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**FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND: PROSPECTS OF USER-
GROUP PARTICIPATION**

**Boguslaw Marciniak
Institute of Sociology and
Philosophy
University of Gdansk**

**Svein Jentoft
Institute of Social Science
University of Tromsø**

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Abstract

The dismantling of communism in Poland has left the two key sectors in fisheries, state and cooperative, with a broken back. At the same time the private sector is flourishing. Also the system of interest representation, for instance relating to fisheries management, is radically changed. This has led to disorganization and dis-integration at all levels as compared to the previous situation, and there exists a void for collective action that somehow needs to be filled. New legislation is underway that will encourage user-involvement in fisheries management. In the process, an interest for the revival of some traditional institutions at the local level --the so called Maszoperias-- has been spurred. In this paper we summarize the present situation within Polish fisheries and describe some of the new legislation that is on the drawing board pertaining to fisheries management. We also depict the history of the maszoperias, how they worked in practice in the old days, and what potentials they may offer for the future.

Introduction

During the 1980s, when communism was abandoned, the structure of the Polish fishing industry radically changed. As in most other former Eastern block countries (cf. Davidsen, 1992: Globefish, 1993; Riggs, 1994) the state fisheries sector was particularly affected through economic crisis and privatization, resulting in a labor force reduction from 22000 in 1990 to 13000 in 1992. Today, only one of the five state companies in Poland has survived.¹

A similar development took place in the Polish fisheries co-operative sector. Today, this sector has almost collapsed. With the co-operative confederative institutions abolished, their role as co-manager was severely limited relative to the situation that prevailed under communist rule, when the national co-operative umbrella organization negotiated quotas with government and distributed it among member co-operatives (Jentoft and Marciniak, 1991). Employment in the fisheries cooperative sector was reduced from 2700 in 1990 to 1700 in 1992.

The private sector, which prior to the transformation was limited to the small boat fishery, is now flourishing. The growth here is partly triggered by the lifting of restrictions on direct export but also encouraged by favorable leasing arrangements of vessels that were previously owned by state companies and cooperatives. According to official statistics, the number of cutters (more than 16 meters of length) owned or leased by private individuals or companies increased from 231 in 1990 to 368 in 1992. The state cutter fleet as a contrast was down sized

from 151 to 63. While in 1980 10 to 12 percent of Polish fishermen operated on a private basis, today this sector employs 70 percent. In the coop sector a similar trend was noticed as the number of cutters went down from 59 to 24, and the number of co-operative fishermen is down from 30 percent of the total number of fishermen in 1980 to 15 percent in 1995.² Today the state and co-operative plants are basically without a fleet. The state company Szkuner is the only has only three cutters left of a fleet of 35 in 1990. All cooperatives and state firms have leased out most of their vessels, but they still have a contract for the purchase of their catch. Without vessels on their own, the role of state and cooperative companies in fisheries management is also diminished as more and more of the TAC (Total Allowable Catch) is allocated directly to the private sector in terms of vessel quotas. This principle also applies for leased vessels.

The transformation from communism to capitalism has also left the fisheries management system more dis-organized and fragmented. In the old regime, the TAC was divided into three parts, a state sector quota, a co-operative sector quota and a private sector quota. Then, through umbrella organizations, each sector negotiated their share of TAC. They also handled the all allocation of vessel or company quotas within their sectors. Thus, a "co-management system" (Jentoft, 1989; Pinkerton, 1989) was in place. Now, these organizations are either abolished or have reduced mandates, and the management system has become much more open and subject to competitive demands of various user groups. Ironically, the restructuring within Polish fisheries has resulted in a more centralized management system, turning

regulatory decision essentially into a government affair.

At the local and regional level, user organizations hardly exist, leaving them without a unifying voice in fisheries policy formation. Polish fishermen, however, have a long history in collective action and mutual self help. The so called "Maszoperias" are still vivid in the minds of fishermen and bureaucrats despite the fact that only fragments of them remain today. These were co-operative organizations at the local level that, among other responsibilities, used to manage access to local fishing grounds. They do stand out as a testimony to users' capability to cooperate in self-governance. There are those in Poland today who believe that the maszoperias at least in part may serve as a model for fishing community organization in the future.

