

Addressing Epistemic Blue Injustice in Small-Scale Fisheries

Millions of people around the world are highly dependent on small-scale fisheries for livelihood, food provisioning and community well-being. Despite their importance, the voice of small-scale fishers is often dismissed due to epistemic injustice — those in which the capacity of fishers as knowers has been diminished — leading to systemic marginalization. A study of 20 testimonies of injustices results in a glossary of terms that captures testimonial and hermeneutical injustice experienced by small-scale fisheries people. It argues that filling conceptual gaps could help fishers to express their experiences in an effective way, contributing to a better understanding and appreciation of the situation that small-scale fisheries are in. Having their own language to talk about different types of Blue (in)Justice will also enhance local empowerment and mobilize support.



***"The limits of my language
mean the limits of my world"***

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Framed in terms of sustainable development, Blue Economy and Blue Growth strategies aim to maximize economic growth and benefits from the ocean. These initiatives are being endorsed in government agendas that are pledging significant financial support for their implementation. There is a growing tension, however, between Blue Economy/Growth strategies and small-scale fisheries, with the latter arguing for ocean values that go beyond profit and encompass traditional, cultural and social aspects. In response, the term Blue Justice has emerged as a counter-narrative to Blue Economy/Growth, paying particular attention to the existing vulnerability and marginalization of small-scale fisheries and highlighting the need to prioritize them in ocean development policies. When fishers are excluded from the decision-making process, it is either because their concerns are not fully understood or their voices are dismissed. The knowledge and experiences of fishers — the daily users and caretakers of the ocean — need to be recognized as invaluable to society and is necessary for achieving fisheries management goals. Naming and conceptualizing the injustices experienced by small-scale fisheries people is an important first step for the acknowledgement and remediation of these injustices.

INJUSTICE EXPERIENCED BY SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES PEOPLE

EPISTEMIC BLUE INJUSTICE

Affects small-scale people by harming its capacity as knowers

TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

Someone's credibility is discredited due to prejudice about their social identity (gender, social background or ethnicity)



BLUE CONSPIRACY

An informal agreement among several people and/or organizations to unintentionally or purposefully do something wrong, harmful, or not legal to small-scale fisheries people in the name of Blue Economy and/or the Blue Growth.



ECO-BULLYING

A deliberate attempt to molest, harm, intimidate or coerce small-scale fisheries people through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that is justified as being necessary to protect or conserve the marine and/or coastal environment.



ECO-HARASSMENT

Actions causing intense feelings of annoyance, anxiety, worry or torment among small-scale fisheries people, taken by outside actors and justified as being necessary to protect the coastal and/or marine environment.



FISHERPHOBIA/ MISOHALIA

Attitudes and/or beliefs about small-scale fisheries that lead to inexplicable or illogical fear; resulting in discrimination against them or treating them as inferiors.



PARTICIPATORY DOMINATION

The exercise of power in participatory processes and marginalization of small-scale fisheries people, by being outnumbered, ignored or disparaged by other, more powerful participants. This can occur overtly, covertly, intentionally or unintentionally.



SIDE-LINING FROM GOVERNANCE

A situation that arises, when due to lack of data, capacity deficits, negligence or discrimination, insufficient or inadequate attention is given to rules governing small-scale fisheries.

HERMENEUTICAL INJUSTICE

Difficulty understanding someone's experience due to gaps in terminology and/or conceptual framework



CULTURAL VIOLATION

Any action that damages marine and coastal cultural assets of value and importance to small-scale fisheries people.



FISHER TRAFFICKING

The practice of employing immigrant small-scale fishers and controlling them through threats of deportation.



INDUSTRIAL PILLAGING

Expropriation of assets or resources of fishing communities or small-scale fisheries people by large-scale corporations and industries.



MARINE CARBON JUSTICE

Harm caused to small-scale fisheries people and fishing communities as a result of the inequitable distribution of CO2 emissions, impacts and risks.



MARINE PEONAGE

The use of small-scale fisheries people bound in servitude by debt.



RECREATIONAL ASSAULT

Damage to small-scale fisheries people as a result of recreational fishing.

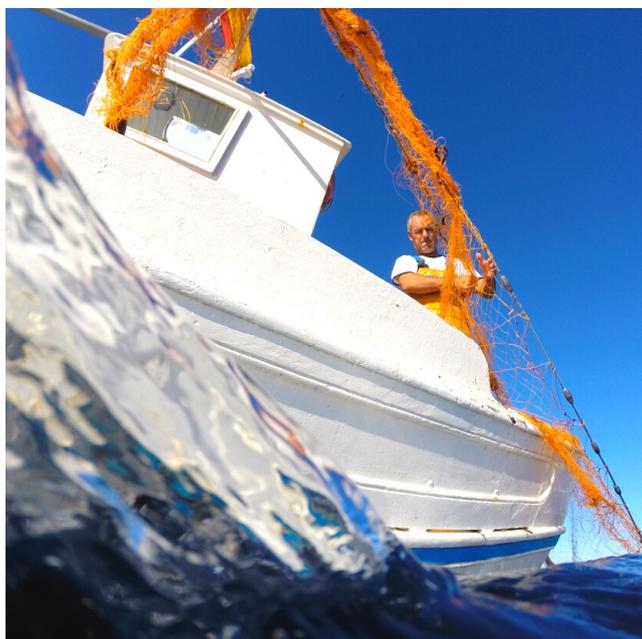


SEAFOOD LARCENY

Any action that transfers fish products from a local to a global market and thereby decreases the supply or availability of local fish products in a coastal fisherfolk community.

Mainstreaming Blue Justice

- Blue Justice for small-scale fisheries requires **new vocabularies that disrupt dominant discourses** on what ocean sustainability is and what it entails.
- **Transdisciplinary capacity** is required to listen better, overcome discrimination and collect testimonies of experiences that **transcend our collective hermeneutical resources**.
- **Fertile collaboration** between scholars and marginalized groups could help **identify, define and categorize their experiences of injustice** and convey the understanding to others, while maintaining scientific academic rigour.
- The Blue Justice community and small-scale fisheries peoples should **bring these concepts into the public domain** and subsequently into the **global discourse about sustainable ocean development** — to **transform first our language and then our actions**.



Take actions to overcome Epistemic Blue Injustice

- Adoption of practices that embody **fair and equitable treatment of all knowers**.
- **Become receptive hearers**, aware of the likely impact of prejudice and stereotypes on our credibility judgments
- **Apply transdisciplinary research** to set up and promote the formation of consciousness-raising groups and diversification of the mainstream social context of small-scale fisheries peoples.
- **Gather and pool common experiences** about injustices experienced in small-scale fisheries.
- **Engage in collective brainstorming** to identify terms and **develop concepts** that correspond to the experiences of small-scale fisheries peoples.
- Join and support networks and advocacy coalitions that **share and disseminate the new concepts**.
- Take advantage of any opportunity to institutionalize the use of the concepts, discussion of the situations they describe, and **actions to address them**.

A TBTI research brief based on:

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Small-Scale Fisheries are Too Big To Ignore