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Captured and Converting: The Institutionalisation of
Small Boat Fishing and the Demise of Fisher Self-Management¹

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Introduction

The Atlantic Canadian fisheries are currently in the convulsions of yet another socio-economic crisis. While not the only factor, tremendous expansions in the capacity to catch and to process marine resources, particularly since the declaration of the 200 mile economic management zone, has precipitated over-exploitation of resources and, possibly, ecological/environmental damage resulting in dramatic declines in groundfish stocks. This situation has left many small boat and industrial vessel fishers as well as fish companies without access to sufficient resources. Consequently, boats and plants now lie idle for lengthy portions of the year, with increasing numbers of catching and processing operations throughout Atlantic Canada finding themselves unable to continue in the industry.

As possessors of highly capitalised, specialised fishing capacity and its accompanying debt, numerous small boat captains/owners face the prospects of either marginal incomes or creditor repossession. There are few buyers for idled capacity, although a limited market does exist for selected fishing licenses. Many fisheries dependent communities are experiencing levels of un-employment and under-employment of such magnitude that their futures, as anything more than retirement villages, are being placed in jeopardy (Government of Canada 1989).

It is our contention that, in no small measure, this crisis has been facilitated and expedited by a transformation in the approach to and in the way of fishing within the small boat, owner/operator sector, a transformation highlighted by the widespread adoption of industrial fishing practices and their associated organisational forms and world views. In short, the brand of utilitarian rationality particular to industrial capitalist market systems is being woven systematically into the socio-economic fabric of the Atlantic Canadian small boat fishery and its communities.

While the majority of Eastern Canadian small boat fishers have been integrated in the respective stages of a developing capitalist industrial market and class systems at the level of exchange, this sector of the fishing industry ordinarily engaged in a livelihood rather than in an accumulation fishery. That is, for the past century, most persons who have fished from the hundreds of Atlantic harbours have done so in order to satisfy their basic material and social requirements of life. Moreover, they recognised and expressed, in their behaviour more so than in their words, the necessity to fish in a manner which did not

jeopardise the livelihood needs of others and which did not inhibit access to livelihoods for others.

Equipped with more or less the same technical ability and know-how, socio-economic distinctions between small boat fishers within harbours arose situationally rather than substantively, expressing differences in factors such as work motivation, luck and risk taking. Rarely would such distinctions be derived from circumstances that violated the livelihood interests of others.² This is apparent in the ways that within harbour fisher relations as well as community social dynamics were structured (Faris 1972, Wadel 1969, Acheson 1981, Andersen 1979, Davis 1984, McCay and Acheson 1987, and Pinkerton 1989).

The last twenty five years have seen considerable pressure brought to bear on these rationalities of collective references and livelihood-targeted commercial fishing: see (Sinclair 1985).³ The ascendancy of competitive utilitarian rationality among/between fishers and in coastal communities is one

² 1. When distinctions did occur they could be accounted for by such factors as the combination of agricultural or forestry pursuits concomitant with fishing, by ethnic, religious and kinship alliances and rivalries, and finally by differential access to advanced education and professional life. Even here, the sense of collective interests and collective destinies enveloped the small boat fisher approach to and organisation of fishing.

³ These pressures are situated in several areas. Federal and provincial government fisheries management and industrial development policies which have brought higher levels of centralized planning, financing and enforcement to the communities. Significant changes in industry structure have paralleled the earlier dramatic movement away from salt fish towards fresh and fresh-frozen fillets resulting in specialized forms of catching and processing according to advanced marketing strategies. Rural coastal communities have become more immersed in urban exchange and culture. Physical linkages made available by recently improved highways and telecommunications have been complimented by such cultural forces as the commodification of rural coastal areas for urban recreation, by the explicit bureaucratic ethos manifest in the expansion of all levels of consolidated schooling and by the highly centralized mass media which remains a key vehicle for facilitating elements of the urban dominant ideology. Finally, technological changes in fishing methods have afforded fishers greater range in grounds, increased capacity and considerably shorter and simpler career apprenticeships.

consequence of these changes. Competitive utilitarian rationality has become predominant in fisher decisions to invest in expanded capacity and to specialise in mass harvesting approaches to resource exploitation; thereby, expediting intra-occupational and intra-community differentiation and the current resource crisis (Davis 1990, Government of Canada 1976, 1983, 1989, Sinclair 1983, 1985, and Thiessen and Davis 1988).

In order to develop this argument of a transition to competitive utilitarian rationality in the small boat fishery this essay opens with a review and discussion of evidence concerning small boat fisher self-management practice in Nova Scotia. Our focus here is on cultural and organisational qualities that informed the practice and capacity of small boat fishers to self-manage so-called "common property" ocean resources. This is followed by a brief presentation of recent developments concerning the professionalisation and institutionalisation of small boat fishing. Here an emphasis is placed on fisher-government relations, particularly as these have facilitated the institutionalisation of a new phase in small boat fishing; thereby, cultivating competitive utilitarian rationality as the dominant world view among small boat fishers. Data from a recent study of Nova Scotian Atlantic coast small boat fishers is presented next for the purpose of documenting and illustrating the rise of competitive utilitarian rationality and its erosive impact on the capacity of small boat fishers to self-manage. The essay closes with a discussion of the implications for the future of these fishers should conditions not change. In addition we outline some policy alternatives that have the potential to empower small boat fishers with self-management abilities.

Culture and Self-Management Among Nova Scotian Small Boat Fishers

Many, if not most, of the Nova Scotian small boat fishers with whom we have worked have insisted that they are independent workers and are particularly attached to fishing as a livelihood since it allows them to be their own boss. Indeed, this point of view is rooted in the concrete qualities of fisher control over many aspects of their day-to-day work lives. For instance, each small boat fishing captain largely determines, on a daily basis, the pace and organization of their fishing activities.⁴

⁴ The view of self-styled independence is also shaped by comparisons elsewhere. In the context of the century old pattern of out-migration from Eastern Canada, the decision to fish has always been taken in the face of its usual alternative of leaving one's native community to work for others elsewhere. Historic patterns of out-migration in most fishing communities are such

This independent quality of small boat fishers has been interpreted as a variant of rugged individualism and has been interpreted as a major contributing factor to many of the problems currently facing the Atlantic Canadian fisheries - especially for those problems arising out of the lack of support for effective, broadly-based representative organisations. Accordingly, the reputed individualism of small boat fishers has been interpreted as a primary contributing factor to the hyper-competitiveness between fishers which, in turn, has resulted in the pillage of ocean resources. Such an interpretation leads one to conclude that these individualistic fishers are an anarchistic anachronism in this era of long term strategising as embodied in large scale industry, government and corporations.⁵ This leads some to the inescapable conclusion that small boat fishers are not only the makers of their own misery as they prove themselves unable either to forestall or to respond to the industry-wide crisis, but, they are the enemies of the resource itself (Government of Canada 1976, 1982, 1989).

Yet, essential qualities of the character of life in both small boat fishing and coastal communities are ignored by this view. The fishers' rugged individualism is set within occupational, familial and community social contexts. Moreover, this generation of fishers, their families and communities is the current representation of as many as seven generations of continuous participants in the fisheries. The livelihood and lives of many of these fishers continue in exactly the same places as those of their forbearers (Davis, 1990).

that fishing as - a "vocation" might be considered as somewhat individualistic from the very outset since its prosecution flies in the face of the prevailing logic of the majority of one's own age cohort who have already departed once their schooling is finished. This is not to argue that people never fall into fishing. They do; however, it is a greater error to assume that traditional fishers have not made choices to fish as opposed to doing other things. An important part of the choice itself is reflected in the sense of self-control available in the fishery.

⁵ This driven character of the rugged individualist borrows a great deal from the popular culture of another age that once portrayed the very rich and greedy in a similar light. As the metaphor is applied today, the victim now is not the economy as it was ruined by turn of the century robber barons, but the coastal environment endangered by these neo-rugged individualists.

These social and historical facts have profound consequences for the expression of individualism, self-interest and competition. After all, fishers work in a social and personal context which controls individual action and its potential to threaten and damage all livelihoods. In fact, the personal and intimate qualities of life in coastal communities form the foundation of the organisation, rules of conduct and solidarities that define the culture of small boat fishing.

In the anthropological sense, culture is understood commonly as the way of life particular to a society or a community of people, a way of life as in the patterns of organization, world view, beliefs, values, behaviour, identity, attachment and the like -characteristic of human societies and communities through time. Culture is a key dynamic quality of the human condition in so far as it provides people with the social, organisational, symbolic and psychological means and resources necessary to satisfy the requirements of many of the pursuits that people enter into including that of making a living. Moreover, culture provides humans with the creative capacity to develop and change as conditions and needs alter. Culture is the crucible within which and through which people work out and understand their lives. As such, each culture contains and expresses a rationality, a logic, a sensibility keyed to the material and social conditions within and from which it has developed. It is the quality that resides at the heart of peoples' sense of who they are, of what they are about, and of what constitutes meaning in life (Sider 1986, Williams 1981).

The dynamic of culture in small communities reflects both internal and external dimensions of communal stability and change. Like all communities, coastal communities socialize their young according to what they have come to expect as normal behaviour and likewise create new behaviours. These changes are more apparent when the communities become enmeshed in social, economic and political relations with external institutions and forces. Due to the respective power of urban mores as opposed to rural values and due to patterns of unequal exchange, these economic relations have generally been experienced as oppressive for rural communities.

For instance, rural settings produce the primary products that fuel, both as food and raw materials, the furnaces of industrial and urban life. But, primary producers such as fishers, farmers and woodland workers have a history of receiving the meanest and least secure income benefits in these same industrial societies. Only when commodity producers are organized, empowered politically, or dealing with scarce resources do they realize levels of income subsidisation commensurate with workers in other sectors. Moreover, in an

urban-industrial dominated society, rural occupations and industries receive proportionately little by way of educational, research and development support. Indeed, most rural livelihoods undertaken at the family level are viewed as occupations of last resort; that is, occupations to be entered only when there are few alternatives available and as a consequence of a failure to achieve a good education.⁶

The character and history of conditions such as these are known and experienced intimately in Nova Scotian small communities. After all, as indicated above, most families have been decimated by generations of outmigration to the extent that mothers and fathers anticipate that their children will head down the road and make their lives in another, more than likely urban-industrial, place. Indeed, many prepare their children for this eventuality by encouraging the acquisition of educational credentials and by discouraging entry into primary occupations. These people know their history; they know material uncertainty. They know that outsiders become interested in them only when something is wanted (e.g., cottage lots, resources, folk tales, information); they know that they are thought of as hicks, simple, unsophisticated and poorly educated people; they know that big government, big business, and big organisations do not understand and attach little significance to their way of life; they know that they must rely on their own resources and ways of doing things if they are to get on in life. Consequently, they are suspicious of outsiders and institutions. Conversely, they are trusting of family, friends, familiars and community-rooted ways of doing things (Davis, D. 1990, Porter 1983).

Rural community culture is much more than simply an artifact or reaction to exploitation and oppression by outsiders. The predominance of family and familiarity in small communities colours all socio-economic relations. This is embodied in small boat fishing communities by an ethos of co-operative self-reliance. That is, in becoming fishers, each individual learns that he or she must acquire and display the multi-faceted skills of navigation, gear design and handling, knowledge of the fishing ground, carpentry, engine mechanics and the like. Self-reliance is also expressed by co-operative relations among fishers working at the same wharf and from the same harbour. This is evident in practices ranging from sharing bait to assistance with repairs to another person's gear when injury or sickness prohibits them from earning a living.

⁶ It is our contention that when educational and scientific support is given to primary production it occurs at the high end; that is it supports the efforts of the corporate sector in their consolidation of farming, fishing and forestry.

Co-operative self-reliance is most apparent in the informal rules of conduct that govern fishing practices. Central to all the rules is the principle that no individual fisher has the prerogative to fish in a way that will impede or damage the ability of other fishers to make a living. So, there are rules governing the conditions under which one fisher may touch another's gear. There are understandings about who fishes where and with what types of gear. One rule of conduct specifies that if a person has set their gear inadvertently on top of yours, you can move or otherwise clear their gear; but, it must be done in a way that minimizes damage. If, on the other hand, the interference was intentional, you are free from restraint in removing the offending gear. Similarly, if a particular fishing practice is jeopardising a fishery and livelihoods, those employing them will be subject to sanctions ranging from exclusion from co-operative arrangements to assaults on gear and vessels. A clear illustration of how this type of culture informs fishing practice is evident whenever persons not sharing local mores fish along side already established fishers. The sense of violation become obvious in the response that people make to the invasion of their territory. In short, while the culture of small boat fishing underscores independence and self-reliance, it does so while recognizing the necessity of co-operation, mutual assistance and consensual decision-making.

These informal rules of conduct and co-operation constitute an internal fisheries management system. This system inhibits competitive, potentially rapacious, fishing by regulating practices threatening to the livelihood of most fishers. These practices and the associated way of life constitute a culture of consideration (MacInnes 1989).

The culture of small boat fishers is most directly embodied in co-operative self-reliance. It is this quality that has enabled small boat fishers to sustain their communities, thus far, as settings within which viable, satisfying lives are realized. It is this quality that has provided coastal communities with the where-with-all to survive, at least until now.

Over the last twenty five years, a number of forces, most especially federal government fisheries management initiatives and development policies, have gone a long way to discredit fisher community culture. Management policies such as limited entry licensing and development policies like low-interest boat loans have reduced the importance of co-operative self-reliance. Increasingly, the key to prosperity has become successful acquisition of individual licenses or expanded fishing capacity.

Debt servicing and operating expenses have become prime factors driving the small boat fishery. As a result, the rugged individualist fisher is removed from occupational and community solidarities. Co-operation has little relevance for a fisher who must maximize his or her catch to ensure a livelihood.

Professionalising Small Boat Fishers

Notably, the rise of competitive utilitarian rationality among small boat fishers is coupled with the push to professionalise small boat fishing. In Canada, national surveys over the last three decades concerning the socio-economic status of occupations have reported fishing consistently in the bottom quarter of the occupational status system (Pineo and Porter 1967, Pineo, Porter and McRoberts 1977, and Blishen, Carroll and Moore 1987). Low in status, fishing and fish processing occupations are thought of as minimal skill pursuits, jobs done in the main by persons with a poor formal education and few alternatives.

While some of these perceptions persist, considerable resources have been targeted upon 'professionalising' fishing occupations, especially fishing itself. In large measure, professionalisation of fishing has been an objective of federal government development policy predicated on the notion that the small boat fishery must be made economically sensible. Economic sensibility, in turn, is taken to mean consistent in organisation and performance with industrial capitalist market-driven dynamics. That is, small boat fishers would become professional once their livelihoods were derived from an organisation of production and occupational relations embodying a small business ethos as well as the efficiencies of economic competition (Government of Canada 1976, 1983, Government of Nova Scotia, various years).

To this end, the federal and provincial governments initiated training programmes, beginning in the mid-seventies, in areas such as engine repair, net mending, navigation, - electronics, accountancy, small business operations, and taxation/fiscal planning. These courses were designed for delivery within coastal communities during the winter months. While providing useful information, these programmes were also intended to seed and nurture the ethos of approaching fishing as a small business enterprise rather than simply as a way to make a living. The model for development was predicated on achieving some semblance of the industrial model of work, a forty hour week accomplished by certified personnel over a full year in the context of small business operations. It was also hoped that some of these so called fishing skills might be transferred to other sectors of the economy should people choose to leave the

industry. At the same time unemployment insurance was extended to the fishery on the assumption that fishing would become more of a full-time pursuit. The official recognition of its entrepreneurial character was evident by federal governmental treatment of taxation and provincial governmental insistence that with respect to collective bargaining rights fishing be considered legally as a "small business" enterprise. Inherent in the new ethos promoted by governmental programmes was the rationality of competitive utilitarian individualism. This ethos was especially clear in a number of presumptions, namely; that business enterprises are necessarily locked in competition with each other in their pursuit of scarce economically valuable goods; that success is measured by the ability of individual enterprises to maximise their portion of available wealth; and that future economic success in the fishery is contingent upon the ability of fishers to approach their occupation as professional small business operators.

Wedded to this aspect of government industrial development policy were access and participation regulation and management measures. For instance, throughout the late sixties and seventies various government-fisher committees were struck by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) with a mandate to recommend terms and conditions of fisher access to participation. Out of these meetings came the bonafide fisher designation, reserving primary access to participants whom derived a substantial portion of their yearly income from fishing. These were the professional small boat fishers. Part-time, often seasonal participants in specific fisheries such as lobster fishing were at first systematically constrained through special conditions such as the amount of gear they were permitted to fish. Eventually, many part-timers were eliminated through the simple device of the DFO refusing to issue the necessary licenses to those without bonafide status (Davis and Thiessen 1988 and MacDonald 1984).

Of singular importance in this illustration is the setting within which decisions and recommendations were developed - a DFO constituted formal committee composed of fishers from various sectors, DFO policy and science officials as well as others of expert and vested interest status including representatives of fishers' organisations such as co-operatives, associations and unions. These committees have since evolved into various management consultative mechanisms fully incorporated within the DFO and its policy formation and implementation processes (Government of Canada 1985, 1988, 1989). Of course, fisher participation in the committees was and remains legitimated by the notion that these bodies constitute the basis whereby DFO consults directly with industry professionals before designing and implementing policy. As a stage in professionalising the

occupation of commercial fishing, these committees formalise consultative processes and dynamics within institutional settings invented for this purpose, institutional settings foreign to most small boat fishers and their communities.

Moreover, representation in these institutional settings was and remains contingent upon bonafide fishers nominating or electing peers from among categories of participants largely specified by DFO, categories in the main reflecting geographical location and sector participation, meaning gear fished coupled with location factors (inshore, midshore and offshore) and business characteristics (e.g., corporation, independent fisher). Sector representation was, from the outset, designated as a key element of fisher participation in a consultative mechanism. From the DFO point of view, the industry is composed of different groups defined by particular technologies and scale differences that compete for the resource and that are, as a result, often in conflict with one and another. This approach represented a large step in the direction of legitimating and concretising sector divisions, beside the existing differences between livelihood and accumulation approaches, as 'real' organisational elements in the fishery. In addition to being legitimated and concretised within the formal institutional setting, sector divisions have become definitive, as a result, of fisher frames of reference and categorical thinking about their industry. Not only is the participant a bonafide fisher, the participant is a bonafide, professional longline or gill net or lobster or drag net or crab or scallop fisher. These developments further facilitate fundamental transformations in the world view, behaviour and social organization of small boat fishers, transformations signifying the ascendancy of a competitive utilitarian rationality.

The derivation of representation on consultative committees, not to mention order among participants in the industry, provided impetus for federal and provincial fisheries departments to encourage independent, small boat fishers to assort themselves into organisations, organisations through which they could pursue their interests and assure themselves of a voice at government-industry councils. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s numerous organisations have arisen which purport to represent a body of independent small boat fishers. While most of these are associations organised along either geographical and/or sector participation lines (e.g., The Eastern Fishermen's Association, the Cape Breton Island Fishermen's Association, the Southwest Nova Scotia Inshore Longliner's Association and the like), several trade unions, particularly the Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU) and The Canadian Automobile Workers Union (CAW), have had the notable success in presenting themselves as representative voices (Clement 1986). The MFU, an organisation which arose

during the mid-seventies from the struggles of Northeast New Brunswick Acadian small boat fishers, styles itself as concerned exclusively with organising Maritime small boat fishers in order that they have necessary and effective leverage in shaping economic and occupational futures (Theriault and Williams 1986). Regardless of the organisational form of preference, the DFO insisted that fisher participation on its consultative bodies be representative, whether derived from special pan-fisher elections or interest group formations. Either way, the voices of small boat fishers had to be derived from formal organisational references and institutionalised processes, the only references and processes sensible to the DFO and other governmental-industry agencies. Indeed, the ability of small boat fishers to form themselves into such organisations was considered indicative of the extent to which participants had matured as professional, independent business operators. After all, to be professional is to recognise that your particular interests, within the crucible of industrial capitalist dynamics, are furthered by working through institutions that provide voice, especially necessary when other participants in the fishery are seen as competitive and antithetical to self's goals.

Central to the professionalisation and institutionalisation of small boat fishers are the government access and resource exploitation management initiatives such as limited entry licensing and quota allocations.⁷ Stock collapse in the late 1960s and early 1970s, created an industry crisis which compelled government to de-emphasise industrial development and focus upon the creation of stock and access management strategies. For the first time, the central problem of the industry was redefined as too much capacity uncontrollably pursuing too few fish. Consequently, the federal government developed policies intended to interface fishing effort with the biological capacity of stocks to bear specific rates of exploitation. Replacing the view that argued for the necessity to modernise through the adoption of new and better technologies was an econometric-biologically-grounded perspective that insisted the industry had too many fishers pursuing too few fish in a common property environment, resulting in the "tragedy of the commons" rapaciousness. The solution for this problem was believed to reside in the development of a more refined, sophisticated and comprehensive management and regulation regime that would limit and control access to marine resources through mechanisms such as licenses and quotas. With this change came a much greater

⁷ Indeed the government was able to insure that organisation proceeded along these lines by using the tariff resulting from government-arranged small boat "over the side" sales to foreign fleets as "organising" monies for fisher groups.

emphasis by government on 'policing' fish catching and processing activities in order to assure compliance with the new regime of regulations. By the late seventies, commitment to this approach of fisheries management had become thoroughly entrenched. Now the thrust of government policy was to regulate precisely the exploitative effort directed at marine resources by making participation in the specific fisheries with particular technologies contingent upon the annual provision of governmentally issued licenses. Entry into fisheries such as scallop, lobster, shrimp, snow crab as well as those employing mobile gears (seine and drag nets) is only possible today after obtaining the necessary government issued limited entry permits, commonly purchased from retiring fishermen for tens of thousands of dollars (Government of Canada 1989, MacDonald 1984). Added to the capital cost for a boat and fishing equipment, the licence 'investment' assures that new entrants begin with a debt load that can only be serviced through high volume catches and heavy exploitative pressure on ocean resources and environments. Indeed, a fishing strategy solely expressing the individual needs and goals of the captain/owner, over all other concerns, must come to the fore in such a set of circumstances. After all, it is the individual captain/owner who is professionalised, who benefits from and is targeted in government management and development programmes, and who must satisfy livelihood needs and enterprise costs. In fact, government management and development policy assures that the self-interested harvester upon which the policy is predicated comes to dominate the socio-economic profile of the fishery, thereby creating fishers as pirates (Davis 1990, Davis and Thiessen 1988, and Sinclair 1983).

Of course, many fishers, especially those middle-aged and younger, have done little to resist and much to accelerate the industrialisation/professionalisation process. As they have entered the fisheries as captains and enterprise owners, these participants have demanded the latest and the best in boats, engines, electronics and equipment. Fascination with purchasing new gadgets to make fishing easier has earned some the name "drug-store" fishers since the expense and variety of equipment they buy masks their scant experience in the fishery, and their limited knowledge of handling vessels, gear, grounds, weather, waves and all the remaining knowledge that cannot be obtained by off the shelf purchasing. Fuelled by promises of endless prosperity following the declaration of the 200 mile zone and buoyed by access to 'cheap' (low interest) money through provincial loan boards, fishers displayed an almost insatiable appetite for new capacity throughout the late seventies and early eighties. By the time caps were slammed into place in the mid-1980s the new fishing capacity and the debts it represented were in place and fishing, fishing at a place and with an avarice previously unseen in the Atlantic Canadian small boat fisheries

(Davis and Kasdan 1984). Competitive utilitarian rationality became well seeded and nurtured by these developments, developments that have placed the concerns and interests of individual small boat captain/owners front and centre in industry dynamics.

Government management programmes, particularly limited entry licensing, are imposing rules governing access and participation without regard for local-level conditions and practices. In the process, these initiatives are altering in fundamental ways the social topography of the fishing occupation. First and foremost in this process is the impact of government management programmes upon the social organisation of community- and familial-based fisheries within a culture of consideration and co-operative self-reliance.

In such fisheries key aspects of the decision-making processes are governed by an informal, locally-specific, system of rules worked out by the generations of fishers whom have exploited ocean resources from each particular harbour. These rules affect numerous areas of fishing activity. In many instances they define the parameters of harbour-specific fishing grounds; that is, the particular physical dimensions of what fishers from most harbours call our fishing ground. In addition, these rules regulate certain aspects of exploitative behaviour. For instance, they specify the types of fishing gear permissible (e.g., hook and line as opposed to drag net or large mesh gill nets). Often these rules stipulate who can fish the ground (the persons from "our" harbour) or what ground they should fish (fishing the shore contiguous with their land). They also spell out expected behaviour, e.g., you don't sell 'tinkers' (undersized lobsters), you don't touch another person's gear, and you don't interfere intentionally with another person's gear (i.e., set line or traps on top of someone else's, drag a net through set gear and so on).

Persons whom persistently transgress the rules suffer consequences ranging from warnings, through eye for an eye reprisals, to outright destruction of their capacity to fish. Regardless of reputation, economic worth or other measures of occupational success, individuals are expected to reflect in their words and deeds respect for these experientially-based and consensually-derived, local-level procedures. In effect, the rules constitute a fisher-generated access and use management system. As with the most management systems, this one fetters the expression of individualism by attaching conditions to participation, conditions which define the points at which 'rugged individualism' is subordinated to collective interest. This is particularly the case when the actions of individuals

jeopardise the ability of most to make their living from fishing (Davis 1984, McCay and Acheson 1987, Pinkerton 1989).

Limited entry licensing and other management programmes focus on controlling individual enterprises and their owners. This frame of reference is entirely different from and at odds with the familial/community context prevalent among fishing people. The definition and allocation of access and participation resources in terms of individual participants and enterprises assaults occupational and community solidarities. Increasingly the local-level, community-based social framework makes little difference to participation. The key now is for each individual to obtain the necessary permits and resources. Relations of occupational solidarity are irrelevant to whether or not a person obtains desired resources from government dispensaries. Here the social field is institutional, bureaucratic and individual, largely the antithesis of the familial and communal-based essence of the livelihood fishery. Success in this field of action demands skills and points of reference substantially different than those associated with getting along in pre-government access management era.

The successful fishers are increasingly those adept at pursuing personal objectives through bureaucratic systems. An individualised point of reference is now taking precedence over the community basis of occupational solidarity. That is, with economic and occupational outcomes becoming contingent upon access to state-controlled resources, fishers are adopting strategies that are necessarily self-focused – an orientation expressive of the rational, self-seeker policy makers always assumed was an inherent feature of these rugged individuals. In short, government management policies, designed on the premise that fishers were irresponsible, self-seekers and, thus, prone to over exploit ocean resources, have created the conditions necessary to fulfil their prophecy. With the basis of occupational and communal solidarities becoming irrelevant to economic outcomes, fishers, as professionalised and institutionally referenced individuals, increasingly look to government and government agents for resources, participatory licenses and problem solving.

The specific quality and character of these processes is underlined in the following presentation and discussion of Nova Scotian small boat captains opinions concerning self-management and government policies.

Recent Findings Illustrative of the Demise of Self-Management

As an aspect of a larger study examining the impact of public policy on small boat fishers, captains were asked their opinion regarding several features key to self-management practices and potentialities. The preliminary findings from the captains' responses are profiled in Table 1.⁸

Table 1 follows here.

Our thinking in the targeting of the particular areas chosen for questioning on this matter reflects a number of considerations. Realising the limitations of a survey method approach to study of this issue, to be begin with, we wanted to isolate and examine the influence of the 'rugged individualist' ethos in fisher sentiments concerning self-management practices and potentialities. Secondly, we intended to document the extent to which fishers would identify local-level rules as operative in governing access to and participation in the fisheries. Finally, we thought that soliciting opinions on the relation between the organisation of small boat fishers and control of access to and participation in the fisheries would be key to discussing the potentialities for self-management.

The data presented in Table 1 illustrate several aspects of the issues we intended to examine. To begin with, while the great majority of the small boat captains interviewed agree with the statement "fishermen know what is best for the fisheries", over two in every three also feel that fishers are too selfish to decide access for others and almost four in every five agree with the statement that "fishermen can't agree enough among themselves to decide on access for others". These responses suggest that many small boat captains are caught on the horns of a dilemma. While most think they know what is best for the fisheries, a healthy majority also feel that fishers are too selfish and disagreeable to decide on the conditions governing access and participation for others. A close examination of responses shows that younger fishing captains are more likely than older captains to agree with the statement that fishers are too selfish and they are less likely to think that fishers know what is best for the fisheries. We infer from these differences that more younger than older fishers express a cynical view on these issues as a

⁸. In publishing these findings, we should like to acknowledge the work of Victor Thiessen who has been working with A. Davis collecting historical and contemporary data on the small boat fishery in the Scotia Fundy region. This research project has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

TABLE 1

**PERCENT OF SMALL BOAT FISHING CAPTAINS
AGREEING WITH STATEMENTS REGARDING SELF-
MANAGEMENT BY TOTAL POPULATION, EDUCATION,
CLOSE KIN CREW COMPOSITION AND AGE**

response	education		close kin crew		born <or>1946	
	<grade 9 n=63	>grade 9 n=60	yes n=52	no n=67	before 1946 n=62	after 1946 n=64
total population N=123						

Percentiles

Fishermen are too selfish to decide on access	67%	66%	68%	67%	67%	62%	72%
Fishermen know what is best for the fisheries	80%	87%	72%	82%	78%	86%	
Fishermen cannot agree enough among themselves to decide on access for others	79%	81%	77%	76%	81%	81%	76%
Fishermen are not organised enough to make acceptable decisions	66%	72%	63%	68%	67%	75%	58%
Fishermen at every wharf follow their own rules about who can fish and how they should fish.	35%	46%	25%	45%	27%	39%	31%
Fishermen once organised should control licensing	54%	55%	53%	56%	52%	54%	53%

consequence of the socio-economic and policy environments in which they have experienced their participation in the Nova Scotian fisheries. Unlike the experience of older fishers the vast majority of the younger fishers, respondents born in 1946 or later, have known no other access and participation environment than one governed by DFO licensing and quota policies. This environment has been highlighted by increasing institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of the conditions of access and participation. Moreover, these processes have accentuated the significance of individual self-interest in the achievement and retention of the privilege to participate in particular fisheries through acquisition from DFO of the requisite licenses.

This interpretation is reinforced by trends evident in the analysis of several other aspects of small boat fishing captain responses. For instance, younger fishers are likely to have completed more years of formal schooling than older fishers. As we anticipated, those with more formal years of schooling (grade 9 or better) are less likely than those with less than grade 9 to think that fishers know what is best for the fishery. Perhaps the most notable response patterns supporting our contention are found in the analysis of opinions concerning the statement "fishermen at every wharf follow their own rules about who can fish and how they should fish". In summary, fishers born before 1946, fishers with less than grade 9 and fishers working with crews composed of close kin are much more likely to agree with the statement than are fishers born in 1946 or later, fishers with grade 9 or greater in formal education and fishers working with non-kin crews. Here the response distribution clearly suggests the influence of institutionalisation/bureaucratisation on small boat fishing captains' experience and world view. The logic and rationality of local-level fisher self-management mechanisms are of little salience to participants whom, through the course of their lived experiences, have but a passing acquaintanceship with the systems. Moreover, the design and rationality of DFO access and participation policies, in effect, debase the meaning and relevance of local-level self-management practices to access and participation. Younger fishers, likely with more formal education, have experienced little but increased bureaucratisation/ institutionalisation of the conditions associated with access and participation.

Notably, small boat captains' responses to the statement "fishermen are not organised enough to make acceptable decisions" further reinforce this interpretation. The younger fishing captains are much less likely than the older captains to agree with this statement. By implication, younger captains are more likely than older captains to think that fishers are well enough organised to make acceptable decisions. These fishers see the

problem more in terms of conflicts between and competition rooted in individual fisher interests, a condition seeded and cultivated by the DFO individual allocations approach to the management of access to and participation in the Atlantic Canadian fisheries.

In closing review this preliminary analysis of small boat captain responses, it is apparent to us that the capacity for fishers to engage local-level rules and practices as the basis of a self-management regime has been subject to systematic erosion, an erosion consequent to the rise of competitive individualism in small boat fishing. The captains' opinions suggest that those fishing for a living are uncertain and ambivalent regarding the capacity of small boat fishers to self-management conditions of access and participation.⁹ Certainly these data suggest that the informal rules and practices documented as effective self-management devices in an earlier time have deserving salience today. As a result, contemporary self-management regimes, if developed, would more than likely have reference points and socio-economic qualities other than those of the local-level and informal sort. This likelihood, in turn, compels us to wonder what the qualities of self-management systems will be when they are developed in and through bureaucratised/institutionalised settings that, to date, accentuate individual competition values and behaviours. It is evident to us that future inquiry targeted on these issues and processes must consider questions such as self-management in whose interests, the distribution of benefits within self-management systems, the socio-economic situation of fishing crews and recruitment processes to the position of small boat captaincy and ownership. For example, the development of self-management regimes that entrench the prerogatives of existing fishing captains and their families while prohibiting crews and their family members from achieving positions of captaincy and boat ownership, while consistent with the rationality of competitive individualism and institutionalisation, would do little to augment the present condition within small boat fishing communities and livelihoods.

Conclusions

Social science has long recognised the process and transformational consequences of industrial, capitalist institutionalisation. Beginning with Weber, the incorporation of the human into an organisational matrix dominated by the formal

⁹. It is regrettable that survey data on self-management for an earlier period does not exist. However, the rich ethnographic literature permits accounts of the fishery as it existed in the past to be compared with attitudes surveyed today.

institutions of industrial capitalism has been recognised as providing a mixed blessing in the human condition (Gerth and Mills 1946:212 ff).

On the one hand, this institutional form unlocks individual potentials from subjective and local fetters while creating possibilities for the generation and distribution of new wealth. On the other hand, industrial capitalist institutions dehumanise the human condition by subjecting it to the rationalities of objectified economic calculation. The worth of humans becomes reduced to elements such as formal credentials, consumption patterns, income and mobility within a market referenced economic rationality. At the same time, industrial institutions are bureaucratic and autocratic. They compel compliance and conformity to material, institutional objectives rather than to the intimacies of family, familiars, kin and community. In so doing, bureaucratic institutions dehumanise livelihoods and human relations.

While simply put this sketch draws into focus qualities of the professionalisation/ institutionalisation processes. 'Professionalising' small boat fishers, especially those in the advantaged positions as vessel owners, license holders and/or quota controllers, is an intimate quality of institutionalisation. In turn, institutionalisation embeds the rationality of individual self-interest in and among advantaged fishers. Their socio-economic situation becomes referenced by and dependent upon relations with bureaucracies rather than upon relations within their face-to-face intimacies of family, friends, kin and community.

The professionalisation and institutionalisation of Atlantic Canadian small boat fishers have been fundamental intentions and consequences of both government development/allocation management policies and, ironically, of the adoption of broad-based representative forms of organisation such as associations and unions. The rise of the individualistic utilitarian and rapacious small boat fisher in concert with professionalisation and institutionalisation of the occupation is anything but coincidental. Indeed, the latter have contributed to the creation, in no small measure, of the former. The rationality of profession and formal institutions within the industrial capitalist system presumes, specifies and requires the isolation of individually defined interests as the meaningful units of reference and concern. This is the form and forum that makes sense to capitalist industrial bureaucrats and the socio-economic ideologies of market driven logic and evaluations. Pursuit of livelihoods and the determination of competence in such forms of organisation become contingent upon the extent to which players conform to the institutional rules governing the conditions of

access and participation. Institutionalisation and professionalisation compel adoption by players of the world views, the rationalities and behaviours of the dominant institutions in control of access to livelihoods. In short, they compel compliance.

In the case of the small boat fisher, compliance translates into the adoption of the rationality of individual self-interest negotiated through and within formal capitalist industrial institutional settings. Consequently, the collective reference of family, familiars, kin and community become relatively meaningless to the individual fishers' pursuit of livelihood. In this manner, substantive socio-economic divisions rise among small boat fishers and their families and communities. Moreover, now unfettered by the constraints of making their living within face-to-face intimate communities, advantaged fishers can become, in their pursuit of self-interest, rapacious. As Lasch has argued:

Both the growth of management and the proliferation of professions represent new forms of capitalist control The struggle against bureaucracy therefore requires a struggle against capitalism itself. Ordinary citizens cannot resist professional dominance without also asserting control over production In order to break the existing pattern of dependence and put an end to the erosion of competence, citizens will have to take the solution of their problems into their own hands. They will have to create their own 'communities of competence'. Only then will the productive capacities of modern capitalism, together with the scientific knowledge that now serves it, come to serve the interests of humanity itself The will to build a better society, however, survives, along with traditions of localities, self-help, and community action that only need the vision of a new society, a decent society, to give them new vigour (1979:396-397).

The policy implications arising from the argument presented here go beyond "grass roots" strategising. While there are models that do represent significant attempts for developing communities of competence, they appear to be out of reach in the present climate of the Canadian Atlantic coast fishery. In particular, the emergence of the native land claims model is a case in point. The combination of collective action based upon communal rights for alternative cultural and socio-economic development is inherent in this social movement. It would not be difficult to argue that small boat fishers share some elements of the marginality associated with native people. Yet, as a model,

it would not wash. Here, the problem is one of deciding issues of small boat production with communal conservation while maintaining an adequate rate of return to those who traditionally have engaged in the industry. Sorting out these problems in the context of an ever increasing ideological climate of global competitiveness reduces the options that might be available.

One hundred years ago when the enclosure acts had exposed the gaelic way of life in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to the vagaries of the market, Gladstone's government implemented the crofting act to protect primary producers from the landlords. The rights achieved under this legislation were such that the traditional way of life could persist in spite of more attractive land use options that the landlords might have entertained.

Today the marine commons is actively controlled by the state. It is doubtful that government today would deem the small boat fishery as a distinctive way of life that must be preserved by legislation. The institutionalisation of the small boat fishery as we have described it in this paper would indicate that government has been going in an opposite direction. It has removed elements of local decision-making; it has changed the conditions for recruitment of new fishers, and has rewarded those willing to benefit at the expense of others. Policy options therefore must begin with changing the political will respecting the fishery as an alternative way of life that is not only worth social support but might also underlie the process of constructing support in society.

More particular policy initiatives related to cooperative self reliance in the fishery can be summarised in point form.

1. Implication for social research on the fishery would mean directing attention at the household and communal aspects of production rather than disembodied econometrics. An emphasis should be placed on field work in communities when fishery matters are studied.
2. Consistent with ecological concerns the questions related to achieving more selective harvesting technology and efficiencies in small scale operations ought be funded in the applied marine sciences. Associated with these research efforts, policies enunciating the following would also support small boat fishers:
 - a. emphasizing quality over quantity in landings;
 - b. downsizing fleet and vessel capacity;
 - c. give fishers the exclusive right to own boats;
 - d. develop boats able to participate in a variety of fisheries.

3. The preservation of the commons could be presented as a problem involving communal self reliance which in turn necessitates the fostering of social consideration rather than being viewed through the window of enlightened self-interest. In effect this means that the social concerns of livelihood fishing would take priority over the needs of profit driven corporate entities in laying claim to using the commons.

4. Implement fisheries related economic diversification (light manufacturing) to sustain livelihoods and prosperity in rural communities.

Our conviction that the social fabric of small boat fishing provides a valuable model for social development leads us to these seemingly atavistic conclusions. The problems inherent in developing an acceptable method of utilising common resources so that they remain common in access while yet remaining a resource are somewhat daunting. The alternative of maintaining the resource without common access is also a frightening prospect for many whose local history has led to the expectation that -even in a changing world, the resources of the oceans would provide a certain livelihood.

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