



Too **BIG** To  
**IGNORE**

*Global Partnership for Small-Scale Fisheries Research*

# Let's talk about SSF rights and access

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and Reade Davis

TBTI Webinar # 4

May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016

# Why SSF rights and access?

Ratana Chuenpagdee  
TBTI Project Director



TBTI is an open research network and knowledge mobilization partnership, with more than 200 researchers and 20 organizations from over 45 countries, working together to elevate the profile of small-scale fisheries, argue against their marginalization, reduce their vulnerability, and address key concerns affecting their sustainability.



## Three core elements in TBTI

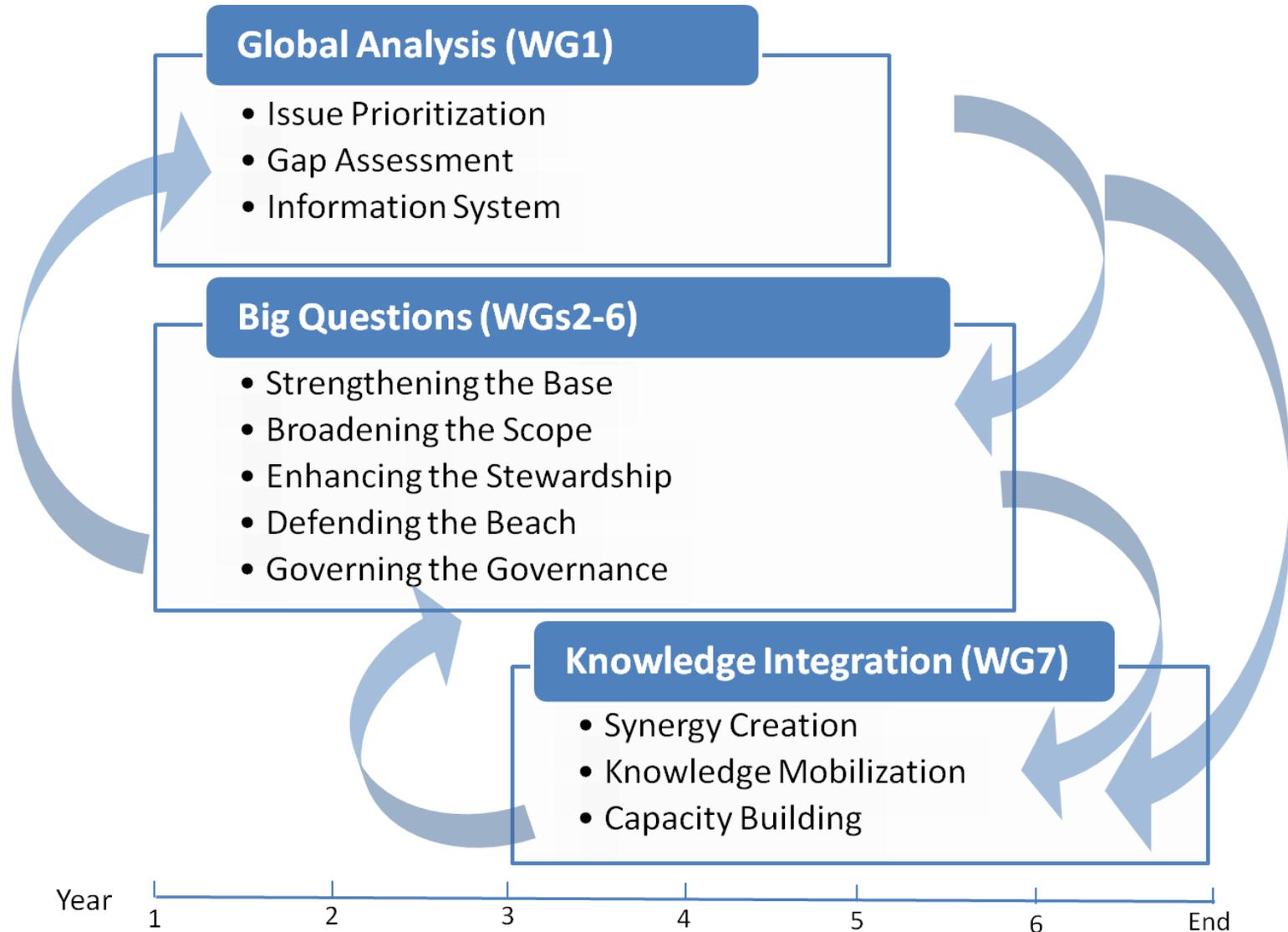
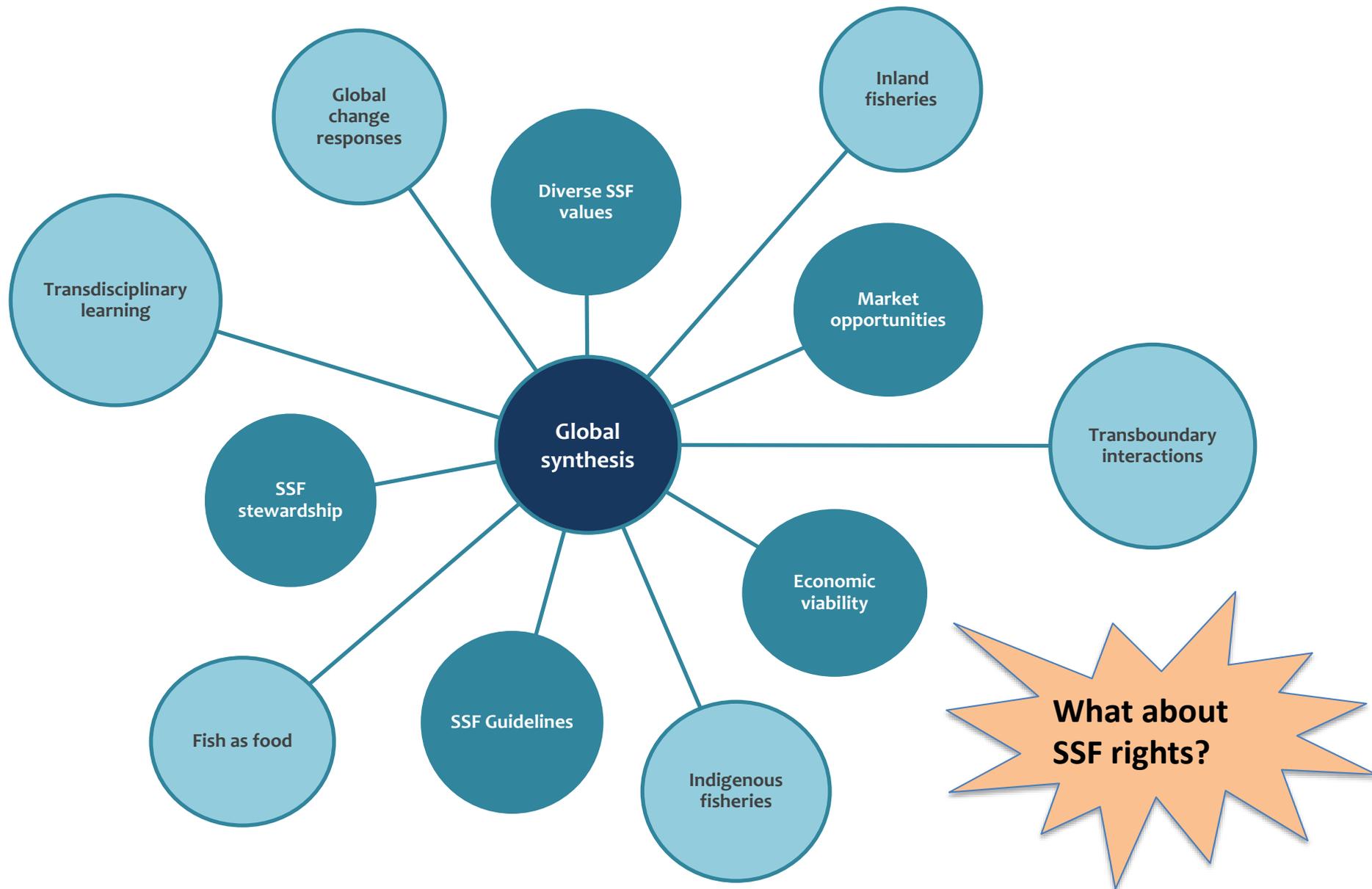


