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Ideal-Type Models of Norwegian Fisheries: Model Development with Practice in Mind

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1. Introduction

Norway is currently playing the role as the most clever of all nations as far as fisheries management is concerned. While Canadians, the EU, the Faeroes, Iceland and others have experienced stock depletion and social and economic crisis, the figures for the Norwegian catches and exports show comfortable development trends. A closer look at the empirical material and reports from community studies, however, show that Gro Harlem Brundtland's garden of sustainable development is no garden of Eden. Most of the Norwegian fishing communities suffer from long-term downwards trend where resource problems, market instability, bureaucratic shortcomings and political isolation are a part of everyday life.

Norwegian fisheries management has been professionally dominated by biologists, accountants and technicians. Until the 1970s, when the resource question became dominant and the productionist policies failed, there was almost no room for social science. Since then, social scientists have found some room for maneuver within the power field of the fisheries, but they have mostly been confined to what Max Weber (1936) calls "the calculation of external objects" (empirical research without theoretical reflection). The social scientists have not been able to market their potential skills in dealing with the complexity of this crisis situation. To some extent this is a result of the polarization within social science between quantitative and qualitative practitioners. To outsiders this is a demonstration of just the opposite of professionalism. This in turn has resulted in the reduction of the ambition of social science

from proposing creative management, as C. Wright Mills (1973) calls "the sociological imagination", to a much more limited ambition (avoiding catastrophe). What has tended to pass for holistic approaches has mostly been the superficial comments of journalists or politicians. More recently, the common property approach, supplied by contributions from political scientists, economists and anthropologists, has begun to fill this vacuum. There are however, a range of problems connected to the common property resource (CPR) theory as a route for social scientists to enter the power field of fisheries, both ideologically, methodologically and theoretically.

1.1. The need for an alternative or clarification to CPR

Ottar Brox (1990) argues that the "common property theory" has to be regarded - and criticized - as an analytical theory, and not as an empirical model which can be tested and perhaps even falsified by directly comparing it with the empirical world. This statement calls upon common property theorists to be more accurate when using terms such as theoretical models and empirical models. From my superficial knowledge of the literature within the tradition of common property analysis, there seems to be a substantial number of empirical case studies that compare these diverse empirical "realities" with the basic CPR theory. These exercises are often based on a traditional positivist way of theorizing, where the researcher makes attempts to find laws or regularities in society and nature simply by observing the "observable facts". Even intentional analysis usually ends up with the same simple check between the topics of study in the empirical world and the basic CPR model. There is no critical examination of the concepts that are used in the models, and there is an underlying expectation that it is possible to build models "in theory" that (if they are accurate and valid enough) both have their replica in "reality" and can be falsified if they have not. In conclusion, no matter how we regard the debate among defenders and critics of CPR theory, there seems to be weaknesses both in matters of theorizing and in the theoretical conclusions drawn from different case studies. Even the analysis of quantitative material is scarce and difficult to apply in connection with CPR approaches as is the case with game theories in general (see Petersen 1994: 500).

From this perspective the common property approach needs a critical examination of its scientific base before it gains a position as the route for social scientists to enter the power field

of the fisheries. If not, the social scientist can easily become "subject to the morality of other men" or "morally adrift" as C. Wright Mills (1973) puts it.

Brox (1990: 230) suggests that mid-range theorizing, which might provide as ideal-typical models in the Weberian way, can be the solution to this epistemological problem within the young CPR tradition. This paper agrees with this strategy. Can we find alternatives to CPR, or is it possible to supplement or correct the scientific foundation of the CPR approach in some way? I will examine the possibility of supplementing the CPR approach both empirically and theoretically.

1.2. About the disposition of the paper

This draft is in fact a report on a larger project. On the theoretical side it proposes a dialectical approach, the life mode analysis, that has been useful in understanding an empirical material of Norwegian fishing communities. This theoretical analysis also draws upon a parallel dialectical tradition called the critical-realist approach, which is heavily influenced by the work of Max Weber.

The empirical side of the analysis which (for a number of quantitative variables) covers the totality and (for three in-depth studies) covers the complexity of Norwegian fishing communities draws upon specific contributions from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1990) and Antonio Gramsci (1971). In this paper I will not go into detail regarding these last two theorists.

2. Theoretical discussion

This section presents two different dialectical approaches that challenge the usual social-scientific way of dealing with theoretical explanation. The first, the critical realist-approach, draws upon Weber and Marx. The second, life-mode analysis, relies upon the work of Marx and Hegel.

2.1. The critical-realist approach

The critical-realist approach to the understanding (verstehen) of society is presented by Ekstrøm (1992). It is one of four ways of understanding the function and importance of causality within social science that Ekstrøm outlines. It is essential to grasp the principal of causality and its implications if theoretical work is to have any practical meaning or application. The four ways of dealing with causality are: 1. to focus on understanding rather than striving for causal explanation; 2. to attempt causal explanation but within rigid methodological structures, 3. to adopt the positivist naturalist notion of causality; 4. to adopt a critical-realist approach. Ekstrøm (1992:107-8) explains the difference among these approaches this way:

First, there is the idea that, unlike in natural science, the endeavour in social science should not be directed towards causal explanation but towards the understanding and/or rationalization of social actions in relation to intentions, meanings, and socio-cultural contexts. Second, there is the idea that social science should indeed strive for causal explanation but that such explanation should have a particular structure and should be arrived at by way of particular methods. Third, there is a positivist naturalism that asserts the general applicability of the empiricist concept of causality in both natural and social science (albeit in a somewhat modified form in the case of the latter). Fourth, and last, there is an anti-positivist naturalism that questions the empiricist concept of causality and advocates a unified science of causal explanation resting on another foundation. In the debate about explanation of social action, there has long been recurrent controversy between, chiefly, the first and third of the above positions.

Ekstrøm builds on the work of Bhaskar (1980) and Harré (1979) who pioneered the concept of critical realism. He points out that the critical realist approach, or the "generative theory of causality" as he terms it, can to a large extent be regarded as a dialectical perspective:

The generative theory of causality implies a fundamental criticism of the succession view of causality, i.e. causality as a question of events following one another with a certain regularity, and of the idea that causal explanations can be expressed in the form of general empirical laws. The essence of causal analysis is instead the elucidation of the processes that generate the objects, events and actions we seek to explain. Things, mental processes, social relations and structures are taken to have causal power, a potential for bringing about change; not that this is a question, though, of some mystical independently existent power--it resides in properties of the things and relations themselves. Causes are neither events nor objects but properties (Ekstrøm 1992:115-6).

The things, mental processes, social relations and structures Ekstrøm mentions are different levels of reality. Causal connections--and thus theoretical explanation--must develop by constantly interacting with all of these different planes. These can be roughly summarized as two types of reality, an abstract reality, with actual causal powers that are relatively autonomous to the second type, concrete reality. Bhaskar (1980) distinguishes three levels: the real (properties/mechanisms), the actual (the events produced) and the empirical (the observation of the events).

The consequence of this line of thought is that causality must be analyzed in terms of tendencies that are manifested in open systems, in complex interaction with other tendencies.

There is therefore a crucial difference between causal explanation of the critical realist type and empirical prediction of the positivist type. Prediction has to do with regularities which are neither a necessary nor a sufficient precondition for causality.

These theoretical considerations have important methodological implications: causal analysis should strive for a methodology permeated by a continuous interplay of conceptualization, theory construction and contextualization. As Ekstrøm (1992: 117) puts it

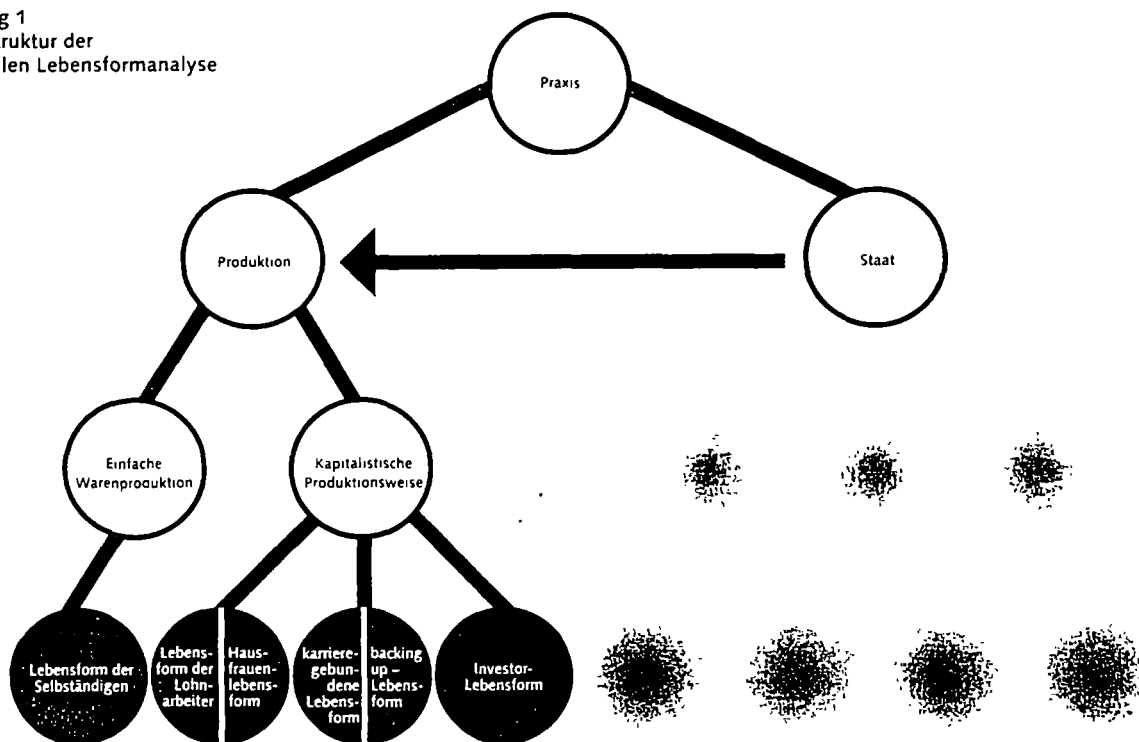
Causal-explanatory research calls for quantitative and qualitative strategies that are much more sensitive to complex and changeable contexts than mainstream variable-oriented research. . . Instead of there being an attempt to emulate the perfect quasi-experimental situation by statistically controlling traditional sociological variables (sex, age, income, etc.), research has to be directed towards constructing--through deep knowledge of contexts--relevant objects of comparison, thereby creating a basis for counterfactual argument.

2.2. The life mode analysis

Life mode analysis itself is inspired by the Hegelian and Marxist traditions. The life-mode approach and the critical-realist approach share the development of ideal-types as a guide to understanding reality. They both examine historical models of complex situations and compare them - both with each other and with the basic theoretical model.

"Life mode" means the theoretical positions that derive from the two different modes of production that coexist in society today: simple commodity production and the capitalist mode of production.

Abbildung 1
Begriffsstruktur der
strukturellen Lebensformanalyse



Thomas Højrup originally clarified three life modes (Højrup 1983): the self employed, the wage-labor life mode, and the career life mode. These three have since then been altered slightly by the division of the career life mode into the investor and manager modes. There has also been work to develop complementary life-modes, for instance by introducing the "backland life mode" as an complement to the career life mode. I use the three original modes identified by Højrup.

The figure illustrates an important point about Hegelian dialectics. Each theoretical concept and each level builds upon the preceding concepts. This means that no single level or concept can be understood in isolation from the others: each retains the meanings and intentional contents of its predecessor. To understand the meaning of a single concept requires understanding the ideas that contributed to its development as well as those that are specific to the new concept.

The main advantage of using this life-mode approach as opposed to, for example game theory, is its ability to incorporate change and fluid and dynamic relationships. It highlights the linkages between socio-economic enclaves and the larger social systems in which they are embedded. It also incorporates the elements of power and ideology.

The special feature of the life-mode approach is its determination to meld theory with empirical reality. It begins with the theoretical assumption that society consists of different complementary life modes that reproduce their differences over time. In examining this variety of communities we have to understand that the long-term survival strategies are adopted both in response to general social and economic forces emanating from the society around them, and in response to the intentions and ideologies of the leaders of the community. When we talk about life modes we are not talking about specific people. A single individual may embody different life modes.

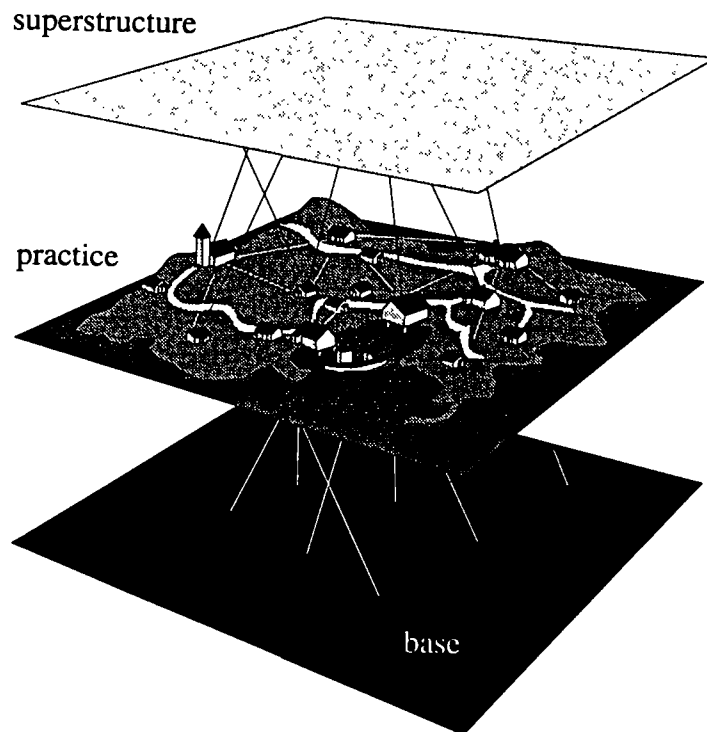
2.3. Applying the Theory to Construct

Ideal-Typical Models of Fishing Communities

The process of empirical work within the life mode analysis is a complex one involving specific procedures in the theoretical laboratory, the model laboratory and the empirical laboratory.

The process always starts in the theoretical laboratory, and moves step by step to the empirical laboratory.

This is admittedly an approach that is hard to describe in just a few minutes. The best way to give an idea of its usefulness is to provide a graphic illustration of how I have applied it in my work.



The illustration shows an ideal-typical fishing community with a territory, natural resources, human structures, social institutions, and human relations, as it appears using the paradigm described in this paper. The lines connecting the three planes are representations of interaction among these three theoretically-constructed levels of analysis: ideology (superstructure), practice, and base.

To demonstrate the potential of the theoretical position when it comes to empirical research, I will sketch a battery of historically-derived models (see Bendix & Roth 1973: 126) that illustrate how the approach incorporates considerations of time and space.

3. An Ideal-Typical Model Set

The following are a range of ideal-typical models that my research to date indicates must inform an analysis of Norwegian fisheries communities.

This set of models also suggests the pattern of development of Norwegian fisheries. I must stress that the list of models given here does not constitute a theory of sequential development. Many of these models may exist at the same time in different localities. Some cases even display what appears to be a regressive tendency. The proliferation of models reflects the different reactions of communities to forces from the world around them. While this approach does take general long-term development trends into account, it is not a description of the evolutionary change of local communities. Instead, it rejects the notion that any single community will experience a determined path of development. It does not seek to predict the paths of community development but it is useful in suggesting what outcomes are not possible. It is therefore a corrective to voluntaristic and overly optimistic comprehensions of the possibility of change. The list is not complete, but it shows different ideal-typical representations of the more general model of a fishing community.

The Archaic Setting

The Subsistence Model

The Common-Property Model

The Exchange Model

The Market Setting

The Money Exchange Model

The Cooperative Model

The Middle-Man Model

The Organized Primary Producer Model

The Organized Processing Industry Model

The Vertical-Integration Model

The Cartel Model

The Redistribution Setting (State-Dominated Models):

Limitations on Total Catch Capacity

Extended Control of Fishing Effort

The State as Promoter of Economic Development

State-Controlled Fishing Industry

External Domination

Control over Market Access

3.1 An impression of the totality of Norwegian fishing communities

My empirical work to date is both qualitative and quantitative. It is qualitative because of its focus on reactions to dramatic environmental changes of three selected fishing communities over a long period of time, involving the importance of ideas and the ideology that people use to comprehend the reality around them. These are not superficial features of human existence nor do they simply reflect some "deeper reality". It is quantitative because it examines a wide variety of communities, finding quantitative data that show the community responses to external social forces.

Examining present-day Norwegian fishing communities is like looking into a shop window where the goods are displayed in a jumbled heap: the latest fashions lie side by side with yesterday's fads, popular commodities along side those seldom bought. In this case, there is no single owner: the stock of the store merely reflects the decisions made by others. Goods are ordered or discarded by many different co-managers and consumers pick and chose among the offerings. Nevertheless, the store must turn a profit or it will disappear. In this image, the co-managers represent the bewildering variety of external institutions, including but not limited to the state, whose decisions determine the "goods" available for purchase by "the consumers", i.e., the local fishing community. From this we can see that the freedom of choice that the consumers seem to have is sharply limited by the decisions of others that determine their range of choice.

At this point we must keep in mind that while theoretical approaches might tend to be limited to only one slice of reality, in this case, the fishing communities or industries, practical reality is not so neatly ordered. All aspects of the fisheries industry are affected by other fields of existence.

We must in addition remember that all of this theorizing concerns the activities and thoughts of living beings not static objects. These individuals think and act differently depending on which life modes they inhabit at any particular time. The life modes available to these individuals varies tremendously with geographic location, temporal location and with variations in the other fields of existence with which any single set of life modes interacts.

Using this approach leads the researcher to a disorderly collection of data and impressions that makes most social scientists extremely uncomfortable. It does not attempt to establish neat patterns, causal statements or predictions and its refusal to do so many find highly disturbing.

4. Conclusion

The practical consequence of this approach is that we must be much more modest in our ambition. Instead of trying to predict reality, or direct reality, we must work on constructing an understanding of the possibilities and impossibilities that confront human actors. In advising policy makers, we should stress the diversity in life modes present in society. Because change in society emanates from and is conditioned by the totality of the life modes present, this would serve as an important counterweight to the centerist views they are most often exposed to (which treats change as a process that is determined by or radiates out from a centerpoint).

Accepting the rich chaos of reality, however, does not mean adopting the position that empirical research and quantitative and qualitative forms of social science are unnecessary. Such studies provide the great amount of raw data upon which this form of analysis must rest. It does mean, however, that the way these forms of social science are currently conducted, the ambition they embody, and the conclusions they draw must be radically reconsidered. When practitioners of the CPR theory use their knowledge of concrete historical cases as a corrective to broad, general models, it shows some promise. However, most forms of CPR analysis suffer from the same general failings of other main-stream social science activities.

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