people that helped you to be in a leadership role?
2. What are the things/people that helped you to be in any roles you would like to do in fisheries?

3. Who do you connect with in the fishing industry, and why? (E.g., is it other women, men, a mixture of genders.)

4. How have the roles available to women in the fishing sector changed over the years?

5. Recently, South Africa's Policy for Small-Scale Fisheries changed the meaning of "fisher" to include more roles in the fishing industry. What does an expanded meaning of "fisher" mean for women in the small-scale fishing industry?

6. How does the role that you play as a woman influence your access to marine resources?

7. Do the roles in the fishing industry give women agency or authority in the decision-making process around access to resources?

Questions on Premier Fishing

1. When did you start working at Premier Fishing?
2. How did you get to the position you are in today?
3. Premier Fishing now has a female CEO – is it normal for women to “rise up through the ranks”?
4. Please tell me more about the “Voorskot” working capital advance for previously disadvantaged fishers.

Algemene Vrae

1. Waarom het u u visvang rol gekies?
 - a. Of waarom het u u rol gekry?

2. a. Is daar hindernisse wat u verhinder om enige rolle te vervul wat u in die visserye wil doen?
 - b. Wat is die dinge / mense wat jou gehelp het om in 'n leiersrol te wees?
 - c. Wat is die dinge / mense wat jou gehelp het om in die nuwe rolle te wees wat jy in die visserye wil doen?

3. Met wie konnekteer jy in die visserybedryf, en waarom? (Bv. Is dit ander vroue, mans, 'n mengsel van geslagte.)

4. Hoe het die rolle wat vroue in die visser sektor beskikbaar het, oor die jare heen verander?
5. Onlangs het Suid-Afrika se beleid vir kleinskaal vissery die betekenis van “visser” verander om meer rolle in die visbedryf in te sluit. Wat beteken 'n uitgebreide betekenis van 'visser' vir vroue in die kleinskaalse visserybedryf?
6. Hoe beïnvloed die rol wat u as vrou speel u toegang tot mariene hulpbronne?
7. Gee die rolle in die visserybedryf vroulike agentskap of gesag in die besluitnemingsproses rondom toegang tot hulpbronne?

Vrae Oor Premier Fishing

1. Wanneer het u by Premier Fishing begin werk?
2. Hoe het u tot vandag toe gekom?
3. Premier Fishing het nou 'n vroulike uitvoerende hoof - is dit normaal dat vroue “deur die geleedere opstaan”?
4. Vertel my meer oor die bedryfskapitaalvoorskot vir voorheen benadeelde vissers.

Onderhoudsvrae

1. Waarom het u u visvang rol gekies?
 - a. Of waarom het u u rol gekry?
2. Is daar hindernisse wat u verhinder om 'n leiersrol in 'n vissers organisasie te neem?
 - a. Is daar hindernisse wat u verhinder om enige rolle te vervul wat u in die visserye wil doen?
 - b. Wat is die dinge / mense wat jou gehelp het om in 'n leiersrol te wees?
 - c. Wat is die dinge / mense wat jou gehelp het om in die nuwe rolle te wees wat jy in die visserye wil doen?
3. Met wie konnekteer jy in die visserybedryf, en waarom? (Bv. Is dit ander vroue, mans, 'n mengsel van geslagte.)
4. Hoe het die rolle wat vroue in die visser sektor beskikbaar het, oor die jare heen verander?
5. Onlangs het Suid-Afrika se beleid vir kleinskaal vissery die betekenis van “visser” verander om meer rolle in die visbedryf in te sluit. Wat beteken 'n uitgebreide betekenis van 'visser' vir vroue in die kleinskaalse visserybedryf?
6. Hoe beïnvloed die rol wat u as vrou speel u toegang tot mariene hulpbronne?
7. Gee die rolle in die visserybedryf vroulike agentskap of gesag in die besluitnemingsproses rondom toegang tot hulpbronne?
8. Is daar iets wat u wil byvoeg oor u rol as leier in Coastal Links Arniston?

9. Ek het geluister na die PLAAS-onderhoud oor kleinskaalse vissers en Covid-19. Wil u bydra tot wat u daar gesê het?

Appendix 2: Original Afrikaans Answers

Chapter 3

- “Verdeeldheid in gemeenskap deur Departement veroorsaak met die uitdeling van visserregte (Divides in the community through the Department caused by the distribution of fishing rights.)
- Wetywering-nuwe toetreders (In this case, new entrants)
- Diskriminering teen vroue (Discrimination against women)
- Wetgewing ([fishing] legislation)
- Finansies (finances)
- Politiek (Politics)
- Opleiding (Training)
- Toegang tot geleenthede (Access to opportunities)” (Fisher Leader, June 2020)

Baie ons is ook nou deel van besluitnemings. Vroue is nie verplig om op see te gaan nie maar kan as hulle wil. Vroue word herken as vissers en vertolk ook leiers rolle alhoewel daar nog steeds diskriminering is in sommige dorpe.

Chapter 5

“Ons as vroue werk meestal met rotsverwerweldes bv soos seekosse wat ons uit haal van die rotse af en die toegang tot spesies is beperk en ons kry poskantoor permitte net tot ‘n sekere limited wat jy nie eers mag verkoop nie vir alles wat jy uit see uithaal of haal moet jy ‘n permit hê en daar is sekere spesies wat jy nie mag uithaal nie”

“Daar is verskeie posisies wat ons as vroue nou beklee in die visbedryf, maar nog steeds is die vroue die minderheid met die uitgee van regte en werke. Ek sal graag wil sien eendag dat ons as visser vroue meer geleenthede kry toegang kry tot meer regte. Ook die nodige opleiding kry om ons vissersdorpe se visbedryf besighede suksesvol te bestuur. Soveel mariene bronne is daar wat ons as vroue kan benut maar op alles is beperkings en vir alles moet ons permitte hê.

Dit sal ‘n voorreg wees as Government die toegang gee vir ware vissers manne en ware bona fide visser vroue tot grond, finansies en spesies en heropen van sekere MPAs.

Dit sal ‘n verandering bring tot beskerming van see en spesies omdat ware vissers het ‘n konneksie met die See en sal dit beskerm omdat dit hulle elke dag se lewe is en die kultuur van hul lewenstyl visvang ensv. Gaan van geslag tot geslag. Dit is ons tradisionele reg wat ons as vissers nou sukkel om uit te oefen met al die beperkings en regulasies deur verskeie departemente.

Kom laat ons saamstaan om ‘n goeie en gemaklike lewe te lei as vissers gemeenskappe” (Fisher Leader, June 2020).