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‘I can't change my life situation’

An exploration of the relation between agency and social structure
for women in the fishery sector in Mangalore, India

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Abstract

A lot of people in the global south's fishery sector live in great poverty. Despite this there is a lack of research which comprises the importance of social sustainability as well as the role of women in the sector. The aim for this paper was to further the understanding of how much agency women in the fishery sector has within the current structures in their context. The research consists of interviews with four women selling fish at a market in Mangalore, with one clerk at the operating corporation and with one union worker. The results from these interviews are discussed together with previous research on agency and social structure. The results show that due to the prevailing structures, the women feel they have little ability to choose how they want to live. The results indicate a lack of resilience due to that the respondents need the market to survive, and if the fish at the market would decrease they would lose their livelihood. The women have low influence on the decisions that might affect the future of the fishery sector and the market. To increase the social sustainability in the fishery sector there is a need for a greater amount of dialog.

Key words: fish market, women, social structure, agency

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1. Introduction

1.1 Poverty and Fisheries

In 2002 there were about 38 million people in the world directly employed in fishing and aquaculture. 90% of them were small-scale fishers. In addition, more than 100 million people were estimated to be employed in other fisheries associated occupation, particularly in processing and trading, bringing the total estimated to be directly or indirectly employed in the small-scale fisheries and aquaculture to be about 138 million in 2002 (FAO, 2005). The majority (87%) live in Asia and most of them under the conditions of great poverty¹ (FAO, 2012). The small-scale fisheries are thereby an invisible sector due to that it employs a significant amount of marginalized people around the world.

Although the paradigm of poverty research has shifted from a concept of income-poverty in the 1960s to a consensus of multidimensional nature of poverty in most sectors, the research on fisheries still is to some extent stuck in the old paradigm (Béné, 2003). During the time since the 1960s the criteria for poverty started to include, besides income and basic food needs, human needs such as health and education, access to food including governing due to social, economic, cultural and political factors, powerlessness, gender and finally during the millennium shift to a multidimensional human development index approach (ibid.). Béné (2003) makes in the article ‘When fishery rhymes with poverty’ a review of the literature in the field of fisheries research, to investigate if the studies on fisheries have taken note of the new way of looking at poverty. He concludes that the research still ends up in a rather simplified view that focuses on poverty mainly as an income problem. The conclusions that most research do; ‘They are fishermen because they are poor’ and ‘They are poor because they are fishermen’ both ends up to ‘Fisheries equal poverty’. Béné (2003) argues that it is the socio-institutional mechanisms governing people's access to fisheries resource, rather than the resource itself, that plays a critical role in the vulnerability to poverty.

Previous research has not only had difficulties to catch up with the multidimensional approach of fisheries and poverty, it has also often accidentally missed an important group in the fishing industry. Biswas (2011) discusses in his article ‘Turning the tide: women's life in fisheries and the assault of the capital’ how the mainly economic approach to fisheries research has overlooked the women. Most countries do not consider the work that the 100 million people in the fishery sector do, such as fish processing and the selling of fish,

¹ Since 2005, the limit for poverty is US\$1, 25 (World Bank, 2008).

transportation, net and gear making, boat building, fuel supply, engine repair, to be economically productive. Because of that, the labor of millions of people across the world remains largely invisible in fishery statistic, and is either unpaid or insufficient paid for. Women make up the bulk of this figure. The women are also often being dragged into highly exploitative forms of production and exchange relations due to, for instance, sexual division of labor. They do most of the work within their home; however, it is mainly fishing itself that is proved to be of economic value. Biswas (2011) therefore argues that there is a disadvantage to only discuss developments in fisheries in economic terms. The fisheries could not survive without women's often unpaid work in post-harvesting and within the home. The economic approach to labor, production relations, etc. is thus neglecting the women and becomes an incomplete analysis. He asks for a broader, holistic and more ecological approach in fishery research with a focus on livelihood sustainability and poverty discourse.

Within the debate on sustainable development, the ecological perspective has long been dominating. However, there has been an increased interest in the social aspects of sustainability (Åhman, 2013) The social aspects have been discussed in terms of being a cause for, or possibly a solution to, environmental problems, rather than something that deserves attention as a sustainability component in its own right (ibid.). In the areas in the global south where a great amount of people are employed in the fishery sector, the local markets make the relation between people and resource strong. The resource is heavily connected with the food security for the people in the area (Marschke & Wilkings, 2014) and is also heavily connected with the local economy (Hutchins & Sutherland, 2008). With a lack of the social dimension of sustainable development it might lead to decisions in developing countries focusing largely on economic benefits, perhaps at the expense of the environment, and do not consider the connected social effects enough (ibid.). To ensure that decisions are made so that they are socially responsible, and thus socially sustainable, decision makers need to gain a complete understanding of potential impacts of the affected people (Hutchins & Sutherland, 2008). These decisions could affect how industrial actions in, for example, the fishery industry impact future generation of fishers' ability to survive (ibid.). This could become increasingly important due to globalization, since the local fishery sector might become highly affected by global fishery industries' influence in the local decision making.

1.2 Women in Fisheries

Small-scale fisheries women as a group are not homogeneous. They are seen worldwide and feature many diverse cultures and economic conditions, and fishing creates various functions and manifests itself thus in different ways. With this in mind I hereby want to give an insight on some common denominator regarding the previous research in this area.

First of all, the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO (Suntornratana, 2005), claims that there tend to be a lack of research on fisher women. Little information about women in the sector has been collected and there is especially a lack of quantitative data describing the scale of their participation and contribution (Harper, 2012). Women as a group are probably much more involved in fisheries than previous quantitative research has showed (Kleiber, 2014).

This shortage of quantitative research is due to a lack of a proper gender analysis (ibid.). This shortage also affects the ability to get a comprehensive picture of the fishery sectors management and development policies (Weeratunge, Snyder & Poh Sze, 2010) and the complimentary and conflicting roles and relations between women and men in the household and community, which affects the fishery related activities (Harrison, 2000). For instance, women are generally not experienced in answering questions from outside interviewers, especially when men are around. The women perceive or act as if men can give better answers, so they leave the men to reply to the interviewer's questions (Kusakabe, 2005). If this is a widespread phenomenon in the research on women this could be classified as an error in the validity since it do not measure as intended. The lack of recognizing and quantifying the role of women in fisheries has profound implications for management, poverty alleviation and development policy (Harper, 2012) and it may hinder rather than help the people's livelihood and well-being (Weeratunge et al, 2010). Therefore, there has to evolve more meaningful and relevant gender analysis to improve the socio-ecological approach to fisheries research (Kleiber, 2014).

Although it seems to be a gap in research, the ones available are pointing out some certain commonalities. It shows that women also participate in the fishery sector but in a different way than the men. Both women and men consider fishing as men's work, but women are almost equally involved in the fishing activities (Kusakabe, 2005). Women are involved not only in post-harvest activities but are also active in harvesting fish (ibid.). While women's role varies between geographic regions, in the Pacific, women account for 56 % of the annual small-scale catches which results in an economic impact of 363 million US\$ (Harper, 2012).

As Okorie and Williams (2009) studies from the Niger Delta show; women fish widely but there are a lot of different factors that separate the way men and women fish. Aside from that women have conflicts of reproduction, oppression due to their gender such as illiteracy, low status because of their marital status, other sexual relations coupled with the fish trade² and other responsibilities in the household, cultural aspects make women fish different regarding to the men. Women are mostly seen as assistants to the men's work and the actual fishing that they do mostly occur near the shore³. The study (Okorie & Williams, 2009) shows that the small-scale fishing in the Niger Delta would not survive without the contribution of women to feed their families and the village's production and development. The finding in this case study also accentuates the intersection theory that states that while all women potentially experiences oppression on the basis of gender women are nevertheless differentially oppressed by the varied intersections of other arrangements of social inequality.

Despite women's involvement of the catch in many fishing communities, women in small-scale fisheries are mostly active in the post-harvesting of the fish (Weeratunge et al, 2010). In developing countries fish handling, sorting, preservation and processing are carried out by women and in South-East Asia the fish market is dominated by women (Kusakabe, 2005). Besides of the work in the fishery sector women are also in charge, as earlier shown, of the fishery community's families. According to the FAO (Suntornratana, 2005) this means that women are not only responsible for processing the fish, selling the products and supporting the husbands, they also have responsible of the children, the elderly, the household's economy and overall of maintaining the household members' quality of life. Women thereby routinely put in unpaid labor into essential tasks which active fishing could not be sustained without (Biswas, 2011).

The research above thus shows that women in the fishery sector are being vulnerable due to their gender, along with the aforementioned economic marginalization because of their profession. This can perhaps be called a double marginalization or double vulnerability.

² The study of Okorie and Williams (2009) shows how the phenomenon of fish-for-sex affects the women's ability to enter into trade agreements with individual fishermen in the Niger-Delta. Fish-for-sex is an agreement between a male fishermen and a female middleman, where the women only can buy fish to resell if she also has a recurrent sexual relationship with the man.

³ This partly has to do partly with the fact that women don't have the same fishing rights as do men and that it is taboo for menstruating women to go to sea (Okorie & Williams, 2009).

1.3 The Study

In order to develop the social dimension of sustainability for the fishery sector, one way can be to address issues of poverty for those people depending on the fishery sector for a living. The motivation to expand this field stems from the lack of research in the field of women and fisheries. From the research I found, there seem to be a lack of broader analysis that does not equate fisheries and poverty. Also the previous research shows that women working in the fishery sector are having a hard time being both marginalized at work, at home as well as in the research. However, women account for a lot of paid and unpaid labor in the fishery sector.

One way of stepping towards a comprehensive social analysis on poverty in fisheries could be to try to understand the individual's capacity to create their own life choices within the context of the fishery sector. This paper will explore the relationship between structures and the ability to make choices despite these structures for female retailers of fish. The purpose of this paper is thus to further the understanding of the relation between the social situation for women at fish markets and the sustainable development of the fishery sector. The specific questions that will be investigated in this paper are:

- How does the social structure express the situation of the women?
- To what extent do the women have the ability to make free choices about their life situation (agency)?
- What is the relation between women's social situation and sustainable development in fishing communities?

I will do this by bringing together material from interviews with women at the local fish market in Mangalore, India with previous research and analyze this from the perspective of four themes. The four themes are 1) Personal, 2) Economy, 3) Governance and 4) Natural Resource. The personal theme includes the women's conditions at home and at work with chores and family relationships. The second theme, economy, regards micro- and macroeconomic aspects of the women's lives. The third theme, governance, focuses on the institutional governing of the fish market. The fourth theme, natural resource, centers on the fish the women sell to make a living.

1.4 Disposition of Thesis

I will show the theories I have started from and how this is connected to my purpose. I will afterwards continue to write about my methodological approach, which includes what kind of method I have chosen and the opportunities and difficulties I have found with this technique.

1.5 Delimitations

I have chosen to focus on the fishery sector in Mangalore, India. Why I chose this place was because I came in contact with my supervisor Per Knutsson and his PhD-student Alin Kadfak who are both doing research in this area and made it possible for me to get in contact with the Fishery College in Mangalore⁴. The time approach for this case study was during September to November 2013.

I chose to focus on the women in the market at State Bank together with the harbor auction at Bunder in central Mangalore. I focus on the fish vendors who resell the fish to individuals on the city's central market in Mangalore. My methodological demarcation therefore includes the interviews I did with the female vendors, as well as employees at the corporation and a general secretary for the fishermen action committee who had started unions for fisher women. My method also includes observations at the market and the harbor auction. Because I have limited myself to the fisheries market, it should be added that I have looked at this place as an accumulation of relationships. If you compare the market with a fishery community where people live, fish, sell and consume the fish within an area, this is a place where people gather from all around a wider area to exchange goods, services and money. The market thus works as both an institution and a relationship between people at the same time.

1.6 The Case of Mangalore

India has an 8,000 km long coastline suitable for marine fisheries. In the country there were in 2010 about four million people in the fishing industry, which represents 864,550 families. On a thousand men there are about 948 women in the sector. 61 % of these people are living below the level of poverty and only 58 % have any kind of education (International Collective in Support of Fish workers, 2014).

⁴ The college played an important role for my study because it helped me with essential contacts and translators.

At India's southwest coast the state of Karnataka is situated with 61 million inhabitants. There are several languages spoken in the area with a lot of small ethnical groups speaking their own languages. Some studies have been focusing on how the women work in the sector of fisheries in the state. Tanaka (2003) describes how women's tasks interacted between individuals in complex systems, and that women are largely responsible for household finances in the fishing community. The vending of the fish at the market is exclusively a business for women (ibid.). Bhatta's study (2003) also shows that only 16 % of women in fishing communities in Karnataka are fully involved in decision-making processes, while their contribution to the family income and household work is significant. There is also a social stigma linked with fish marketing activities which means that the younger generations are not willing to get into the business. Bhatta's (2003) study also shows that subsidies from the government do not appear to contribute to the improvement of the social status.

Mangalore (see appendix, Map 1) is one of Karnataka's many port cities. In 2011 there were about half a million people living there. The city has several large universities that attract students from all over the southern part of the country. At the city's coast, there are both large scale and small-scale fishing fleets. Most of the people working with fishery in this place speak Tulu.

2. Theoretical Approach

To further the understanding of the social situation for the women working at the local fish market in Mangalore I will, as earlier said, analyze interview material through four themes. The analysis will be conducted with the help of the concept of agency and social structure. In this theoretical approach, I want to illustrate what the meaning of the concepts are, what aspect of the concepts I am interested in and finally how it may be relevant for my study.

2.1 Agency

The concept of agency refers to the ability for humans to make their own conscious choices (Kuhlke, 2007).⁵ Agency comprises the capacity of an agent to act in a world. The agents are those entities that are able to make autonomous decisions based on their own beliefs, desires and goals (Health, 2011). Agency is formed within social interaction that is the result of power discourses (Kuhlke, 2007). The amount of power an agent possesses therefore determines how much agency she's got and thus causes how much opportunity she has to decide about the choices in life.

Agency arises from a number of sources. I have used the article 'Agency Theory' by the sociologist Susan Shapiro (2005) to bring out aspects of the concept that is of interest for this study. She puts together some key sources that agency arises from. First of all, agency includes the division of labor; agents simply don't have the time to do everything by oneself and a complex task often requires more than one actor. Agency is also about access to knowledge; you are only capable of doing the things you have the knowledge about. Overcoming physical, social and temporal barriers is also necessary for being able to do what you aim. Finally, agency refers to the possibility of enjoying the economy and to let it protect oneself against risks for instance through pension, insurance and investments.

Another aspect of agency that is of interest for this study is by Ramamurthy (2000) who refers to two types of the concept; subversive versus feminist agency. The first one means the act that an agent individually do to change her socioeconomic status quo. Subversive agency is the act of changing some women's subjectivities as workers but do not necessary lead to radical changes in the socioeconomic order or gender relations. Subversive

⁵ One can look at this as a contrast to the simplistic concept of free will; that the choices we make are determined by causal chains. Agency assumes that we can make choices and the concept is instead interested in how this decision interacts with the world around us (Kuhlke, 2007).

agency emerges in the process of women's developing creative strategies to survive (coping mechanism). The other one, feminist agency, refers to acts which collectively reconstitute the socioeconomic order and gender relations. Feminist agency is thus an act of coming to consciousness through praxis. These are two types of acts that can be referred to when talking about women's empowerment.

These aspects of agency are relevant for this study because the fisher women's social situation is linked with how they have chosen to live their life and therefore it's relevant to investigate if it involves an active choice or if they didn't have any opportunity to determine their situation. The agency could refer to their ability to change careers if they like to or create a life or a family constellation through their own individual choices.

Regarding Shapiro's text, the aspect of division of labor in the theory of agency could refer to the understanding of the women's household and income responsibilities. Access to knowledge might in the women's case be the ability to perform various tasks within the workplace or an educational system that favors women to study on to other professions could therefore be a way to increase their power to make free choices in life. Overcoming physical, social and temporal barriers might be ways of reducing the time and ability to get to the places needed for work and spare time, a good working environment with the necessary facilities and social networks to feel confident about one's life, for example through unions. A high agency with focus on enjoying the economy might require a financial safety net with for example pension and health- and unemployment insurance for the working women.

Linked to the social part of sustainable development increased agency would either be to increase the resilience at individual or community level. Coping with the vulnerability by increasing the level of agency for women in their livelihood context (subversive agency), for example by making make working conditions in the market more livable, could be one way. Changing the conditions for women overall in the fishery sector (feminist agency), for example by increasing their ability to make a living through something else, is another act.

2.1.1 Powerlessness and Subjectivity

While the agency shows the extent of an agent's realization of free choices, Iris Marion Young shows in her article 'Five faces of oppression' (1992) that this realization isn't only a product of visible power. For example, it cannot only be shown in legislations and such. Instead she discusses the informal power which can have an impact on the agent's self-image. The article claims that there is a privileged part of the society that determines and oppresses another part of the population. One of these ways of oppression is powerlessness.

The concept of powerlessness assumes that there are those in society who have power and there are others that do not. Some of the basic injustices associated with impotence are the aggravating to develop their capacity (agency), lack of decision making power and exposure to disrespectful treatment because of their lowered status. Young argues that this oppression can indoctrinate the agent without her even being aware of this. The inferiority becomes a normal state for the agent who feels she has no power and therefore no agency.

This can be linked to the formation of identity. Nightingale (2010) argues that subjectivity can create identities for the agents. These identities among agents create a hierarchy in the society (Nightingale, 2011). She also argues that this hierarchy should be seen from an intersectional perspective (ibid.). The family can work as an illustration over this subjective power. Although the family is subjectively constructed as cooperative and egalitarian, it is a site where patriarchal ideologies under capitalism may well intensify the subordination of women (Ramamurthy, 2000, p.552).

These aspects are relevant for this study because identities can make women feel far down in the social hierarchy. Even if visible power such as laws tries to enable an increased agency, the feeling of powerlessness may hinder the women to make conscious free choices. This powerlessness due to invisible power structures has to be investigated through an intersectional perspective where all kinds of power are being interweaved such as gender, occupation, family structure and so on.

2.2 Social Structure

The definition of social structure is often implicitly assumed, rather than explicitly defined and uttered (Blau, 1975). However, one definition of the concept is thus that social structure is 'the rules and resources which are constantly implicated in the reproduction of social systems' (Young, 2007, p.202). Social structure is also the enduring patterns formed by relations among people, groups and institutions form the social structure of a society (Giddens, 2013). It can therefore be said that social structure is the social interactions in the society that emerges from the actions of individuals, and in turn affect individual actions. Individuals occupy different positions in the social space, and their positions are determined in relation to others' positions (Young, 2007). These differing structural positions provide different and unequal opportunities and potential benefits to their holders; conditions are such that the limited opportunities and minimal benefits to some agents matched by greater benefits to others (Young, 2007).

Social structure is, according to some sociologists such as Durkheim, in direct opposition to the concept of agency. The controversy consists of the desire to explain the society based on the individual or the collective. Durkheim says that individuals' actions and ways of thinking will be explained by reference to social phenomena. Social phenomena are over-individual and exist outside of the individual's thoughts and beliefs, which in turn act as a force against the individual (Gilje & Grimen, 2011). Because the society is nothing more than the sum of the actions of individual, social structure therefore have primacy over human agency (Giddens & Sutton, 2013). Lately, the concept of agency (the perspective of the agent) has gained priority (Giddens & Sutton, 2014) with the argument that a society is nothing but a composite of many individual actions (Giddens & Sutton, 2013). Nowadays, it's a consensus between the controversies of the concepts; structure and agency are seen as one interactive concept (Giddens & Sutton, 2014). The concepts are not opposites but rather complement to explain the complex society. For example, when addressing agency, social scientists examine the relationship between individuals and societies, and focus on how institutions such as governments mediate the power relations between these entities (Kuhlke, 2007).

The aspect of the concept of social structure that is of interest to me consists of two perspectives; the institutional and the relational (Bernardi, Gonzalez & Requena, 2007). Social structure can be viewed as a network of social relationships between individuals, groups and organizations in the communities (ibid., p.164). Institutional structure refers to the linking of agents and organizations through norms and institutions. Cultural and normative models thus determine an actor's expected behavior. Relational structure is on the other hand the bonding through relationships and networks e.g. the social system (ibid., p. 163). However, we have in our society a huge amount of different networks that affect each other. This creates both norms, which in turn affects how agents act and how institutions work. In turn this also creates new relationships between people and organizations.

Structural injustice exists when social structures puts great amount of people in a systematic threat of being dominated while others hold a dominant position and is equipped with a wide range of opportunities to develop and exercise their abilities (Young, 2007). Structural injustice is a kind of moral wrong that is different from one actor's erroneous action or a state's regressive policies. Structural injustice emerges as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting in pursuit of their own individual goals and interests, within given institutional rules and accepted norms. These restrictions and openings occur not only by institutional rules and norms, but also through incentive structures that make certain courses of action attractive, and carry a small charge for some and make others act roads

extremely costly for others. The injustice lies in the way in which some agents limit other agent's chances⁶ (ibid.).

Social structure and structural injustice is relevant for this paper because I want to further the understanding of how the women's social situation is connected to the rest of society. The state, norms or other agents in the society might affect the women's agency and feeling of power through structure, such as formal regulations and informal arrangements. I want agency and social structure to go together with each other when I analyze the interview material.

⁶ Compare this to Rawls' Principle of Liberty 'Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others' (Rawls, 1971, p.53) The agency of one agent should thus not be of a disadvantage for another agent.

3. Methodology

3.1 Method

By doing a case-study I don't have the tools to explain what the reality, e.g. the situation for all fisher women, looks like. Instead I might be capable of trying to interpret how the reality is being perceived through some people's point of view. To increase the reliability I must then be aware of my role as a researcher during the collection of data and also being able to look at knowledge as a process of interpretation through a hermeneutic view. The hermeneutic approach that helped me interpret my data might as well have caused some problems. It is mostly my own impressions and boundaries that set the frameworks for my results. To work through this I will share and explain my collection of data as much as possible.

I chose to do semi-structural interviews to increase the depth of the understanding of the women's experiences, but at the same time being able to control the presence of themes of my interest during the sessions. Questionnaires could also have been an option, however, I saw obstacles in designing a suitable template in an exploratory study. When I instead spoke to the women I had the opportunity to steer the conversation to themes that the women felt comfortable with at the same time as I was able to ask them to develop phenomenon I thought was interesting for the research. I am aware that these themes which I structured the interviews, and later on my results, from are made up by me. With instead a deep interview I may have found other themes. A further disadvantage about surveys was that the women might not feel comfortable of answering written questionnaires. At the polls, I would also have needed a sample of at least 40 respondents to determine the outcome not by chance (Newbold, Carlson & Thorne, 2010) and I didn't think I would receive this amount. The optimum would possibly have been to first do qualitative interviews to then follow up with quantitative surveys. I would then had been able to adapt the questionnaires after what some of the women wanted to talk about while I had gotten a good pre-understanding as a basis. However, this was too big for this project.

Ackerly and True (2010) says that an interview that goes on in the respondent's home can help her to feel more comfortable talking about her life situation. By doing visits in their homes, the women also had opportunities to show me the equipment they used when they work without the need to describe this in words. This made it easier for me to understand things I had little preconceptions about before.

During the interviews there were a lot of people involved. I had the feeling that the women wouldn't feel comfortable answering questions about their family and so on when their family was in the same room. I tried to explain why this could be a problem but I wasn't able to get the privacy I think was necessary. I am aware of this and hope that this didn't cause too much of a default to my results.

One other problem with the validity might be the 'validity of concepts'. According to Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson and Wängnerud (2012) one can always question the operationalization given the interpretation of the theoretical concepts to the operational indicators. If the operationalization is poorly substantiated it can lead to the variables not measuring what they are supposed to. Esaiasson et al. (2012) says that the validity problem increases with the distance between the theoretical definition and the operational indicator. In this paper it might be even more of a problem because he adds that 'a high level of abstraction means that the translation into operational indicators will be particularly problematic and thus easy to be exposed to criticism' (ibid., p. 59) [my translation]. In this paper I use agency and structure as concepts which are both theories that aim to explain people's life through power relations. This thus requires a certain level of abstraction to interpret the concept to fit into the researched people's stories.

Esaiasson et al. (ibid.) point out different strategies to overcome this problem and since I wasn't able to empirically test my operationalization and couldn't rely on previous similar research, the only strategy that's possible is called 'face validity' (ibid., p.62). Basically it's the way of reasoning towards an acceptable validity of concepts. It involves reasoning about both the pros and cons of various possible operationalization and trying to find the weak spots among the theoretical concepts and test materials.

I have tried to overcome this problem of abstraction by using a variety of sources in my theoretical approach. The sources could therefore complement each other and thus creating a more comprehensive interpretation of the concepts. I also tried to give examples in my theoretical approach of how the concepts could be implemented.

3.2 Implementation

My interviews were both with informants and respondents. The respondent's interviews with the fisherwomen were based, as mentioned, on an interview guide (see appendix, interview guide) with a semi- structure. I used McCracken's (1988) model with a predetermined structure although I was allowed to vary my order and ask follow-up questions

in the areas that I found interesting for the study. I designed my guide with different categories such as personal life, work life and their thoughts about justice, responsibility and vulnerability. I tried to follow a naturalistic interview which consisted of three phases; the introduction, the main phase and the conclusion. In the introduction I wanted to create a safe atmosphere between me as an interviewer and the respondent. The main phase consisted of the predetermined interview questions where the respondent was allowed to tell one's story. In my role as a researcher I tried to get out as much as possible of the information, but I was careful not to ask leading questions. Instead I tried to ask open questions. In the concluding part of the interview I tried to reestablish a positive relationship with the respondent and tried to reassure that she didn't have anything more to add.

For the interviews with the state office and Mr Baloor (General Secretary of the National Fish Worker's Forum, NFF) I only prepared some guidelines as a tool to have a conversation. I didn't seek the same depth in the questions with these informants.

Because the women I interviewed had Tulu as their main language I needed a translator. My aim was to find a college student because I thought that the level of education might help me get closer to an accurate interpretation. I also wanted to find a female translator since this might create a desirable atmosphere regarding the power relations (Ackerly et al, 2010) between the woman and myself and my translator. However, this was more difficult than I had imagined so the translator that I finally found was a male lab assistant whose gender and lack of education could have affected my results. Although, this wasn't his first time being a translator and I therefore think the translation were acceptable.

I recorded all my interviews and I also tried to take as much photos as possible to go look at afterwards and discover things I didn't at first sight. I found it essential that everyone involved felt comfortable with the recording and was sure to ask if they approved. According to Ackerly et al. (2010), this is important in order to create a good balance between the interviewer and the interviewed, and also because I think it is more ethical justifiable.

As soon as I got the opportunity after the interviews I transcribed them. I didn't want to wait too long because then I wouldn't be able to fill in the subjective impressions as much as possible.

Another part of my data collection was observations at the market and at the harbor. I wanted to understand how the market was working. For this cause I spend a lot of time in the field trying to observe, take photos and ask for whoever knew English. I didn't have a translator to help me at this time. I spoke to the fishermen and visitors at the harbor and at the market, and asked them to tell me how the auction and market worked. I tried to get an

overview about the situation but I'm aware of that I could have misunderstood the complex system of market and auction.

3.3 Sampling

I wanted to get four long interviews with different fisher women about their living situation. I thought that amount would give me enough ground and more interviews would require too much time of transcribing and visiting. My translator from the university had a function more than just helping me during the interviews. He was also part of making the selection for my respondents because he had local knowledge and would therefore help me get in touch with the right women for my interview with a long experience of working at the fish market.

Because of that the women at the market need to follow the rules from the state corporation I found it to be of interest for this project to also get in touch with the responsible there. I also wanted to get their point of view and how they perceived the situation of the women. The interviews with the state took place at the town office. I used a 'snowball sampling' by asking the informants (Esaiaasson et al, 2012) to help me find out what other informants at the corporation would be of most use to me.

While once again using a snowball technique I found Mr Baloor (General Secretary for the NFF) by discussing my research with the University of Social Work in Mangalore. Mr Baloor is engaged in forming unions for fisher women and I figured that he would have knowledge about the women's social situation.

3.4 Preconceptions

I earlier said I wanted to visit the area where the women interact with other people during a typical day at work. My aim was to get insight about the structure of the market before doing interviews with the women. My approach was to spend as much time as possible in the area because I felt like I would then get a more nuanced picture of the field and reduce my prejudices. I was observant over the fact that my prejudice otherwise would lock me in a given path and thus set limits on what questions I could ask during the interviews. However, I was aware of that biases however are important for one's understanding if you manage to process them well (Gilje & Grimen, 2007). I therefore wanted to talk with the locals and also use a lot of my sight, hearing and smell impressions. I used a camera, recorder for mental

notes and wrote down as much as I could when walking in the harbor, at the auction and at the market.

3.5 Ethics

Before every interview with the women I started off by explaining to them why I was there to talk to them. I also told them that they could stop the interview whenever they wanted. This is expressed in the guide (Appendix). The women also remain anonymous in the paper.

For the sake of the women I found it important to use a bottom-up perspective. Therefore, the major parts of my results are based on the women's thoughts and experiences. Although I have interviewed the corporation I will when word is against another rely on the women's information. I don't think this will interfere with the reliability because the women talk for themselves as individuals and the corporation talks about the women as a group.

3.6 Analysis

I started my analysis by sorting the results from my respondent interviews using the model from Esaiasson et al (2012, p. 269-274). I tried to find similarities between the answers and sorted them in the themes; personal, economy, governance and natural resources. The same applied to the informant interviews with the corporation and the general secretary for the NFF, their answers regarding education, governance and economy was sorted into the themes as well. Into these four themes I tried to link the concepts of agency and social structure where it suited, and thus where able to interpret the empirical data with help of my theory and previous research.

By interpreting the interviews with a hermeneutic approach I thought I could be able to look beyond the given answers and get an overall understanding of the situation. According to Gilje and Grimen (2007), hermeneutics doesn't believe in an absolute truth, everything depends upon the context and phenomena that emerge during the interviews are thus social constructions. I used the 'hermeneutic circle' (ibid., p. 187) during the whole process of understanding my transcribed text. I thus tried to see the text as whole with individual parts that only could be understood by reference to the whole. In this case the individual woman's answers could be seen as the individual parts and the whole were rather the similarities between the different interviews, the previous research and my chosen concepts. This process can be understood as a circle, neither the individual nor the whole can stand without the other.

The problem with hermeneutic is that there is always a risk of being too subjective and open to further interpretation. To avoid serious flaws as much as possible my aim was to be accurate and clear throughout my work. For example I bore in mind the phenomenon of 'double hermeneutic'. When a person becomes interpreted she has already interpreted herself because people are self-interpretive (Gilje & Grimen, 2007). The problem then is that the researcher thinks that she gets a glimpse of phenomenon but instead it's a phenomenon which has been analyzed and reformulated by its creator. I was aware of this during my research and therefore tried to talk with the women about their personal situation rather than structures and such that they could have opinions about. Another problem with the interviews is that it may have become mistranslations due to my translator.

Regarding my observations it was difficult to operationalize my parameters observations when I had to sort out the essence of my time in the field. However, I believe that clarity and structure helped me by systematizing my results after each day. Some assumption, regarding the observations that I could be wrong about, is if what I thought I observed as average occurring days in the field instead was something less average. However, I believe that by interacting with people who tend to move in the area I got enough past this problem.

Finally I would like to add that I have throughout my stay in Mangalore and in India thought a lot about my own role as a researcher. I am a white, young, female student with middle-class background who traveled unaccompanied. All these parts of my appearance I think affected the way I was treated and might also affected the answers I received during the interviews. The power relation towards the locals was complex. On one hand, maybe my status was increased because of my economic and educational level. On the other hand I think I could notice that I often did not get a lot of respect as I was a lonely young woman. This is no criticism of the treatment I received, but nevertheless a possible problem for my results. It may have affected my performance during the interviews. Maybe a person with a different background, for example, someone who knew the language or were non-white would have gotten increased confidence. However, my gender may have made it easier to talk to my female respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

Below is a joint presentation of my results and analysis. To increase the understanding of the social situation for the women at the fish market, it is essential to first increase the understanding of how the fish market works. The first part (4.1) of my results thus deals with the market organization on the basis of interviews with the women, the corporation and observations at the market. The other parts (4.2-4.5) of my results from interviews with the women, the corporation and the unions for NFF, are structured by the aforementioned themes; personal, governance, economy and resources. The aim is to link these themes with my theoretical concepts (agency and social structure) to being able to answer my research questions. Finally, I will end the results with a concluding discussion (part 4.6) where my aim is to bringing together agency, structure and social development.

4.1 The Market

The place for my observations was in the harbor situated in Bunder (see appendix, Map 2). A lot of people working in the fishery sector are living on the opposite side of the bay, in Bengre (see appendix, Map 2). These people take the ferry from one side of the bay to the other, for example when leaving for work. At the harbor a lot of fishing boats gather after being out at sea (see appendix, Photo 1). There are both large-scale and small-scale fishing boats. The large-scale boats are able to go further out in the sea to fish while the smaller boats have to stay inshore and fish on more shallow water. There are different kinds of fish depending on how deep the water is and so the small-scale fishermen catch different kinds of fish than the large-scale boats. It's mostly mackerel and sardines inshore. At the time I did my observations people told me the season for small-scale fishing wasn't very active, only a few small-scale boats were out fishing. Therefore, I was told, all the fishermen shared a joint auction.

The women who sell fish at the market first buy the fish at the auction (see appendix, Photo 2, 3 & 4) and then transport themselves to the market at State Bank (see appendix, Map 2). This transportation is by walk or rickshaw, which is a motor driven vehicle run by a driver. The transportation with a rickshaw will take about 10 minutes from the harbor to the market. Walking the same distance will take about 30 minutes and the walk is next to a highly trafficked street.

The auction at the harbor is out in the open by the water, while the market is situated in the middle of central Mangalore. The place for the market is like a block between the major roads in the city which creates, as in most parts of Indian cities, a high volume and emissions from rickshaws and cars. The roof of the market consists mostly of suspended plastic pieces. When the sun is high it creates an incubator-like feeling that encapsulates heat, moisture and odor but keeps out direct sunlight. The women who sell at the market sit directly on the cold, damp floor or on small pallets. There are large rubbish heaps just behind the fish sales. The women seem to stand or sit in uncomfortable positions and there are many vendors in a small area that compete for the attention of the buyers (see appendix, Photo 5 & 6). The market is owned by the government and is operated by the fish corporation.

4.2 Personal

The women have to be working since they need to earn money for the family. One woman says that the family is hungry and she needs the money because they are very poor. This is a way of helping the family (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16). Another says that it is only her in the household whose working and she therefore have to feed a family of six people in the age of 15-20 years (FW3, personal communication, 2013-10-17). A third woman says to me that she is the sole provider for the family since her husband doesn't work (FW4, personal communication, 2013-10-17).

In addition to the responsibility for the economy all of the women I spoke to also testified to a great responsibility in the household. One woman says, for example, that she every day before going to work is doing all the household chores for six hours (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16). The older woman gets help from her son's wife (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16).

The reason why they are working in the fishery sector is mainly, according to all of the respondents in this study, that the job has gone on for generations. One woman says that she has been selling fish since she was a girl. Her parents and her husband were all in the same industry. Everybody she knows is doing the same (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16). All the women I talked to has had the same job throughout their whole working life. One woman says that she doesn't know any other job she could perform and she has never tried any other profession (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16). Another woman says she doesn't have the ability to change career, or move to another location and work, as this is the only job she can perform in order to survive (FW2, personal

communication, 2013-10-16). A third woman says that she can't change her life situation because she doesn't know any other job she could perform (FW3, personal communication, 2013-10-16). The respondents all say that they haven't had the opportunity to choose between different professions to see what would suit their situation the best. Instead, they have chosen their profession based on their social context where their family and close ones are working with the same thing.

The women I spoke to have only attended school five to six years. One says that she doesn't feel she has enough education to be able to do anything else in her life (FW3, personal communication, 2013-10-17). During a conversation with Mr Baloor (General Secretary in coastal Karnataka Fishermen committee in Mangalore, personal communication, 2013-10-29) he meant that there are religious reasons to why women shouldn't be educated:

'Religiously women when they are children the parents are looking after [the women], after marriage husband is looking after, after old days her children are looking after her' (ibid.)

He believes that this approach means that women shouldn't be able to be independent in the way they can get through education. However, he sees a positive change regarding the future of education for girls in Karnataka (ibid.).

To work at the market the women have to sit on wet cement floor for many hours a day. One woman shows me the equipment they use. It includes a basket for the fish, an umbrella to protect them from the direct sun when they're outdoors and also a large piece of plastic to protect the Sari (their traditional clothing) from the fish and being able to put out the fish on the ground (see appendix, Photo 7) (FW1, personal communication, 2013 10-16). A woman explains the market conditions by:

'I have to be sitting a lot and that is making my body ache. It's also very hot in the sun and my eyes are starting to hurt, therefore I have to take medicine. [...] Because of the pain I will stay at home days in a row' (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16)

This woman, like the rest of the respondents, testifies about the conditions at the market as not good. It is moist, hot, a lot of mosquitoes and ergonomically unhealthy. The tools they use cannot compensate for the physical strain. They also need to work long hours to

make the work profitable. One woman says that she works from noon to dusk except six days a year (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16). Another one work 14 hours per day (FW4, personal communication, 2013-10-17). A third woman is working from early morning until eight at night (FW3, personal communication, 2013-10-17). The women all say that they will work as long as the sun is up. If the lights at the market would have been functioning they would have been able to work even longer days until they had sold all of their fish. One of the older women I interviewed is 70 years old and says:

'I used to spend every day of the week working, but now I only work four days a week. Sometimes I don't go to the market because I'm too old and tired but mostly I try to be at the market at 10 am' (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16)

Her health thus seems to complicate her ability to make an income. The work doesn't seem to be optimal for her situation but since she needs an income she is forced to work despite her poor health.

Regarding their well-being the women responded during interviews that they generally were unhappy with how their lives look like today. One woman says that she is not happy with her work or her life and it's a hard life for her generation (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16). Two other women say that they relate their feelings about their life to what the situation looks like; one says that she must be happy with her work (FW4, personal communication, 2013-10-17), the other one says that she thinks it's nice to meet people at work, yet she works because she desperately needs the income (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16). One woman says:

'It's [selling fish] hard but I do it anyway. There has been no other job for me'
(FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16)

This quote shows that the profession is not optimal for how she would like to live her life but there is no other alternative but to continue on the same path. These statements could indicate a feeling of resignation. They have to accept their work situation for what it is and it's required that they continue with their work regardless of whether they are happy or not.

The women I talked to live and work in a context surrounded by structures. Based on these results there are some structures I want to focus on. First of all they talked about the structure of poverty that drives them to raise money for their home, despite if they like the

work or not. According to the aforementioned research on the fishery sector, a lot of people who get their income from fish in some way, are under the conditions of great poverty. This is a structural problem since there seems to be a strong connection between poverty and the fishery sector. Another structure is the social context; the samplings from these interviews are showing that the women's occupation is the same as their surroundings' occupation.

Despite the structure of poverty and the social context that the women live in, I am interested in how their agency is affected. To what extent can they make free choices in life based on their own preference and values within these structures?

It seems as if the respondents have a life situation which according to them isn't totally desirable. They all speak in some way about their unhappiness and their tuff conditions at work. Also, it seems as if they have made a choice of occupation that mostly consists of the expectations within their social context. This doesn't give them opportunities to think that they might have a choice to do anything beside the fishery sector. One woman even says that she doesn't think that she's able to change her life situation. These feelings can be linked to poor self-esteem which Young (1992) discusses could be a sign of powerlessness, which in turn might occur when an agent doesn't have much agency. As Nightingale (2011) argues, all of the structures in their surroundings, such as poverty-, gender- and class structures, together form the women's identities through an intersectional perspective. Their poor self-esteem might be a result of their identity as fisher women. The identity shape their belief that they aren't capable of doing anything else than what is expected from their surroundings.

Besides the diverse structure of poverty and social context which seem to shape the women's agency through low self-esteem, they might also be affected by the patriarchal structure. A lot of previous research from the Karnataka area shows that women seem to take major responsibility for the family's finances (Tanaka, 2003), much of the unpaid work in a fishing community is being done by women (Biswas, 2011) and women are responsible for the chores at home (Suntornratana, 2005).

The women in this study also seem to take a lot of responsibility over the economy and chores in the households comparing to the men. Either the men are unemployed or they are not taking responsibility over the household's chores besides their work. The women seem to put a lot of unpaid labor in the family which means that their gender controls their amount of distributed time and energy. This is an illustration of how the home can reflect patriarchate subordination of the women through subjective power within the family. The women may not have time to do everything by themselves, and taking care of both the economy and the home

requires multiple actors. An unequal division of labor can thus reduce the women's agency according to Shapiro's (2005) definition.

Regarding the interview with Mr Baloor there also seems to be a religious structure that is affecting the women's ability to choose how they want to live their life, in this case through education. In the whole area of Karnataka only 58% of the people in the fishery sector have any kind of education (International Collective in Support of Fish Workers, 2014). If there are religious structures that are the main cause of this extent, it might affect women the most. Béné (2003) says that the key out of poverty, and thus to increase poor people's agency, is proper education. In other words, changing the structures of poverty through education is an act of change through praxis; feminist agency.

The respondents in this study have little, but still existing, education. However, none of the women I spoke to felt that their level of education has helped them making it possible to make a living out of something besides the fishery sector. Their education, or knowledge using Shapiro's (2005) definition, might therefore be a hinder to their agency.

4.3 Economy

In order to get an economically quantifiable measure of the women's living situation I wanted to create an overlook over their income and expenses during a day. One woman says that she makes Rs 50-200 (U.S. \$ 0.82-3.29), sometimes she loses money relative to the amount she invests, and sometimes she doesn't earn that much when the difference between the purchasing and the selling price is almost equal (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16). Another woman says she usually earns around Rs 200 (U.S. \$ 3.29) but sometimes she loses money (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16). A third respondent says that it is difficult to estimate her income since it depends on what kind of fish she's selling, the profit and the risk varies with the variety of fish, though she earns as most Rs 1000 (U.S. \$ 16.45) or so happens that she loses Rs 200 (U.S. \$ 3.29) (FW3, personal communication, 2013-10-17). A third woman earns between Rs 100-150 (U.S. \$ 1.64-3.29) per day (FW4, personal communication, 2013-10-17).

The income varies between the women I talked to. The conclusions I can draw is that those with greater capital, or higher purchasing power based on the number of marketable fish, have a greater income. Also, compared to the poverty limit of U.S. \$ 1.25 several of the women, even those who usually earn most of the respondents, earn near this limit. It should

also be noted that there seem to be frequent to work a full day, one or a few days a week, but returning home with less money.

In addition to the purchase of fish, they daily need to spend money on ice for the fish, a sale fee and cost for transport of their goods by a rickshaw. These expenses are counted within their income. At home, since they have responsibility for the household's economy, they have expenses as well. After calculations, I concluded that FW2 loses Rs 300-400 (Rs 200 as income minus Rs 500-600 as expense) every day. FW3 manages her budget on the days she doesn't loose and thus gain Rs 600 (Rs 1,000 minus Rs 400). FW4 loses Rs 300-350 (Rs 100-150 minus Rs 400) every day and she adds that her income is insufficient (FW4, personal communication, 2013-10-17). FW1 had no exact amount of her income but she says that she doesn't earn enough to gain any money (Personal communication, 2013-10-16).

This economic model is only working since the women are taking loans. One woman responds to my question regarding if she saves money:

'[Laughing] No savings. But loans from the bank' (FW3, personal communication, 2013-10-17)

None of the women I talked to have any savings. However, everybody take loans. One woman tells me about the prevalence of loans among the women at the market:

'A lot of people at the market take loans and every day the bank will come and collect' (FW4, personal communication, 2013-10-17)

The payment is continuous by the bank staff that visits the market daily and raises funds. The ones who aren't able to get loans from the bank have to instead try to get loans elsewhere. They need money every morning to buy fish at the auction to make an eventual profit during the day. The older lady I spoke to isn't qualified to get loans from the bank due to her age. Therefore she has to start every day by asking friends for money. She says that it's getting harder to find money but she has to keep on trying because her family wouldn't manage without her income (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16).

When I spoke to Mr. Baloor (General Secretary in Coastal Karnataka Fishermen committee in Mangalore, personal communication, 2013-10-29) he said that he, amongst others, has in recent time started unions for fish women in Karnataka. One of the goals for the union is to help with lending of money to these women.

None of the respondents in this study participate in any union. One woman believes that if any woman is to be injured, there is instead a social network of other helping women at the market (FW2, personal communication, 2013 10-16). Mr Baloor (General Secretary in Coastal Karnataka Fishermen committee in Mangalore, personal communication, 2013-10-29) says that women in the fishery sector are not organized in the same extent as men. Unlike the men who drink and waste their income, women work hard to take care of their family. Therefore, they should engage together to create better conditions. The unions might, besides making economical effects, work to increase the women's representation in decision-making processes. Both in terms of representation of women and people in the same low-caste as people in the fishery sector (ibid.).

One structure seen here might be the economical system that the women have to adjust their business to. This structure includes the bank that let some profitable people lend money to a set rate, which puts some people in debt while others make profits. The structure that these women work within doesn't offer insurances or pension unless they themselves save money. The economic structure might as well be linked to the poverty structure since the vulnerability increases if the income is low, everybody in your social context are in the same economic situation and the knowledge about finances and such are low.

The respondent's economical situation isn't sustainable. They seem to lose money every day and are highly dependent on the bank and other people to lend them money. This makes no room for any economic resilience. According to Shapiro (2005), one of the prerequisites for agency is that an agent should be able to relate to their financial situation, so that it reduces one's exposure to risks. This could be such as pension, insurance or investments. The women I talked to seem to lack any kind of long-term financial savings. They thus have little ability to influence their resilience once they have started to become a part of the economic system at the market.

By starting unions who can lend money, this could be seen as a way to create subversive agency (Ramamurthy, 2000) by altering strategies for women to survive. Though, none of the women I spoke had part in any union. They could only rely on their friends and others at the market, which seems to be in the same economic situation as them. One thing I would like to add is that although Mr Baloor's statement 'Unlike the men who drink and waste their income, women work hard to take care of his family' shows trust in women as a workforce, these kinds of reasoning might strengthen the patriarchal structures due to that it might justify the women to take most responsibility for the family. This in turn might lead to the reduction of women's agency.

4.4 Governance

The women don't pay any tax for the income they get for selling at the market. However, since the market is operated by the corporation, this organization collects a fee for letting the women use the market area. When I talked to a public clerk at the central office for the State Bank market (Corporation, personal communication, 2013-10-28) he told me that there is one sole person who works with collecting the fee from the women. The clerk also told me that the women must pay the fee to be able to sell. The contractor comes down to the market every day to collect the fee. It's a fixed amount from the corporation and the fee varies based on how large the area is that the sellers need to use for sales. The person who collects this fee has been selected after bidding at an annual auction. He⁷ will return to the city office only once a year, in April, when his time for charging is complete. Whatever he collects, he has to bring to the corporation (ibid.). The women I talked to said that they daily pay a fee of about Rs 6 (US\$ 0,1). However, the woman with a higher capital (FW3) has more fish and therefore she pays a fee of about Rs 40 (US\$ 0, 66) daily.

In return to the fee the respondents feel that they should get more from the corporation, otherwise it's not a fair cost. The women I spoke to think that because of the money the corporation is gaining they should be able to provide them with necessary things such as proper light and running water. Right now none of the women think that exchange of revenue and commitment is as fair as it should be. One woman thinks that the corporation should provide the market with light, water and proper cleaning (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16). Another one says that the draining system isn't working, they get fever and there are lots of mosquitoes (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16). All of my respondents agree that it's difficult to work and sell due to bad light and that it's getting really hot under the plastic roof. Also during the rainy season everything is getting soaked because of the non-existing draining system.

When asking the corporation what they are supposed to provide the women with they say:

'The sellers do everything by themselves; the government doesn't have to do anything. The government doesn't visit the market, it's only the contractor'
(Corporation, personal communication, 2013-10-28)

⁷ I got the impression that it's always a male contractor.

The clerk at the corporation didn't agree that the fee is excessive regarding the corporation's commitments. Instead, he said that the corporation thinks the fee is too small (Corporation, personal communication, 2013-10-28). At the office, they do not think that they collect a large fee because, according to their assumptions, the women make about Rs 5000-10000 (U.S. \$ 82.25-164.50) daily (ibid.). There is thus a difference in the perception about the women's income. The clerk (ibid.) also adds that the reason why women do not need any proper light at the market is because they stop selling at five pm when the sun is still up. This does as well differs from what the women told me; they are selling to the early evening and are in need of light in order to sell all of their purchased fish.

According to the information that differs, there seem to be a controversy between the corporation and the women at the market. One of the women says that there have been protests against the authority, there is a lack of confidence in politicians linked to the corporation, and there are a lot of women who strike against the corporation by quitting paying the fee (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16). To this statement, the corporation says that 90% of the vendors pay the fee (Corporation, personal communication, 2013-10-28). Also, if there are any protests at the market, that's a thing for the police to take care of. The clerk adds that the fee is set by order of the consult boarder and is thus represented by the people. He has not heard anything about that people would be unhappy about the fee but says that they only have contact with the market once a year when the conductor comes to the office with the money (ibid.).

What we see here is a relationship between a group of people and an institution. This relationship is maintained by an exchange of money (the fee) and a place (the place for sale). You might look at their relationship as consisted out of two agents with an equal profit from the exchange. However, this relationship can't be seen as disconnected from the rest of the society's social structure. There are some results from the interviews that point to that the women in this study work at the market under the terms of the corporation and that this unequal exchange, due to the society's social structure, might affect the women's ability for agency.

There seem to be an unequal balance of power. First of all, according to the women they don't perceive that the exchange is fair. The interviews with the women could indicate a feeling of powerlessness against the corporation. Powerlessness might indicate a lack of perceived agency. They might experience that the corporation holds more power than themselves since the only influence that's possible is through protests and strikes. Also, another sign of an unequal balance of power might be that the corporation has incorrect

information about the women's income due to an inadequate communication. The corporation claims that the fee is set by the women's ability to pay, through a consult boarder, but since they aren't up to date, this might be a sign of ignorance and is affecting the balance of power. Of course, it might be so that my selection of respondents' earnings is not speaking for the entire market. However, the corporation's data is more than ten times higher the women's income and it would be hard to argue against that these are well substantiated claims.

The women think that the fee should provide them with more facilities so that they can perform their job. The terms of the exchange towards the women mean that they should be able to sell fish at the market, but since the exchange doesn't give them the opportunity to develop their full capacity, or perform their job in a pleasant way due to the physical conditions at the market, it makes it difficult to fully take part of this exchange. There thus seems to be a bad communication regarding what is expected from both the agents. It seems to be a misunderstanding since the corporation thinks that the women should do everything by themselves and the women think that the corporation should use the income from the fee to provide them with light and cleaning. There seems to be no available documents or such that could show the terms of exchange. Everything might then be organized by an inadequate institutional structure through diffuse norms. Since the women are not sure about the terms of exchange, their ability to influence the relationship for their own strengthening of agency might be reduced.

It might also be added that the contractor is a male, in opposite to the women selling fish. Due to the patriarchal structures in the society the women might not feel comfortable telling the conductor about their feelings of dissatisfaction at the market. Thus, the information isn't able to reach the corporation and the only way of influence that's left might be protests and strikes.

Hence these assumptions, the relationship between the corporation and the women can be seen as a network in a social structure in which the various agents' actions are interlinked with each other. These actions are systematized after positions in the social sphere, that both of the agents in the network posses in relation to the other agent's positions. When these positions systematically lead to a greater advantage for one agent than the other, with the consequence that one agent lower their agency, Young (2007) defines as social injustice.

4.5 Natural resource

Based on my observations and interviews about the auction in the harbor, I came to the understanding that there isn't any internalized control concerning the function of the market. The women at the market don't have to report their selling to any office. The fishermen don't either need to report to any office about their amount of catch. One woman says that the only rule that applies to her in the harbor is that she has to buy the fish through an auction; she can't buy it directly from the boats. She believes that this is a way for the fishermen to increase their income. Those who buy fish at the auction give the money to the auctioneer who then forwards the money to the fishermen for a fee (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16).

The women are dependent on the fish as a resource to be able to do their job and get money. There are all kinds of fish the women can buy and re-sell, though there is a different profit depending on the fish. Some fishes have a higher purchase price which gives a higher profit, though these are harder to sell since there aren't as many buyers. The women with a smaller capital therefore say that they sell the fishes with smaller purchase price, since the risk is low, but with a smaller profit. This includes fishes like mackerel and sardines.

All of my respondents reveal a complicated situation regarding the access of the resource over time. It has become more difficult to buy fish at the auction since the resource is decreasing. One woman says that:

'Sometimes I get fish and sometimes I don't' (FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16)

When she doesn't get any fish, she must turn back home and can't get any income that day. Another woman says that some days she will come home directly after the auction because the fish was too expensive and she wouldn't be able to re-sell it at the market (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16). The fish price has increased and there is a need of a larger capital in order to acquire resource for resale. All of the women say that this makes it more difficult for the family to survive.

None of the women have gotten any idea of what they would do if the situation would be getting even worse than now. This may indicate that the vulnerability is already low because there is no security for future external threats. Their way of dealing with current scarcity of resource is only to work harder and for longer days.

Regarding who is responsible for a decline of the fish stocks, the women have difficulties of condemn an individual part. One woman says that:

'Only the water itself has a responsibility and you can't blame anybody else'
(FW1, personal communication, 2013-10-16)

Two other women say that it is because of the pollution that the resource has declined. One of them says that everybody in the fishing community once went on a strike against the companies so that they would stop the pollution (FW3, personal communication, 2013-10-17). All of the women, however, share the view that it is difficult to propose a burden to one specific part. One woman mean, for example:

'I can't tell who's responsible. I don't think I have any responsibility. This is something of concern for everybody and it's getting harder for everybody' (FW2, personal communication, 2013-10-16)

One structure that can be seen here, regarding the natural resource, is once again the patriarchal structure since there is a division of labor due to gender. Women in the fishery sector are over-represented in the post-harvesting activities of the fish (Weeratunge et al, 2010) and in Mangalore, as in South-East Asia, the fish market is dominated by women (Kusakabe, 2005). The resource goes through a chain of agents before reaching the women at the market. This might be a disadvantage for them because they are then affected by how other agents act earlier in the chain. What we can see here is a situation where the respondents perceive the natural resource to be declining. If the fish reduces, then the situation for the women is affected by how other agents earlier in the chain re-act to this change in availability.

As the women testify the supply has decreased but the demand remains the same. This means that the purchase price might exceed the women's ability to pay. They might then not get an income. This could be a way the patriarchal structure is affecting the women's ability to control their income, and thus their agency. The reduction of the fish affects the women, but possibly in a different way in the current situation than if they had caught and consumed the fish themselves. Now they are a part of the structural network of agents that influence their investment and profit, as aforementioned.

Shapiro's (2005) definition of agency is that the agent has to overcome physical barriers, such as the availability of natural resource. Lack of resource might lead to greater

competition which requires a larger investment. If the women don't have this amount of money, which these respondents don't, it could lead to a nonexistent or smaller spread of fish supply. A reduction of the spread of supply might increase the vulnerability and thus make the women even more vulnerable to outside influences, such as a worse financial situation. This could in turn affect their agency negatively.

What can be said about the resource itself however is that fish is a non-defined resource and thus exposed to the tragedy of the commons⁸. As can be seen, neither the market nor the fisheries have any internalized control. Free access to the resource controlled only by social relations may not allow for enough accountability. The one's suffering the most from a scarcity of the resource due to the tragedy of the commons are those with the least resilience and lowest agency.

4.6 Concluding discussion

In this study I wanted to further the understanding about structures that might affect women who are selling fish at the local market in Mangalore. I also wanted to investigate the agency these women have despite the social structures. For the interviewed women I found structures connected to poverty, patriarchy, economy and religion. I came to the understanding that these women seem to be affected by aforementioned, multiple structures both in their home and at work. Relational structure, through social systems in their families, was driven both by patriarchal- and religious structures. The women had a hard time distributing their time and energy since they needed to take responsibility over both the household and the economy. The religious structure might also have affected their lack of a proper education since it's not fully accepted for women to go to school for a longer time. Institutional structure, as how the market is organized and how the economical system works, also affected the women.

The structures surrounding the market at State Bank seem to provide different and unequal opportunities. In the structural relationship between the women and the corporation, the women seem to get limited opportunities and minimal benefits relative to the corporation since only the sellers are experiencing dissatisfaction. This could be linked to structural injustice which in this case seems to emerge as a consequence of a market-, economic- and patriarchal structure. The injustice lies in the way in which the corporation's lack of communication limits the women's chances of acceptable working conditions and also limited

⁸ Free access to a limited resource might in most cases lead to an over-exploitation (Hardin, 1968).

their decision making power. It seems as if the total power of these structures working together had strong influence over the women's life.

To not make the women victims to these structures, it was important for me to address agency as well as social structure. However, the results in this paper show that the agency for these women is strongly affected by the prevailing social structure. Some examples of this are that they don't perceive that they can't change their life although they are not pleased with the current situation. There are also a lot of signs that they don't have the economic, educational or decision making capital. Nor have they got an equal division of labor in their homes or enough participation on the governing of the resources they need to make a living.

I found the women's lack of agency, lack of decision making power and exposure to disrespectful treatment from the corporation all being associated with powerlessness according to Young (1992). For instance, there were signs of resignation in their statements about their financial situation; they were in a financial situation that was constantly getting worse, but they did not seem to feel that there could be a way out of it. It seemed as if they thought that if you are a woman in the fishery sector then it is your destiny to be in this financial situation. Their powerlessness thus had become a part of their identity and self-image.

In this study I have found some ways of increasing the level of agency within the women's livelihood context, as a way of coping with their vulnerability e.g. subversive agency. The man working with unions in Karnataka wanted the women to easier get loans. This might change the women's agency since a complex task, like solving the urgent economic problem, may require multiple actors. Also, if the women were able to work together as a cartel, or through a union, maybe they would be able to control the selling prices at the market despite the shortage of resource. However, these are both examples of short-term solving and are only working in the context of current conditions.

Another way of increasing the women's agency, instead in a long-term process, is through the feminist agency approach. This refers to the change of the structures that seem to affect the women's agency and thus decrease their self-image. Firstly, one way might be to higher the educational level for girls in the fishery sector. By working against religious- and patriarchal structures, a higher level of education might, besides increasing the women's ability to choose between qualified occupations, even strengthen their self-image. They might feel that they have a capital of knowledge and thus able to active chose occupation. Secondly, one other way of changing the structures could be to improve the dialog between the

corporation and the women at the market. The women's might feel more involved in the terms at the market and thus feel more equal to the corporation. Thirdly, by influencing the public opinion so that the socio-economic system increases the economic security for everybody in the society, through sickness benefit or such, it would also increase the women's agency. Strengthening the role of women through these three structural changes might even lead to a decrease of the patriarchal order. So, instead for the union to support the economical system by giving loans, maybe they would make better change by more long-term operations, for example, propose changes in the tax policy. Because; if the market would not survive due to overfishing or such, and all the energy in empowering the women have been focusing on the conditions at the market, then the women at the market would be vulnerable since they can't do anything else instead.

What, then, is the relation between women's social situation and sustainable development in fishing communities? Well, this case study have indicated that women in the fishery sector in global south who live close to the resource and has a low agency due to the social's structure, might be highly affected by the fluctuations of fish. It seems as if low agency and low decision making power correlates which give the women little insight and influence in the decisions regarding the market structure. At the same time, these decisions by corporations, companies and others might have a great effect on the fluctuations at the market through legislations and such. Hence, the decisions have great effect on the people who, first of all have a vulnerable position in society and second are not able to influence these decisions. If the decisions don't have the local knowledge over structures they might make decisions that put the affected people in even more vulnerable positions. If the sea gets overfished due to insufficient legislations, then this might, first of all, harm the food security. And for the concern of this paper, the lack of resource might lead to that many people will lose their livelihood without being able to do anything else. This could lead to harm in the whole local economy.

To instead decrease the vulnerability and increase the social sustainability, the decision makers should be more open for a dialog with the affected group of people and also be attentive for the structures that affect these people's agency and livelihood. The people with more decision making power, than in this case the women, should focus on getting a complete understanding of the potential impacts of the affected people. If they fail with this in a long term period of time, and if this is a problem for many local fishery sectors, this might lead to a global concern.

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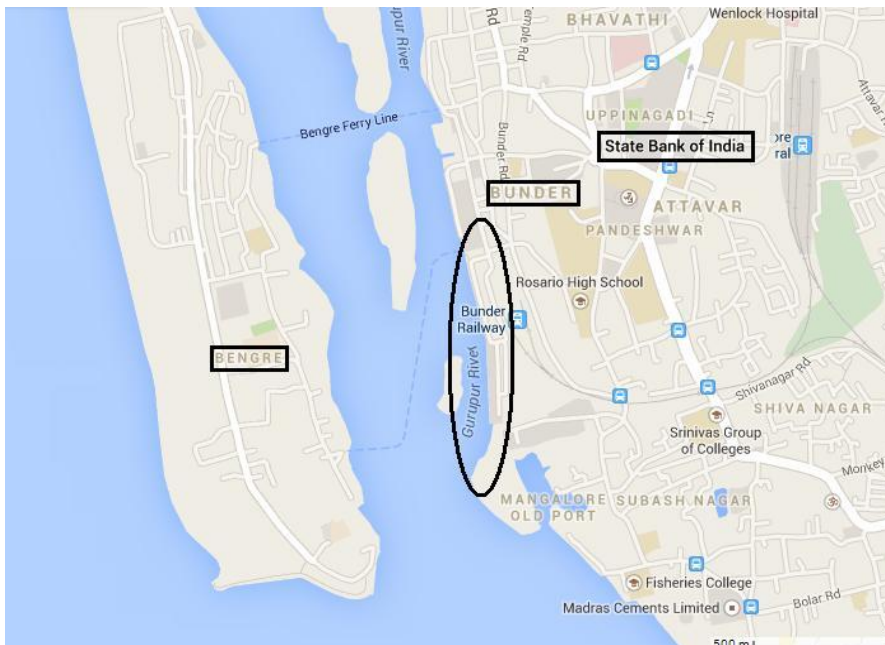
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Appendix

Maps



Map 1. The map is showing where in India Mangalore is situated⁹.



Map 2. The map is showing places in Mangalore, such as Bunder, State bank market and Benge. The oval circle is pointing out the harbor.

⁹ The maps in this paper have been created with Google Maps as a search engine and with Microsoft Paint.

Photos



Photo 1. At the harbor in Bunder the boats gather to sell their daily catches¹⁰.



Photo2. Before the auction at the harbor in Bunder.

¹⁰ All photographs used and displayed in this paper are taken by the author; Ellen Thorell. The photographs were taken during the period October- November in 2014.



Photo 3. During the auction at Bunder a lot of people participate and the bidding works quickly.



Photo 4. The auctioneer is shouting out the bids to the buyers.



Photo 5. The fish market at State Bank with women selling their fish.



Photo6. Three women at Bunder who are waiting to buy fish at the auction to then re-sell it at the State Bank market.



Photo 7. One woman is showing a basket of fish. She is using plastic to cover her clothes from the liquids.

Interview guide

My name is Ellen Thorell and I'm a student from Sweden. I'm here in Mangalore for a couple of months to do some research for my bachelor degree about women, like you, at the small scale market here in Mangalore. I would like to ask you some questions about what you do for a living.

If you don't want to continue the interview you can stop at any time. I'm interested in hearing about your experiences and your life so please try to be as specific and personal as you feel comfortable to do.

Would you mind if I record what you're telling me?

- Name?
- Age?
- Where do you live?

Could you tell me about your family?

- How many people are you?
- What level of education do you have?
- How about your family?
- What caste do you belong to?
- What religion do you belong to?

Could you describe your home?

- Who lives in your house?
- What facilities are available?
- Do you have access to clean water? How?
- Do you have electricity?
- How do you cook your food?
- How far away do you have some sort of health service?
- Do you feel that there is some facilities you miss at home?
- What chores are you doing at your house? Like cooking, cleaning, shopping, taking care of children.

Could you tell me about your transportations during a typical day?

- Where do you go?
- How far is it?
- How do you transport yourself?
- What does the transportations cost?
- How long does it take?
- Are there anything stopping you from not taking any other choice of transportation such as bicycle or scooter?

What do you do with the money you earn?

- Who is responsible for the household budget in your home?
- Do you feel you have any control over the money you earn?
- Do you have any savings? Is it you personal savings? How do you save it?
- Do you need to take any loans? By whom?

Could you tell me about why you sell fish?

- How long have you been selling fish?
- Have you ever worked with any other jobs before this in your life?
- Do you have any plans to work with something else in the future?
- Where you live, what do most people do for a living?
- What happens to the fish that are left over from the day?

Could you tell me about a typical day for you? What do you do?

- How do you get the fish that you're selling?
- From whom do you get the fish? (Auction or directly from the boat)
- What fish is most common that you sell?
- What is the purchase price?
- What is the procedure to sell it?
- Who buys the fish from you?
- What is the selling price?
- Is it different from day to day?
- What facilities do you need to perform your job?
- How much do you have to earn per day to survive?

- How much is that in sold fish?

Could you describe for me how the market works?

- Which actors are involved?

- Is the market divided between Large Scale Fisheries and Small Scale Fisheries? How do these differ?

- Could you be involved in Large Scale Fisheries?

What other people in the market do you have contact with?

- Do you all speak the same language on the market?

Could you describe for me how you think the market is regulated?

- Where can you sell your fish?

- When can you sell it?

- What is stopping you from selling it at another place/ time?

(- What is affecting the price you have to pay for the fish?)

- What is affecting the amount of money you get by selling it?

- Do you need to report to any office regarding your sales? Earned money or amount of fish.

Do you have any contact with any offices? Ex the government of Karnataka department for fisheries.

- In what way?

- Do you feel that there are any rules or regulations concerning you?

- Do you feel that there are any rules that benefit you?

- Are there any that is of disadvantage to you?

- Do you feel that you have any influence over rules, regulations or policies that is affecting you?

- Do you vote?

Do you feel that the availability of fish has changed by the time you have been working here?

- Are there any seasonal fluctuations?

- Do you reflect over an eventual decreasing of fish stocks?

- Do you reflect over what would happen to you if the fish stocks would decrease?

- Do you feel anxious about that thought?

- Who do you think is responsible for avoiding overfishing?

- Do you think you have any responsibility?

Are you content about your living situation?

- Do you want to change your career?

- Would that be possible?

- Is it possible for your children?

- Why/ why not?

- Do you want to move from this place?

- Would that be possible?

Is there anything else you would want me to know?

How do you feel after these questions?