Figure 2 *Too Big to Ignore* is a six-year project, structured as three key related components and seven working groups (WG).

# TBTI research clusters



# Rights in SSF Guidelines

Where poverty exists in small-scale fishing communities, it is of a multidimensional nature and is not only caused by low incomes but also due to factors that impede full enjoyment of **human rights** including **civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights**. Small-scale fishing communities are commonly located in remote areas and tend to have limited or disadvantaged access to markets, and may have poor access to health, education and other social services. Other characteristics include low levels of formal education, existence of ill health (often including above-average incidences of HIV/AIDS) and inadequate organizational structures. The opportunities available are limited, as small-scale fishing communities face a lack of alternative livelihoods, youth unemployment, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions, forced labour, and child labour. Pollution, environmental degradation, climate change impacts and natural and human-induced disasters add to the threats facing small-scale fishing communities. All these factors make it difficult for small-scale fishers and fish workers to make their voices heard, **defend their human rights and tenure rights**, and secure the sustainable use of the fishery resources on which they depend.

# Rights in SSF Guidelines

The objectives of these Guidelines are:

- a) to enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to global food security and nutrition and to support the progressive realization of the **right to adequate food...**

Small-scale fishing communities need to have secure **tenure rights** to the resources that form the basis for their social and cultural well-being, their livelihoods and their sustainable development (Section 5: Governance of Tenure)

# Rights in SSF Guidelines

All endeavours should be made so that small-scale fisheries are represented in relevant local and national professional associations and fisheries bodies and actively take part in relevant **decision-making and fisheries policy-making processes** (Section 5B: Sustainable resource management)

States should take steps with a view to the progressive realization of the **right** of small-scale fishers and fish workers **to an adequate standard of living** and to work in accordance with national and international human rights standards...(Section 6: Social development, employment and decent work)

**What could TBTI do in a new research cluster about SSF rights?**

# **Neoliberal Policies & the Future of Small-Scale Fisheries**

**Evelyn Pinkerton**

*School of Resource & Environmental Management,  
Simon Fraser University*

**Reade Davis**

*Department of Anthropology  
Memorial University*

# History of Working Group 5 of TBTI: “Defending the Beach”

*Our goals were to:*

Examine the challenges SSFs face in response to new movements toward privatization and enclosure (starting with North America and then expanding into other regions)

Examine the development & implementation of neoliberal policy (ideology, law, practice) and how it has been applied to fisheries policy

Consider how people who continue to depend on SSFs are responding to and sometimes resisting these changes

# Special Section of *Marine Policy* Nov 2015 edited by Pinkerton & Davis

- *Spec.Sect: Neoliberalism & North American SSFs*
- [Intro: Neoliberalism & the politics of enclosure in North American SSFs](#) (open access) by EP & RD
- Papers by Courtney Carothers, Reade Davis, Sabrina Doyon, Caroline Pomeroy-Madeleine Hall-Arber -Flaxen Conway, Steve Langdon, David Jenkins, Tom Thornton-Jaime Hebert, Gabriela Sabau-Michael van Zyll de Jong, Paul Foley-Charles Mather-Barbara Neis, Brett Tolley-M. Hall-Arber, Evelyn Pinkerton, Sara Breslow

# What is Neoliberalism?

- A political ideology that crystalized in the 1970s, inspired by University of Chicago economists
- Characterized by a strong emphasis on private property rights, economic efficiency, government cutbacks, and devolution of responsibilities and risks to the private sector
- First incorporated into policy the 1980s, especially in North America, UK, and Chile and then expanded into new regions in later years.