In this paper we describe how these community organizations worked in the old days, i.e. up to the mid- 1960's, and why they dis-appeared. What are the conditions and prospects for their revival in present day Poland? We argue that the likelihood that the Maszoperias may be reborn in their traditional form, is rather slim. However, there is now a legislation reform underway that may give them another chance within a new organizational framework. Before we go into the history of the Maszoperias we outline the situation that prevails in Polish fisheries, particularly pertaining to resource management.

The data presented in this paper are gathered from visits to communities in Cashubian region of Baltic Poland, particularly on the Hel peninsula, where we interviewed fishermen and fish-plant managers.³ We also interviewed representatives of

fishermen's organizations, members on the committee preparing the new Fisheries Act, and researchers at the National Sea Fisheries Institute (MIR) in Gdynia. For the historical part, we draw heavily on upon documentation already available in Polish and English.

Fisheries Management - The Present System

Three fleet groups make up Polish fisheries: the industrial fleet operating on the high seas world wide, the cutter fleet working in the Baltic, and the artisanal vessels (some 800 boats are registered) that fish on the Szczecin and Vistula bays and on the Gulf of Gdansk and close to the Baltic side. Today, the future of the Polish deep sea fishery is very uncertain. This fleet is in severe crisis as fishing grounds have come under national jurisdiction (Gwiazda, 1994). The Baltic fishery suffers from heavy over-fishing by all Baltic states, which has led to drastic cuts in quotas. The bay and inshore fisheries are struggling with the effects of pollution and low recruitment. In the Baltic particularly, the cod has suffered, and the minimal cod quotas have increased the harvest of other species such as sprat and herring.

These environmental factors explain much of the crisis that the Polish fishing industry now finds itself in. They come in addition to those problems stemming from the restructuring of the Polish economy. Subsidies are cut down drastically. Today, only 15 percent of the cutter fleet is less than twenty years old, and

65 percent is more than 30 years. Without government support, renewal must be privately financed, and with the state of the resource base, profits are low. There are, however, fishermen who have earned substantial amounts by selling their catch directly in Danish ports such as the Bornholm island. This has undoubtedly helped the process towards privatization of the cutter fleet.

Fisheries are managed through a combined licensing and quota system. For private fishermen, the license is issued for a fee for five years at a time. The responsibility for licensing resides in the three regional branches of the Maritime Office. As to quotas, the framework is provided by the Baltic Sea Fishery Commission, in accordance with the so called Gdansk convention signed by all Baltic states⁴, in the form of recommendations regarding TACs. Recommendations are given for the Baltic as a whole and for each Baltic state. Individual quotas are distributed free of charge to users by the Ministry of Transport and Maritime Economy. Transferability of vessel quotas is only accepted within companies owning more than one boat. Individual quotas are not issued within the artisanal fishery. Instead, this sector is allocated a fixed share (5-6 percent) of the national quota. In addition, a great number of gear and area restrictions are imposed, most of them instituted independent of the Baltic Sea Commission's recommendations. These regulations are often implemented and enforced by the Maritime Office's regional branches. The principles of next year's regulations are discussed in a fall meeting that is publicly announced and open for all user-groups. The meeting has only an advisory function. Fishermen's organizations participate, but fishermen can also

attend as private individuals. Also the fish processing industry, government representatives and the Sea Fisheries Institute are represented. Fishermen speak with many voices and tend to disagree on matters where they have conflicts of interest. Nevertheless, in several instances the meeting has produced recommendations that have led to alterations in the regulations proposed by the government.

In the ports about 30 fisheries inspectors enforce regulations, while the Coast Guard make inspections at sea. Despite this, compliance is a problem, and the exact, actual catch level is difficult to determine, particularly in recent years as landing in foreign ports has become lucrative. One problem is the fact that the fishery is still regulated according to a law created in 1963 - the Sea Fishery Act. For the present circumstances, the law is far from adequate and up-date, something that has hampered effective enforcement of regulatory decisions. Another factor is the incentives to over-fish. Prices on cod have increased both because it is an important export commodity but also due to its scarcity related to other species such as sprat and herring (targeted for domestic markets).

For these reasons, a committee to draw up a new fisheries bill has been appointed, and its report is due by the end of 1995. We interviewed three members of this committee, but some of its proposals for change are already presented (Wòjcik, 1994). The committee aims at simplification and clarification. The present law has produced a very complex regulatory system as new amendments over the years have been added. Among the new proposals are a system of Individual Transferable Quotas

(ITQ's). Another interesting recommendation is that a wider range of rights and obligations pertaining to conservation and management should be delegated from central authorities to local levels. Not only are the regional Maritime Offices mentioned in this connection but also fishermen's organizations:

"Important aspects of a proposed new act are putting more responsibility for resource conservation and management on fishermen on the one hand, and greater involvement of fishermen's organizations into adoption, implementation and monitoring of standards - one the other hand." (Wòjcik, 1994:97).

Without using the concept of "co-management", it is, in effect, what the committee is aiming at. What it may imply in practice is, however, another matter. This was also a recurrent theme in our interviews.

Fishermen's organizations are highly fragmented and in poor financial shape.⁵ For instance, the largest organization representing private fishermen, The Private Sea Fishermen's Association, (established in 1947) has lost a big chunk of its membership. It is reduced from 990 in 1989 to 420 in 1995. But its leader, who also serves on the committee, hopes that the organization will resume its role in management decision making. Before, the organization performed the allocation of quotas among members, but today it only plays an advisory role vis-a-vis government as an interest organization. In some ports, however, the organization still owns facilities for boat repair and

storage of gear.

There are those who believe that the traditional community institutions - The Maszoperias - should be reactivated. For instance, the Vice-Director of the Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia, Eugeniusz Stanek, argues that the coastal fisheries must be established on the basis of the maszoperia principles. He fears that the pressure on near-shore and inshore grounds will increase now as the Polish deep sea fisheries are being drastically reduced.⁶ The coastal and bay fisheries will need a more strict and protective regulatory system than what prevails today. The artisanal fishery is predominantly open access and is vulnerable to pressure.

Also, members of the legal reform committee have an interest in the Maszoperias. The Sea Fisheries Institute representative, Ireneusz Wojcik, who is also the author of the paper referred to above, believes that maszoperias could function as the primary organizational unit within a system of representation in fisheries management decision-making. Local maszoperias could subsequently form regional organizations that could be involved at the national level. He expects that the new fisheries act will make such a solution possible and even encourage it.

Given the fact that today maszoperias are only represented in the history books, one may ask what the conditions are for them to reemerge. How likely is it that they will gain support within fishing communities? Before one can start to answer such questions, we need to describe what these organizations were and how they worked when they still served as the institutional structure of Polish fishing communities.

The Maszoperias⁷

Origin: The maszoperias go way back. Their first mentioning is in a chronicle of the town Hel dated 1450 (Ruhle, 1929). Later they are identified in other communities along the Hel peninsula and in other areas along the Baltic coast. Their origin and particular organizational form stemmed from the rights to sections of water territory granted to village administrators, individual or groups of fishermen or to the church (who would rent the ground to fishermen). In the middle ages the fishery was regulated by a law created by Pomeranian Dukes (Jagow, 1915). In 1592 fishing by individuals was banned, and fishermen were advised to form maszoperias with relatives, neighbors and friends.

By the end of the seventeenth century there were six maszoperias at Hel. Later they spread and by the end of the nineteenth century there were 53 maszoperias in 14 communities along the Hel peninsula and, on the mid coast as far west as Leba, and in the Puck Bay.⁸ Their growth is partly explained by the lifting in 1884 of legal restrictions on access to water. Until then private ownership reigned on the fishing grounds. When open access was introduced and fishermen were released from payment of a net tax, the maszoperias flourished. They became involved in various fisheries, such as salmon, eel, sprat and herring. Usually one maszoperia would specialize on one species. Fishermen would therefore join several maszoperias throughout the year depending on the fishing season. In 1921 there were 43

maszoperias in five villages on the Hel peninsula. All operated in the eel fishery. Twenty seven maszoperias participated in the sprat fishery, and twenty in the salmon fishery. The maszoperias re-established every year. In some instances, they were formed whenever a group of fishermen were able to pool enough gear. This happened most often in communities where fisheries were less important. Once a maszoperia was established its rules and rights had to be respected. If there were no maszoperias, fishermen could go by themselves.

Membership: The maszoperias were comprised of owners of nets, fishermen and apprentices, involving also family and other community members as helpers. Sometimes they recruited participants from neighboring villages as well. Participants were all named "maszops". The authorized user of water territory occupied the most important role. He usually owned the net or seine and was elected skipper, a position that usually would be inherited from father to son. Thus, the maszoperias would be connected to the same families over generations. To be a member of a fishing family meant to be a member of a certain maszoperia. This practice lasted well into the modern age. The maszoperia usually were called by the name of the first skipper or the name of a specific fishing ground.

Particularly labor consuming was the beach seine fishery. Then, the number of members could reach thirty persons. The average size of a maszoperia had a core of 12 - 15 fishermen. Extra helpers were recruited when needed, for instance when hauling. Membership was generally very stable. To stay with the

same maszoperia throughout one's lifetime was normal. Trade of fish was done by members of the maszoperia. Gdansk and Puck were the main markets, and the income was divided among all members of the maszoperia. A maszoperia employed several boats, depending on how large the area each maszoperia had at its disposal. Boats and gear were individually owned and marked. Each family had a basic symbol, with small additions to the main form identifying the particular family member. (Batorowicz (1971:179) mentions that in one community, Karwia, boats had been common property for many years.) Fishermen were obligated to bring their own nets. These nets were tied together with those of other fishermen to form a larger net, seine or trap.

Territorial distribution: Each mazoperias had its own territory ("szted") along the beach and further out (see map). Internally, each vessel was allocated its own space - "szted" - by the maszoperia. As it was well known that some grounds produced more fish than others, the maszoperia would practice a rotation system. If there were several maszoperias within one community, there would be a rotation system between them as well. Figure 1 shows how the system worked in the village of Kuznica.

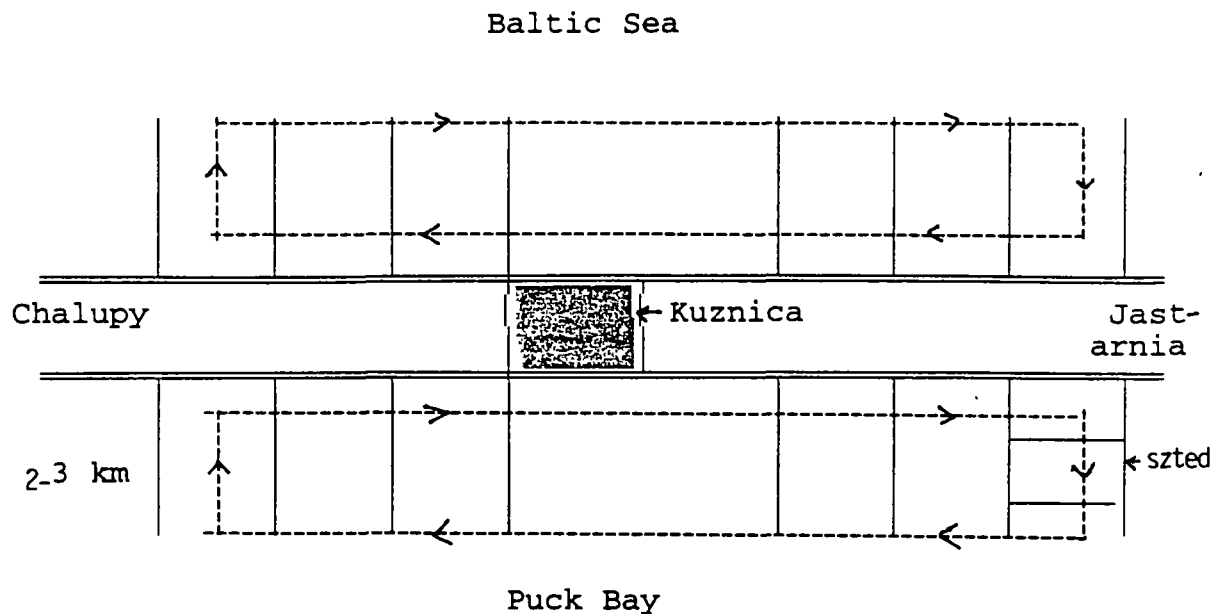


Figure 1: Area Rotation system

The figure depicts the rotation system for the eel fishery. The village sea territory is bordering with neighboring villages, Chalupy and Jastarnia. The maszoperias organized the fishery both on the sea- or the bay side. The fishery shifted from bay to coast depending on the season. In both cases to ensure equal opportunity boats would circulate from fishing ground to fishing ground" in a coordinated fashion. The borders of the "szted" was defined by markers ashore such as roads crossings, houses, observation towers, hills and the like. The "szted" was often named after famous skippers, accidents that has occurred there, or bottom formations. A fisherman was forbidden to switch from one maszoperia to another during the same season. The catch was also shared equally between participating boats. The only

exception from these rules was in Hel village. Here the allocation of fishing territory was decided by an annual lottery.

The fisherman Benjamin Struk from Chalupy remembers that in the 1950's in his village there were two maszoperias. One would employ the east shore and the other the west shore. Next year they shifted. Internally, a boat was not allowed to return to the same "szted" as it had occupied the last time. Every man brought one line. The total catch was divided equally within the boat crew, not between boats within the maszoperia. Benjamin Struk also recalls that regulatory principles differed from species to species. In the salmon drift net fishery "the-first-come-first-serve" principle was applied on the fishing grounds. For salmon only one boat was used while other members of the maszoperias waited, watching from ashore. They all shared the catch and supplied a net marked with their personal sign. The fish was sold to a state company.

The skipper role: According to Struk, the skipper of the maszoperia was elected in a meeting of all the boat skippers. Usually, the oldest and most experienced were chosen. To fish on the sea side was particularly risky. The weather conditions were discussed among the maszoperia members, but the skipper had the last word whether they should go out or not. Then everyone was committed to join. Therefore, the skipper had to be trustworthy. The skipper ensured that norms were adhered to, for instance that the gear was set according to rules. He had the authority to remove people who did not do their job. He also decided on which

boats young recruits should be placed on. As a rule the newcomer was assigned to the most experienced boat skipper.

To plan for the next season the skipper would called a meeting. Here, members signed up, new members were admitted, and plans for the operation of the fishery discussed. They also decided if a certain fishing grounds should rest because of over-fishing, and how much gear every participant - maszop - should bring. The skipper would direct the fishing operations at sea when such a function was needed. Furthermore, he spoke on behalf of the maszoperia in interaction with local government and other maszoperias' skippers on matters concerning the whole community and the organization of the fishery, such as division of sea space. The skipper could hold his position for decades. Only in Hel village was he elected every year, and then among the most experienced fishermen.

Organizing principles: There is no record of serious conflicts between villages as to the distribution of sea territory. The regulated territory stretched 2-3 km out from the beach. Further out the fishery was free. The maszoperia system rested on certain institutional principles that remained more or less unchanged up through the centuries. While the detailed rules could vary from community to community, Batorowicz (1971) lists three basic rules that was generally applied:

- a) The right of every fisherman to work individually or with a group in the coastal zone within the boundaries of each settlement.

- b) Equal contribution in both gear and work of each fisherman in collective fishing and therefore equal shares in the catch profits.
- c) The right of sons of maszoperia members to participate in fishing according to the established terms.

A young recruit was exempted from bringing gear: He was therefore only be entitled to half a share. To be accepted as a full member of the maszoperia was to be regarded as a grown man. That usually happened after military service. Fisher widows received a full "part", while women and children participating in the hauling of nets were granted a quarter of a full share - a "mandel". Women were not permitted to become a full member. The boat itself was entitled to one "part". The priest always received the largest salmon caught, the teacher the second largest. Sick and retired fishermen would also receive a share. Any community member who brought their basket down to the water front when fishermen landed would get fish. No one should have to go hungry.

Community embeddedness: While the maszoperias were voluntary organizations, most fishermen on the Hel peninsula were members. As Batorowicz (1971: 177) notes, "any fisherman not belonging to the fishing co-operative (i.e. maszoperia - our add.) suffered serious financial losses and was also outside the normal run of life in the local society." The role of the maszoperia in the community depended on how important the fishing industry was. The more fishermen in the community, the greater the need for a coordinated fishery. Hence, also the number of maszoperias and

the detailed division of fishing space.

The functions of the Maszoperia could vary from place to place but in general they were multipurpose. Cooperation at sea and the allocation of fishing space were only two of several tasks. Mutual aid to fishermen's families during emergency was part of their social role. Widows of fishermen and elderly people could draw on their benefits, often over periods of many years. The maszoperias were also be employed in regular community work such as road clearance, felling of trees, supplying wood for the school. In the middle-ages they also formed a para-military unit.

The maszoperias formed a close social group that exercised social responsibility at a level that was crucial not only to social order at sea but also on land. As such, they were well regarded by the authorities who accepted the rules fishermen collectively had worked out pertaining to the exploitation of the coastal zone. Thus, the maszoperias were a crucial element in the socio-economic fabric of the community.

Modern age: The Maszoperias existed more or less unaffected until after World War 2. Then, changes in their structuring appeared. For instance, the traditional rule that members should bring boat or gear was eased. This opened up for a a wage work relationship within the maszoperia, thus altering their egalitarian structure. Those employed without gear would receive half a "part", and were generally unstable. By 1950 nearly one third of all fishermen on the Hel Peninsula had status as worker-fishermen. This change was partly related to the introduction of the cutter fishery that speeded up in the 1950 as a consequence of the government's

ambition to modernize the fishery. The cutters changed the nature of the fishery, as only few of them maintained some form of cooperation. Batorowicz (1971) also observed that a new socio-economic elite emerged in fishing communities along the peninsula. The traditional egalitarian structure eroded, the traditional role of the skipper lost its force, causing more social conflicts within the community. Cutters usually fished in the open sea where space was plentiful. Hence, the need for a detailed coordination of fishing operations as provided by the *maszoperias* was not as urgent. Interestingly, while the cutter technology implied a different kind of organization, the name "maszoperia" was often applied. However, the cutter *maszoperias* were stripped of most of the social obligations that traditionally characterized the *maszoperias*. Often they were owned by a group of fishermen who brought their own gear. Also, the cutter was owned by one person only. In the off-season cutter fishermen frequently participated in *maszoperia* eel fishing. However, in 1954, this shifting was forbidden.

Demise: To work on a cutter was much more economically attractive for young people. For the same reason many of them also favored a job in the deep sea fishery. Increasingly, the *maszoperia* artisanal fishery became employment only for older fishermen. "The failing interest in box-trap fishing and the fewer men using these, result in the weakening of the once-efficient organization of collective exploitation of the sea", Batorowicz (1971:180) noted. Neither was the old principle of equal sharing of profits adhered to by those *maszoperias* still working. Likewise, the

tradition of skipper families was severed, and many preferred to fish outside the maszoperias. Further, their role as community welfare institutions weakened. Maszoperias was last registered in 1962. Then Jastarnia had ten eel and seven sprat maszoperias, Kuznica had seven and four, while Chalupy had three and two. Today, there are no maszoperias left. However, some of its organizing principles are still applied. For instance, the system of rotation - but now among individual fishermen - is in use in Kuznica. Benjamin Struk finds little interest for the artisanal fishery among young people in his village. Those that settle at home prefer the cutters, where salaries are higher.

External pressure: The modernization of the Polish fishing industry is partly a story of how traditional communal organizations were replaced by a more atomistic and stratified socio-economic structure. This started in the early 1950's when Poland adopted the industrial model in fishing and fishing processing: The process not only introduced new technologies but also new organizational forms: large scale state corporations and state sponsored co-operatives. From then on, the private artisanal fishery was bound to become marginalised.

The fishery is still important along the Baltic coast, and communities on the Hel peninsula are no exception. But the fishery has come under pressure. The natural beauty of the coastline attracts an increasing number of tourists, which will provide new jobs but may also become a competitor to the near-shore artisanal fishery. Fishermen still feel that they have particular rights to use the water. Batorowicz (1971:181)

observed that people consider "the coastal waters to be the property of the village and that each of them has the right to exploit them.." Here lies a future source of conflict of interest. In the Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia they are concerned that tourism should be developed so as to provide an alternative source of income for artisanal fishermen. Their boats could well be used for tourism in the off season. The fisherman Benjamin Struk shares this view, but he thinks that first the pollution problem in the Bay must be solved. As to a possible future for the maszoperias, he is more pessimistic. His skepticism has nothing to do with organization as such, but the marginal role of the artisanal fishery. Today, it attract mostly retired fishermen who needs to supplement a low pension.

Discussion

The recent transformation to a market economy has not reversed the trend towards further differentiation at the local level. Communal systems are not being restored. After communism, collective action and institutions have minimal legitimacy at the grass root level. Rather, capitalism is taken quite literally. "Everyone for himself" has become an ideology underpinning fishing activity, as so much else in post-communist Poland, particularly within the young generation. However, there are those who clearly see the need for user-organizations. "Today we are too divided to have any influence", says the fisherman Franciszek Necel from Wladyslawowo.

At the port level, fishermen have a little bargaining power. The state processing plants and cooperatives have met increasing competition from private buyers, but they still own the harbor and can determine the conditions for its use. The financing of the harbor infrastructure has become a constant quarrel between fishermen and processors after privatization. Recently, some fishermen did try to establish an organization in on fishing village but the state plant as owner of the harbor effectively opposed it.

The demand for some organization representing fishermen at the port level was voiced by a fisherman from Hel, Jacek Schomburg, at a recent conference on the future of Polish fisheries:

"I appeal to all fishermen to create one strong organization which can unite all fishermen and whose purpose should be to establish minimal prices of fish in every port along the Polish coast so that the fishermen should know how much he receives for every fish caught. Each fisherman should by obligation become a member of such organization and respect negotiated prices. At the moment the fishermen have no knowledge about prices and a lot of fishermen reduce them freely. As a result of this, a lot of us have big trouble selling our catch even for minimal prices. It has happened that nobody even wanted to take the fish for free."⁹

The leader of the Private Sea Fisher's Association in Gdynia,

Stefan Richert, shares this view, but he is pessimistic as to the likelihood that the ordinary fisher will respond. Fishers are poor and they regard a membership fee as an expense they cannot afford, particularly when they recognize that what they receive in return for their membership is uncertain. The post-war interest organizations have a more restricted social role than the traditional maszoperias. They were primarily set to provide a two way channel between industry and government.

To be effectively represented in fisheries management, users need organization. But as Stefan Richert points out, fishermen are passive. He feels that there is a free rider problem: "Fishermen benefit from our work regardless of whether they are members or not." The problem his organization is facing is symptomatic of a social system where solidarity and trust is eroded: Membership rests on calculation only. The dilemma however, is that in order to work effectively, organizations must have a committed and enthusiastic membership, but to obtain such a support, the organization must prove that it can deliver. So the question is, at which end does one start?

Ireneuz Wojcek who works with the Sea Fisheries Institute and is a member of the committee drawing the new fisheries act, has doubts regarding a central government initiative: "Fishermen cannot be organized from the top down, as was typical during the communist regime. Rather, they must be involved from the bottom up." His view on fisheries co-management is hardly representative of government officials. He argues:

"For bureaucrats, the idea of decentralization does not come naturally. For bureaucrats that are used to the old regime, such a proposal sounds odd. It is not within their mentality. In the initial stage of the legal reform process, the committee wanted delegation of allocation decision making to fishermen's organizations to be written into the law, but when we discussed the language, the government lawyers had reservations."

The idea of a bottom up revival of the maszoperia institution, in some form or other, has been advanced, if not officially so at least informally. A problem is that in the old days the maszoperias were family based. Now 80 to 90 percent of the fishery is not. When users and government officials alike tend to employ the concept of maszoperia in rather flexible ways, i.e. to characterize most kinds cooperation among fishermen, it has to do with its positive connotations. The maszoperia is among the few collective institutions in fisheries that are not identified with the communist regime, as for instance is the case with cooperatives in Eastern European countries (Marciniak and Jentoft, 1992). The concept is not corrupted in the minds of ordinary fishermen, even if it stands out as a contradiction to the prevailing free-market ideology. Fishermen speak proudly of the maszoperias. They are part of the Cashubian cultural tradition that is now being revived. The history of the maszoperia is prominently displayed in the Hel fisheries museum, and a famous restaurant in Hel bears its name!

Privatization within the fishing industry has led to the

externalization of social functions: Previously, state and cooperative plants provided various social services such as medical care, housing, pension plans, education. (Jentoft and Marciniak, 1991). In western countries, with obvious variations, these services are provided by the welfare state. In Poland, a fiscal crisis prevents the state from assuming such a role. Therefore, privatization has created a void at the village level that the maszoperias in the traditional society supplied. The confusion over whose responsibility it is to run the harbor infrastructure is another example of this. Thus, when some people in Polish fisheries argue that the Maszoperias should be reborn, it is not just for nostalgic reasons. Someone must provide their traditional services. If not the government or industrial fish companies, then why not an institution like the maszoperias?

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Notes

1. This is the Szkuner Fishery and Fishing Service Enterprise located in Wladyslawowo. Statistics presented here are drawn from official sources such as "Studia i materialy, Seria E. numer 50. Gospodarka Rybna w Latach 199-92, published by the Sea Fisheries Institute (MIR) in Gdynia.

2. According to estimations of Stefan Richert who is the leader of the Private Sea Fisher's Association.

3. Today the Cashubian region stretches from the Baltic Sea north west of Gdansk about 80 km south. In previous centuries Cashubia covered a much larger area. It became part of Poland after World War 1. Cashubian is a separate language and the population comprises around 300 000. During communism the language was banned in schools, and today it is mostly spoken among elderly people. Efforts by Cashubians to promote their culture were met with suspicion by government. After 1989, the attitude changed and there is a growing awareness of the value of sustaining this heritage. Now, Cashubian language and culture are taught in schools, it is addressed in media, and Cashubian literature is published. A source of information is the "Multicultural Baltic Region" - Part 2, The Baltic University, 1994. The Hel peninsula, where we gathered most of the data, used to be settled only by Cashubians. Today the population is mixed, sometimes creating tensions in local politics.

4. The "Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea and the Belts" was signed in Gdansk in 1973.

5. Now members must pay their fee out of their own pocket, while before 1989, when private sales of fish outside the official channels (state plants and coops), the fee was automatically deducted from the value of the catch when landed.

6. Basically, the deep sea fleet has only one fishing ground left, the Okhotsk sea.

7. In this section we draw heavily on Batorowicz (1971). He describes the Maszoperias as fishing co-operatives, but they were established long before the Rochdale pioneers invented the term. The system was also explained in detail, to us by several people, among them Mirosław Kuklik the director at the fisheries museum at Hel and Benjamin Struk, a fisherman from the village Chalupy Struk who used to be a member of a of a maszoperia in his younger days. We are grateful to both of them.

8. According to Batorowicz (1971) similar organizations existed along the whole southern Baltic, for instance on the coasts of Latvia, Estonia and Finland. However, they were not as closely connected with a specific sea territory as in the Cashubian region to which the Hel peninsula belongs.

9. His speech (here in our translation) is printed in the proceedings from Sejmik Rybacki (Fishermen Parliament) Wladyslawowo, May 6-7 1993 "Baltic Fisheries as an element of people's existence in the Cashubian Region." Institute of Fisheries (Morski Instytut Rybacki), Gdynia.

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