# Was a response to the Keynesian “Welfare State”

- After WW2, many countries increasingly subsidized healthcare, education, public housing, environmental management & conservation
- Unprecedented prosperity in this period was linked to high rates of taxation on the most affluent people and active trade unions which led to higher wages and high rates of consumerism.
- The **neoliberal** frameworks which began to emerge in the 1970s and 80s were a direct **response to these policies** and to working people’s increased share of total wealth between about 1950 and 1980.

# Key characteristics of neoliberalism

- Gradual undermining of social safety nets & structures of material security (including **access to subsistence harvesting**, etc.)
- State policies to support the working classes were often characterized as an attack on individual freedom, though freedom was defined almost exclusively in narrow economic terms
- Cultivates an image of citizens as risk-taking entrepreneurs who must not expect government support in times of need and must assume greater responsibility for their own welfare/accept that social and environmental risks are a necessary part of life.

# ....Key Characteristics of Neoliberalism

- Private property rights viewed as essential to harness greed, selfishness & economic rationality for the greater good
- Privatization framed as logical and inevitable
- Emphasis on deregulation, openness of trade across borders, and **export-driven growth**

# ....Key Characteristics of Neoliberalism

- Market rationality & economic efficiency become basis of state legitimacy
- Emphasis on deregulation, “lean government,” public-private partnerships, “audit culture,” eliminate/contract out “non-core” functions
- government agencies forced to rely on public-private partnerships with universities, NGOs, & private corporations to carry out their mandates

# Neoliberalism Remakes Human-Environment Relations

- Companies given favourable rates of taxation, expected to remain globally competitive and deliver continuing return on investment to shareholders
- Heightened efforts to overcome barriers to capital accumulation (environmental, social, political)
- “Accumulation by dispossession:” Pressure to **eliminate forms of land/sea tenure** both domestically and globally that do not lend themselves easily to capital accumulation, replace with those that do (privatization of resources).
- Further enclosure of the commons

# Neoliberalism in North American Fisheries: Broad Trends

- 1) Continuation of the Tragedy of the Commons thesis: “too many boats chasing too few fish” seen as cause of economic inefficiencies, used to **justify reducing the number of SSFs**. Social scientists have long noted the misfit between fisheries economists’ conceptions of fishermen as disembodied, self-interested rational actors vs **how fishermen and fishermen’s organizations actually behave**

# **...Neoliberalism in North American Fisheries: Broad Trends**

- 2) North American capital contributes to shifting of harvesting pressure to other regions of the world
- 3) Outsourcing of fish processing labour to lower wage countries
- 4) Downward pressure on wages and benefits in higher wage countries

# ...Neoliberalism in North American Fisheries: Broad Trends

- 5) **Attack on social institutions** and legislation that have sought to ensure that **benefits from fisheries are distributed equitably** [share system is a threat to capital accumulation]
- 6) sweeping **budget cuts** to fisheries and ocean science and management
- 7) Heavy investment in industrial aquaculture
- 8) Continued failure to address the **destructive power & inefficiencies of industrial harvesting technologies**

# **...Neoliberalism in North American Fisheries: Broad Trends**

- 9) New efforts to brand and market product “quality” through MSC certification or other measures to obtain a competitive advantage.
- 10) No concern for non-commercial species (even if commercial species ate them!)
- 11) Treat fisheries management itself like a market, instead of a public good: habitat protection became a “non-core” function in Canada
- 12) The imposition of tradable property rights to fish or access to fish (ITQs)

# Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs)

- ITQs are permits allowing the holder to catch or transfer a fixed share of a total allowable catch (TAC). This transforms the permit into a tradable commodity like a stock on a stock market, with few or no limits on who can buy or lease it.
- ITQ holders can keep the full value of their quota when they sell or lease it outside the community, province/state, or country and have no legal obligation to compensate crew members, plant workers, or others whose livelihoods are negatively affected as a result of their decisions

# A brief history of ITQs

- 1976: Extended jurisdiction (200 mile limit)
- 1976: ITQs introduced in Netherlands
- 1979: ITQs introduced in Iceland
- 1986: ITQs introduced in New Zealand
- 1989: ITQs introduced in west coast Canada
- 1990: ITQs introduced in US east coast
- Post 1990: Growing pressure to introduce ITQs in new jurisdictions around the world.

# Impacts of ITQs

- **ITQs have resulted in:**
- concentrated ownership
- overcapitalized quotas
- blocked entry for younger fishermen
- loss of quota ownership to outsiders & investors
- increased processor control relative to harvesters
- hardened class divisions within coastal communities

# **Neoliberalism impacts: loss of access & benefits in fishing communities**

- lead to the flow of capital away from rural fishery-dependent coastal communities into urban areas
- negative impact that this transfer of wealth has on local values, traditions, and lifeways
- calls into question the unexamined assumptions of neoliberal models about the benefits of allowing this free flow of wealth, both within communities and away from coastal communities.

# Failures of neoliberal approaches to adapt to local contexts

- despite claims that neoliberalism is a more flexible response to the “inefficiencies” of the welfare state, neoliberal assumptions that industrial capitalist growth model & more “technologically sophisticated” boats are inherently more efficient have proved wrong in certain contexts
- disconnects between neoliberal policies & local knowledge & practices of SSFs
- efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness of SSFs for specific situations not amenable to large-scale fisheries; their contribution to well-being & overall social welfare; their contribution to greater equality between rural & urban regions

# What are processes of enclosure and privatization doing to SSFs?

- Initial ITQ allocation often forces out SSFs (don't get a large enough quota to be viable if ITQs brought in for conservation: Iceland, NZ)
- Downloading of new risks and responsibilities onto harvesters: monitoring requirements which have to be imposed under ITQs (cameras on board; offload monitoring) are too costly for small ITQ-holders. [BC halibut fishery]

## **...impact of ITQs to SSFs?**

- Forcing SSFs out because of economies of scale, e.g. SSFs sell ITQ to larger operators because they can operate more profitably even if SSF more efficient.
- New entrants blocked because SSFs cannot afford to buy expensive ITQs, and size of operation could not pay off debt incurred.

# What is privatization doing to regions losing SSFs through ITQs?

- Violation of social contract/legitimacy
- Rise in unemployment, poverty, economic crisis, resulting in multiple mental and physical health problems
- New costs imposed on governments/public
- We haven't even begun to calculate these costs

# Other manifestations of neoliberalism in fisheries: **ocean grabbing**

- for use by private interests throughout large sections of Africa, Asia, North America
- Fishing people must increasingly compete for ocean space with a variety of new interests:
- aquaculture, energy development, oil & gas development, wind & tidal energy development, marine recreation & tourism, shipping & marine transportation, bioprospecting, seabed mining, military operations, scientific research

# What is privatization doing to other countries?

*New Zealand case: leasing out ITQs* to Chinese and Korean vessels who exploit Indonesian labour. Slave-like conditions, abuse, removal of all profits in fish processing from NZ (processed in China). Quota holders, now investors & large processing companies, lease quota to where they can make the largest profits, which is where labor is cheapest.

# Imagining alternatives: resisting neoliberalization

- Require offshore LSFs to deliver to locally-owned processing cooperatives
- Enable direct marketing & community-supported fisheries
- Require maintenance of share system for compensating crew
- Public opposition to new proposed international trade agreements that undermine local claims
- Promote the realization that when both fishing and processing rights can be traded out of the country, livelihoods are undermined and only elites profit

# Questions

- How do the trends we've observed in North American context resonate with the situation that SSF's in the region(s) you are most familiar with?
- How are people connected to SSFs in these areas responding to these pressures and articulating alternatives in order to resist privatization and ensure that coastal communities can retain access to the fisheries at their doorsteps?
- How can SSFs best assert claims to food sovereignty, equity, locally established and maintained tenure systems, political representation?

**What could TBTI do in a new research cluster about SSF rights?**



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**Ideas for the upcoming TBTI webinars?**

**Send us an email to [toobigtoignore@mun.ca](mailto:toobigtoignore@mun.ca)**



**Too Big To Ignore welcomes new members to the network**

Become a member



**Mission**

Too Big To Ignore is a research network and knowledge mobilization partnership established to elevate the profile of small-scale fisheries (SSF), to argue against their marginalization in national and international policies, and to develop research and governance capacity to address global fisheries challenges

**Research Instruments**

- Concept note Governing the Governance
- Framework Assessing the economic viability of small-scale fisheries
- Framework Social and cultural contributions of SSF

**Research Clusters**



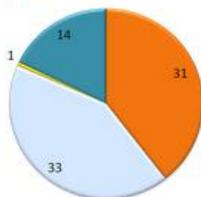
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**Facts & Figures**

**State of the Art**



**Total annual catch**



Source: World Bank/FAO/WorldFish (2010)

**Research Highlights**

- GAP recommendations on SSF Guidelines
- Special volume on "Enhancing ecosystem stewardship in small-scale fisheries"
- An article on implementation of the international voluntary guidelines for small-scale fisheries
- E-book: Enhancing Stewardship in Small-Scale Fisheries: Practices and Perspectives
- Community handbook: Small-scale fisheries policy

**Member of the Week**

**Rashid Sumaila**



Dr. Rashid Sumaila is Professor and Director, Fisheries Economics Research Unit, Fisheries Centre, the University of British Columbia. He specializes in bioeconomics, marine ecosystem valuation and the analysis of global issues such as fisheries subsidies, illegal fishing, impact of oil spills and marine pollution, and the economics of high and deep seas fisheries. [read more]

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**Thank you!**

**News & Updates**

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**Sign up to TBTI new Research Clusters**

Posted on November 26, 2014 { Edit }



TBTI is moving into a new phase with the organization of activities around twelve 'research clusters', several of which are linked to the original themes, but many are added ba ...[read more]

**Information System for Small-scale Fisheries (ISSF) launched**

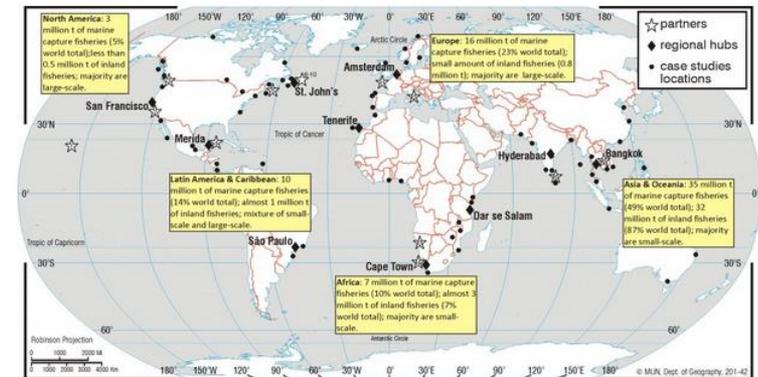
Posted on October 15, 2014 { Edit }



TBTI has recently launched its Information System on Small-scale Fisheries (ISSF), the first interactive global repository of small-scale fisheries, providing information on key ...[read more]

**Project Overview**

TBTI comprises 15 partners, 62 researchers from 27 countries, conducting activities around the world.



**Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada**