

Growing pressure

Although not a fish-eating nation itself, the Netherlands' fisheries are experiencing strains, particularly on the export-oriented sector

The Netherlands has a legal 20-km exclusive zone for the small-scale fishery sector, comprising trawlers of less than 300 hp and averaging 150 hp. In the north of the country, this zone falls within the borders of the Waddenzee.

This, on the one hand, is partly a bird and flora sanctuary and, on the other, one of the most polluted seas of northern Europe, thanks primarily to industrial waste from Germany.

At the bottom of the Waddenzee, near the coast, there is a large stock of natural gas. This is one of the major items of export from the Netherlands, especially to countries of the former Soviet Union.

For many years, there had been a slowdown in the growth of gas exploitation due to environmental reasons like the sinking of the sea bottom.

Now, however, there is growing pressure on the government from oil companies like Shell to lift the ban on further exploitation for gas.

In view of the usual financial crisis of the government and the shortsightedness of politicians, it seems that these oil companies will win rights of exploitation.

Greenpeace and other environmental action groups have organized a protest campaign against this selfish business of companies like Shell and others. The campaign is supported by fishermen's organizations and has drawn good response from the public.

While the government has still not decided on the matter, it is visibly alerted by public opinion. This is because the general elections are nearing and the environmental issue is at present one of

the most sensitive political issues in the Netherlands.

After a campaign by small-scale fishermen, marine biologists and environmental activists, the EEC Council for Fisheries had, in 1989, founded a sanctuary in the North Sea, close to the Netherlands, for plaice, one of the victims of overfishing.

This sanctuary, called the 'Plaice Box', was not initially very successful, since the big trawlers continued their overfishing practices in the surrounding areas.

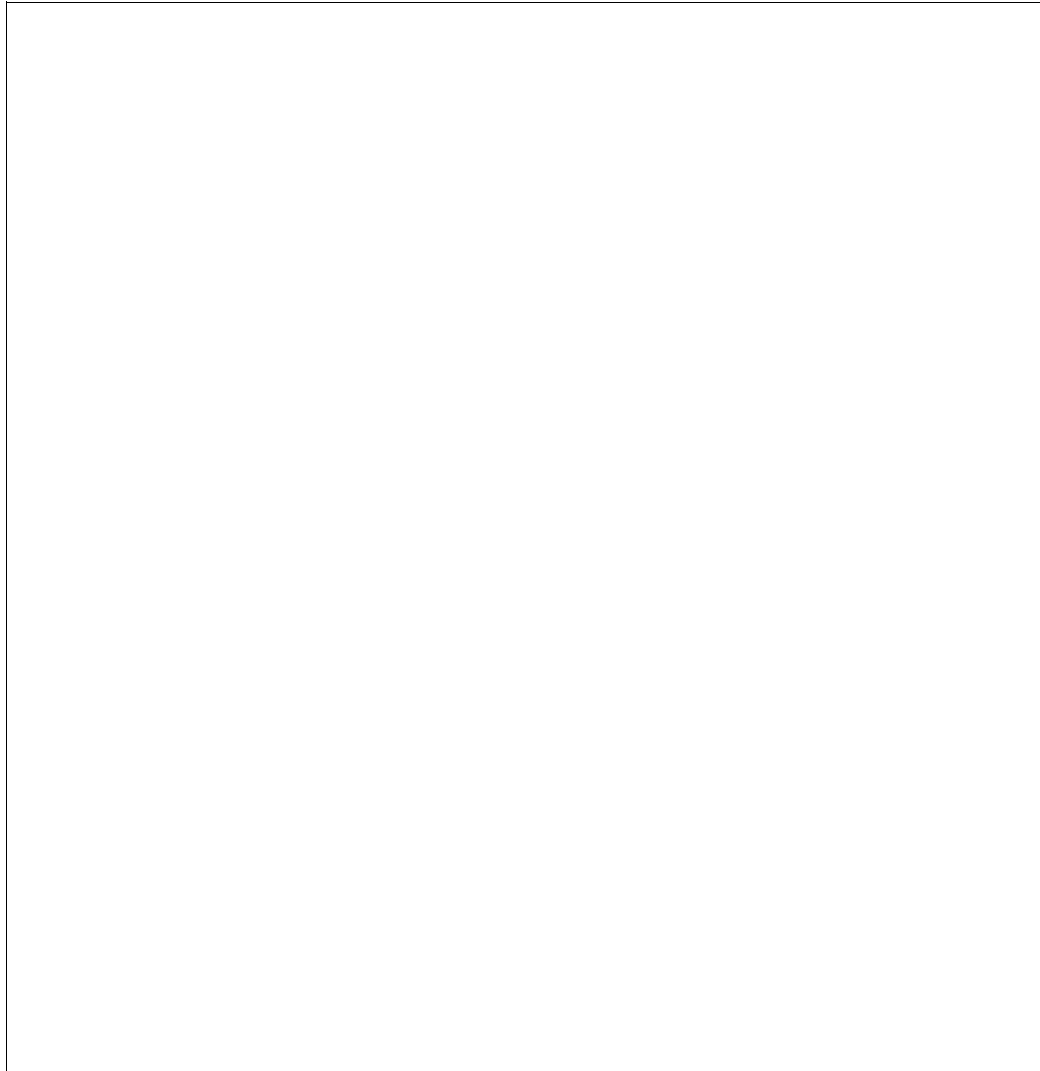
Furthermore, the Plaice Box was closed for only a few months in the year, during the prawn season, and as soon as it was opened, all the huge trawlers rushed in and 'cleaned up' the place within a few days, leaving nothing for the small-scale fishermen.

The small-scale fishermen's organizations and Greenpeace are now campaigning for a closure of the Plaice Box for the whole year and for allowing only the small-scale sector to fish in the Box during a few months of the year.

At present, fish prices in the Netherlands are among the highest in Europe. This is in contrast to France, where cheap fish from eastern Europe is dumped. One reason for the high price is the strict control on the quotas of the Dutch fishermen.

Plenty of imports

This has resulted in a decline in supply of fish in the Dutch market. As there is a great demand for fish, the Netherlands now has to import plenty of it. Otherwise the price of fish would rise further. Most of the fish is bought by the processing industries which re-export them mainly to Spain and



France, where the large, particularly for high-quality fish.

The largest shrimp processing industry in Europe is situated in Groningen, in the north of the Netherlands.

The industry here too imports prawns from Malaysia and Sri Lanka in Asia and then takes them, along with the prawns from the Netherlands, to Poland and the Baltic states to be peeled.

This is for two reasons. The first is because the labour costs of women workers in these countries are much lower. The second reason has to do with laws on hygiene and the environment, which are supposedly more lax than in the Netherlands.

So, even though the Netherlands is not a fish-eating nation, it is a 'good' trading nation.



This piece is by Netherlands-based Cornelia Quist formerly a co-ordinator of ICSF's Women in Fisheries programme

North Sea fishery

Enough is enough!

The closure of an extensive part of the North Sea led to a blockade of Rotterdam, the world's biggest seaport, by angry Dutch fishermen

"This is an undemocratic decision, and we ask ourselves, for how long can the Dutch fisher community persist under these policies? Or are we soon only to see fishermen in museums?"

These words of indignation and despair were uttered at a meeting after the emergency decision of the Fishery Commission of the European Union to close an extensive part of the North Sea for fishing, from mid-February until the first of May. A big part of the closed area is exactly along the coast of the Netherlands and forms the most important fishing ground for the Dutch. For the Dutch fisher community, it was an enormous blow in the face, as they recently also had to accept a large reduction of their quota of plaice and sole, the most important target species for the Dutch fishermen. Furthermore, they are still recovering from the oil price crisis. As a fisher-woman said, "All together, it means that we will see our yearly income reduced by more than 25 per cent, and this is very hard for us women, who are responsible for the management of the household. We have not been given any chance to prepare for such an income reduction, even as our fixed expenses continue."

The emergency decision of the EU-Fishery Commission was due to the depletion of stocks of codfish, which have reached alarmingly low levels. Biologists, fishermen and policymakers all agree that something has to be done urgently to help the codfish rehabilitate. Therefore, consultations had already taken place between the Commission and policymakers and representatives of fisher organizations of the European member States, about the measures needed. This was not an easy process, because several interests were at stake,

and there were different ideas about regulations. Another factor was the fishery agreement of the EU with Norway, with whom the EU shares the codfish stocks. So, the decision was primarily based on political grounds, and the Dutch fisher community now feels victimized.

As their first objection, the Dutch fishers say that the emergency decision will not have the expected results of rehabilitating codfish stocks, as the area, which is designated for closure, is not a typical codfish ground (a hypothesis supported by biologists). Secondly, there are only a few cod fishers left in the Netherlands, and the Dutch primarily fish flatfishes (plaice and sole) and shrimp.

The Netherlands has only been allocated 10 per cent of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of codfish, of which only 5 per cent is caught by cod fishers, while the other 5 per cent is bycatch by the flatfish fishers. The Dutch fishers fail to see why they should be the ones to be affected most by this measure. They are also angry by the fact that the Danish fishmeal fishery is allowed in the closed areas, although this type of fishery is generally considered very destructive. Finally, they also warn of unwanted side effects of the measure, which will lead to increased pressure on the fishing grounds outside the closed areas, resulting in overfishing, resource conflicts between fishermen, and other damages.

Sudden decision

Due to the sudden decision of the Fishery Commission, the two Dutch national fisher organizations were not able to organize any other form of protest than to meet the State Minister of Fisheries to urge her to plead with the Fishery Commission for an alternative proposal. This alternative proposal was to impose a

fishing ban during the spawning time of the cod for the whole of the North Sea, which would be more effective and fair, as far as sharing the costs is concerned.

In support, the Women in Fisheries Network of the Netherlands immediately wrote a letter to the State Minister, supporting the alternative proposal, but also telling her about the problems the fisher families face these days: "We want to fight for the position of our families. If the present situation continues, we will be forced to leave the fishery and choose jobs on the shore. This thought makes us unhappy, and we think this can not be the intention of policymakers."

Women of the Network also wrote letters to members of parliament and the media, which contributed to the mobilization of a broad support. The State Minister of Fisheries was sent to meet the EU Fishery Commission to plead for the alternative proposal of the Dutch fisher-community, but, unfortunately, without success.

To find support for their alternative proposal, the Dutch fisher organizations contacted other fisher organizations in Europe. But, again, they did not succeed. Unfortunately, there is very little solidarity within the fisher community of Europe. Every one tries to settle deals through their own fishery ministers, without considering the interests of the

other communities. So it happened that the EU member States that do not fish in the North Sea supported the decision of the EU Fishery Commission. That act will greatly affect the future of the North Sea fisher community.

"We fishermen, from north to south, have been talking a lot to each other these days through the radio. All of us are surprised and sad that the decision to close parts of the North Sea is pushed through, and that alternative and better solutions are not taken into consideration. We will now surely see a big reduction in our incomes. Our costs will even increase because we are forced to leave our fishing grounds and go farther. Our last hope now is to receive financial compensation. If not, we will no longer refrain from action." This quote from a Dutch fisherman, faxed to the national fishery paper, is a good summary of how the fisher community felt at that moment.

Emergency meets

The Dutch fisher organizations called their members for emergency meetings all over the country, to sound them out on what further action to take. For several fishermen, particularly the younger ones, this emergency decision of the EU was the limit, and they called for "hard actions." These days, the younger fishermen go through very hard times, because investment costs have increased enormously, while the value of their boats

The cutter fleet

In the Netherlands, the cutter fleet is the largest 'traditional' Dutch fishing fleet. In 1999, the Dutch cutter fishing fleet composed 399 boats, of which 56 per cent were small-scale boats (under 300 hp) and 44 per cent were medium-scale ones (301-2000 hp). The large majority of the boats (80 per cent) are more than 10 years old.

Most (84 per cent) of the fishing enterprises of the cutter fleet generally own one boat only. The enterprises are primarily family-owned, and are passed on from generation to generation. The official employment figure of the fleet is 1.815 fishermen, but, generally, family members lend a helping hand in the work. The remuneration of the crew is based on a share system, which means that no real employer-employee relationship exists. The Dutch cutter fleet is concentrated in the north and southwest parts of the Netherlands. The largest fishing village, Urk, is, strangely, situated in the centre of the country. This is because this village was once an island in the sea (Zuiderzee), but after the sea was closed by a dike and land reclamation began, Urk became part of the mainland. The community of Urk is still 80 per cent dependent on fisheries, including trade and processing.

The primary technology used by the cutter fleet is the trawl net (with beam and otter-board), and the major commercial species caught are flatfish (sole and plaice) and shrimp. Codfish

also used to be a target species, but, at present, there are hardly any cod fishers left in the Netherlands. The fish harvest is for human consumption only, mostly for southern European consumers.

Since the introduction of the EU's Common Fishery Policy and the TAC quota system, the Dutch fleet has faced overcapacity. To control and reduce the Dutch cutter fleet, the following management regulations were installed: (a) quota system (Individual Transferable Quotas, pooled in eight management groups); (b) obligatory auctioning; (c) licences (for boats and the 12-miles zone); (d) gear regulations (for engine capacity and mesh size); (e) limits on the number of days at sea (177); and (f) a decommissioning scheme for boats.

Fish prices in the Netherlands are still good, and the sector, as such, is economically 'healthy' at present. Yet, obviously, due to the yearly increase in operation costs and the reduction of quotas, more and more fishing enterprises of the cutter fleet fail to break even, and decide to go in for decommissioning.

This has led to a reduction of the number of fishing boats by 45 per cent since 1987, and a reduction by 40 per cent of the number of employed fishermen. In the last two weeks, another 12 Dutch cutters have reported for decommissioning, among them the last full-time cod fishers.

and quotas is decreasing. Some of them said that they would lose 60 to 70 per cent of their income because of the closure of their fishing ground. The fishermen criticized the EU fishery policy in these words: "The EU fishery management only means rules and restrictions, new ones every day. A fisherman has to go to university these days to understand the enormous amount of regulations. And what has been the result? The number of fishermen has declined, and the income of fishermen has declined, but the fish stocks have not significantly improved. These quota reductions have only caused an expansion of the black market of fish and all kind of other unwanted practices."

Soon, emotions were running high. The leadership, however, felt that they should be cautious not to lose the sympathy of the

public. In the past, the fisher community had often met with negative publicity in the media, partly because of the bad image spread by environmental organizations, which have a broad support with the public, and partly also because of their own attitude and weak public relations.

Meanwhile, the fishermen were provoked by the deployment of a large number of coast guard boats, helicopters and airplanes to control the closed areas. It looked like the State was preparing for a war with the fishermen, who read it as a sign of mistrust. One boat that violated the boundary of the closed areas was fined an exorbitant amount of 30,000 English pounds. When the Netherlands State Minister of Fisheries also refused to discuss any form of compensation or any alternative, the leaders of the fisher

organizations could no longer keep their members under control.

On the first of March, fishermen spontaneously started to blockade the major harbours of the Netherlands. Soon, practically all fishermen had joined in. The leadership of the fisher organizations could no longer maintain a reserved attitude. The action was effective, particularly because the fishermen succeeded in blocking access to Rotterdam, the world's biggest seaport. At night, the leaders of the two fisher organizations succeeded in reaching an agreement with the State Minister about a compensation. The blockade was immediately called off.

Compensation is, of course, not a solution. However, the good news is that the generally divided fisher community underwent the experience of being united. For a long time, both fisher organizations pitched in together with their strengths. Also very positive were the discussions and exchanges within the fisher community at meetings and also via radio communication at sea. For the fishermen, it became clear that it is now time to become more proactive about the fishery management of the North Sea, in order to survive as self-employed fisher families. A group of young fishermen decided to form a working group to prepare, together with the two fisher organizations, proposals for a fish rehabilitation plan for

the North Sea, and promote these proposals to the government. The proposals should aim to protect the marine environment in such a way that fishermen would still be able to run healthy fishing enterprises. Dutch fishermen are entrepreneurs, but, at the same time, fishing is a way of life for them, where they directly interact with nature.

Another good news is that the Dutch fisher community succeeded in winning the attention of the public. But now they have to work hard to maintain this attention in a positive way. Generally speaking, there exists some 'communication gap' between the fisher community and the rest of Dutch society. One reason may be that our fisher community has shrunk enormously during the last century and what is left are small pockets of well-organized, but also rather closed, communities. The latter facet is a strength, as these communities could retain a relative autonomy; yet, it is also a weakness, as they need the support of other sections of society to survive. It is also tragic that such a relatively small fisher community as exists in the Netherlands needs two national organizations to represent them.

Different interests

To be sure, the EU should learn to deal with the different interests within its domain in such a way that Europe's diversity is respected and her citizens are left their

The last of the Dutch cod fishers

Jaap Tuip, leader of the roundfish (cod) fishers, and vice-president of the Dutch Fishermen's Union, does not see a future anymore for his cutter boat, the *VD 19*, circa 1971, the last full-time roundfish fishing boat, along with the *UK 7*, the twin of the *VD 19*. (In the Netherlands cod fishing is traditionally done in pairs.) Both boats have reported for decommissioning. The closure by the EU of the fishing ground in the North Sea was the major reason for this decision. "Normally," says Tuip, "we make nice trips this time of the year to the inside of the Brown Bench and, thereafter, in the direction of the German Bight, but these areas are closed now. Going to farther areas is beyond the scope of the small boats."

Another problem is the reduction of the quota for cod by 50 per cent this year; renting of extra quota is too expensive. Though there is whiting, another roundfish, the cod fishers have no quota for this species. 1998 and 1999 were very good years for the *VD 19* and *UK 7* pair. "But, today", says Tuip, "you won't make a penny out of it anymore." Tuip himself will stop fishing, but fisherman van de Berg of the *UK 7* wants to look around for a new fishing boat. "We are looking for a multi-functional boat, because, these days, you need to be able to switch between gears easily," he says.

(From *Visserij Nieuws*, 23 February 2001)

dignity. Until now, fishermen are often seen as a nuisance, instead of partners in the management of European fisheries, which has a counterproductive impact. However, the attitudes of the EU fisher communities have to change too. There is still a lot of shortsightedness and inward looking tendencies within the communities. Hopefully, the leaders of the fisher organizations will put in more effort in meeting one another at the European level, and working together for the preservation of both the marine resources and the communities who depend on them. 3

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Capitulate, dodge, protest...

State intervention in the fisheries of the Netherlands has forced fishers to adopt some interesting coping strategies

Less than five years ago, on 1 March 2001, newspaper headlines in the Netherlands screamed: “Angry fishermen block sea ports”. That morning, some 50 cutters had moved to obstruct entry into the main port of Rotterdam. Large numbers of cutter fishermen also barricaded IJmuiden and Delfzijl, paralyzing shipping from Amsterdam port and the Eems channel. According to the newspapers of that and the following days, the atmosphere in Hook of Holland was especially vicious. A fisher spokesman threatened to drop a World War II bomb into the waterway, saying that other ships too were carrying explosives. One of the skippers participating in the blockade warned, “We will not stop at anything”.

Port authorities pre-emptively halted all sea traffic and simultaneously filed for damages. The Dutch government, meanwhile, mobilized Navy, Coast Guard and police contingents to break the blockades by force if necessary. The Minister of State for fisheries quickly contacted the fisher unions to find out what could be done. One day later, faced by a threat of stiff court penalties and by financial concessions of the Minister of State, the fishermen decided to conclude their agitations. The sea battle that some observers had feared was thereby averted, and public life went back to normal.

The direct reason for the dramatic incident described above was the imposition by the European Commission of a 10-week moratorium on cod fishing in the North Sea that would also affect Dutch fishermen, albeit indirectly. It reflects some of the trends and tensions that have affected Dutch fisheries at least since the 1970s. These relate, in large measure, to changing entitlements and greater State interference.

In this article, we explore the current state of Dutch marine fisheries and inquire about the constraints by which it is affected. Finally, we consider some of the strategies employed by Dutch fishermen to cope with the present situation.

Fisheries are commonly categorized according to the product, the technology employed (horsepower, vessel type) or the characteristics of the fishing zone. We use geographical criteria to distinguish inshore (within 12 nautical miles), offshore (12-200 nautical miles) and distant-water fisheries (over 200 nautical miles). These coincide, to a large extent, with a typology of fishing craft, as presented in Table 1 below.

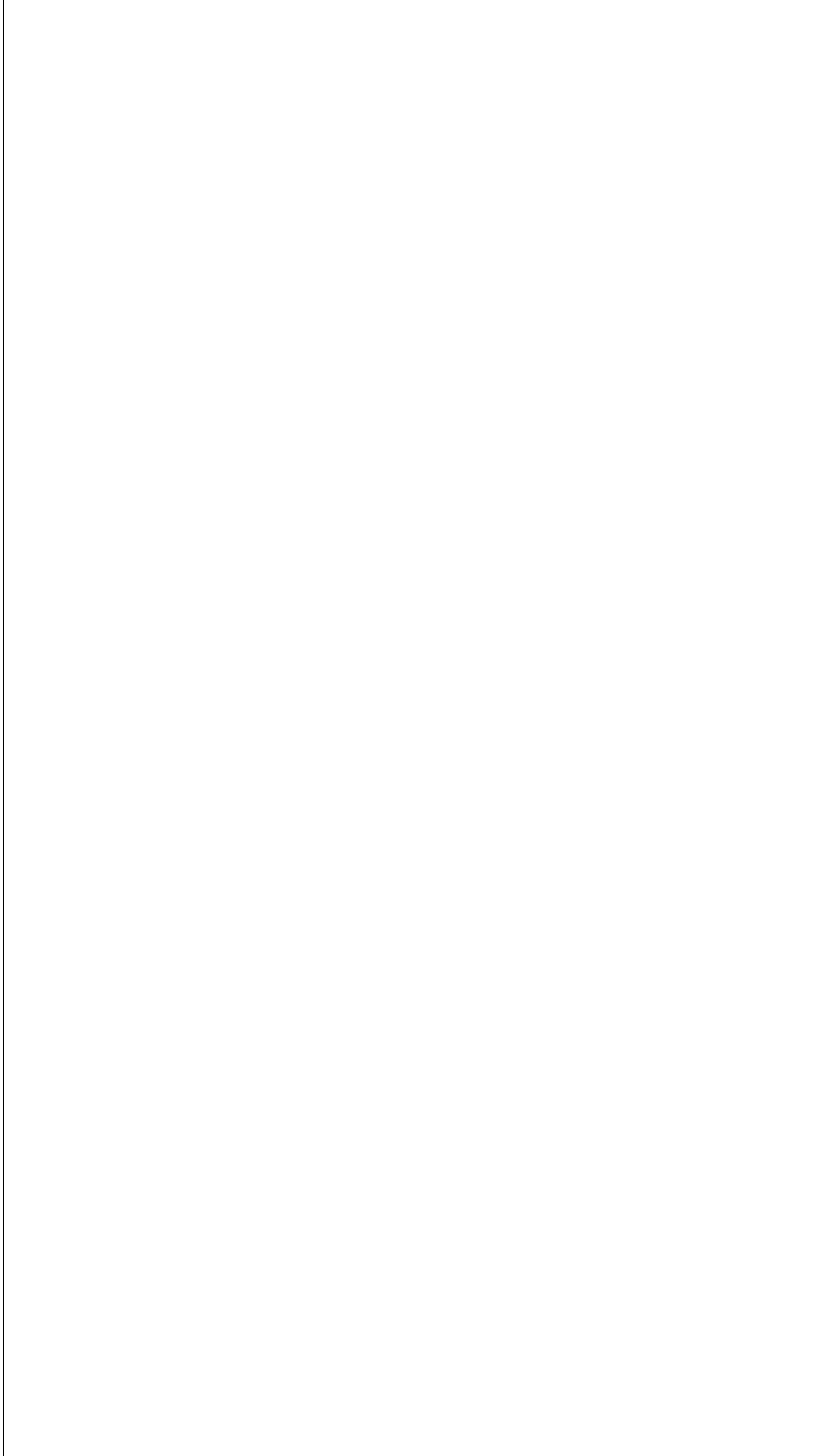
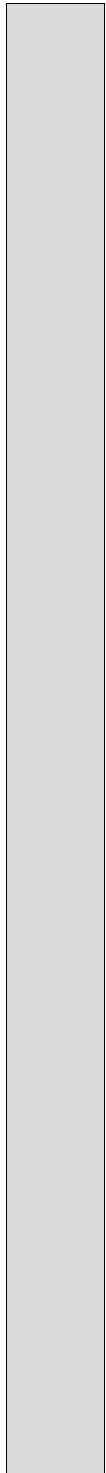
The small Dutch fleet operates from a limited number of harbours spread along the coastline. It employs no more than 2,650 people. The table indicates a decline in the number of fishing vessels in the period 1993-2002, with the exception of distant-water trawlers that have recently increased in number. It also points out that the inshore, offshore and distant-water fisheries of the Netherlands do not differ overly in terms of the value of their landings.

As distant-water fisheries largely take place outside the North Sea, we leave that sector aside in this paper. The inshore fisheries of the Netherlands are dominated by mussel cultivation, oyster farming, cockle fishing and shrimping, but also include other small fisheries.

Spawning grounds

The most important spawning and nursery grounds lie in the littoral and sublittoral areas of the Wadden Sea, and of the Western and Eastern Scheldt in Zeeland. These are also the areas where fishing and fish cultivation are

Netherlands



concentrated, while along the coast other fishing like shrimping occurs. All fisheries are now carried out on the basis of licences or rental agreements issued by government. In many cases, regulation is carried out in close collaboration with producer organizations in forms of co-management.

From the late 19th century onwards, oyster farming has been an extremely lucrative business in Zeeland's coastal waters. Following the outbreak of a paralytic disease, *Bonamia ostreae*, however, most oyster farms, with the exception of those in Grevelingen Lake, were forced to close down. At present, there are only 27 leaseholds of oysters in the latter location, with 34 operators possessing permits for the common area.

Mussel cultivation is a semi-culture, depending on seed that is caught in the wild and then transferred to leased plots for maturation. The Dutch government has made a total of 5,500 hectares available for cultivation, two-thirds of which are located in the Wadden Sea (460 plots), and the remainder in Zeeland (380 plots).

Each firm rents a number of plots in each of the two areas. Just as in the case of oyster production, access- and use-rights are exclusive. Processing and marketing are almost entirely concentrated in the old mussel town of Yerseke, in Zeeland.

Cockle fishing is currently the most contested of the inshore fisheries of the Netherlands, cocklemen regularly crossing swords with environmental activists. The latter argue that mechanical cockle fishing brings hardship to bird populations that depend on the same stock, and also affects the ecology of the seabed.

As a result of political upheaval, the mechanical cockle fisheries in the Eastern Scheldt have now been completely shut down, and significant parts of the Wadden Sea closed for mechanical cockle fisheries. The public discussion that arose both in response to the conservationist movement and as a trade-off for gas drilling in the Wadden Sea, has recently resulted in buying out the remaining mechanical cockle fishermen.

Within the shrimp fishery of today (220 vessels) one can distinguish specialized shrimp fishermen and mixed fishery enterprises. Fewer than half the shrimp vessels are allowed to exploit the Wadden Sea. All fishers are licensed, with Wadden Sea licences being transferable and those for the Eastern Scheldt not. As resources are believed to be abundant, no quotas have been imposed for shrimp fishing although no more vessels are allowed to be added. Recently, Dutch, German and Danish shrimp fishermen of the German Bight agreed voluntarily on catch restrictions. To their disappointment, however, the Netherlands Anti-Trust Authority (NMA) disallowed the agreement, as it was regarded as price-fixing.

The offshore fisheries of the Netherlands are carried out by a fleet of large cutters mainly beam trawlers—that operate in the European exclusive economic zone and are expected to follow European Common Fisheries Policy guidelines. Map 2 indicates the geographical distribution of Dutch fishing effort in horsepower/days. One conclusion is that fishing effort is concentrated in adjacent North Sea fishing areas all along the Dutch coastline, and hardly covers the areas further north or south.

The European system for the allocation of national fishing rights is an important factor structuring the spatial distribution of fishing effort. According to this system, the European Commission determines total allowable catches (TACs) for various fish species, following the quadrant system of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). These TACs are distributed among the member countries, the governments of which decide on allocation among 'their' fishermen. The establishment of TACs and national quotas is a highly politicized process, and fisher organizations base their judgement of the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Food Safety on his or her performance in the annual deliberations in Brussels.

Species quota

At present Dutch offshore fishermen enjoy quotas for 22 species. The majority of the Dutch fleet is, however, specialized in high-value flat fish, such as sole and

Table 1: The Dutch Fishing Fleet

Fishery	Vessel Type	No. of vessels, 1993	No. of vessels, 2002	Landings Value (mn Euro)
Inshore	Mussel boats	77	69	83
	Cutter (1-300 hp)	244	235	26
Offshore	Cutter (>300 hp)	230	158	74
Distant-water	Trawlers	12	17	126

Sources: Taal et al, 2002; Van Ginkel, 2001

plaice. Table 2 indicates the quotas for Dutch offshore fishermen, as they have been set per ICES quadrant for these two species.

If they were to be mapped, the geographical distribution of quotas correlates in large measure with the distribution of offshore fishing effort.

Nowadays Dutch offshore fishermen consider their portion of the national quota for a certain species as their private property. Initially, however, the quota system was met with hard resistance. This included the operation of grey and black markets, as well as confrontations with the General Inspection Service and police forces.

After this period of trial and error, the Dutch government decided, in 1993, to delegate responsibility for the regulation of offshore fisheries to so-called Biesheuvel Groups—Biesheuvel was the chairman of the committee that drafted the management proposal—small groups of cutter fishermen carrying out similar fisheries. This co-management system is considered to be very successful in quota management.

In his study on the fisheries of Texel in the period 1813 to 1932, Van Ginkel describes fishermen as being caught between the Scylla of a fickle natural environment and the Charybdis of an equally fickle market. He describes in detail how fishermen in this period adapted themselves to these varying uncertainties and strove to exert control. Taking his image as point of departure for an analysis of present-day

fisheries, one is tempted to add one equally perilous rock to the Strait of Messina. The State is a factor that now cannot be discounted. In all Dutch fisheries, the national government and the European Commission have attained a shaping presence. State policies now co-determine much of the how, where and what of fisheries, whether it is in inshore, offshore or distant-water.

Fishermen do not readily accept State interference. This may partly be caused by the fact that fishing is a form of hunting and gathering. Hunting societies place a premium on skill and luck, and emphasize egalitarianism. This is not to say that fisher communities disagree with the allocation of fishing rights. A plethora of studies carried out since the 1970s demonstrate that fishermen the world over have developed systems of sea tenure that are continuously refined. The issue is more whether interferences by outside agencies, such as the State, are tolerated. The rapidly increasing level of State intervention in Dutch fisheries has regularly provoked obstruction and protest. The report of the 2001 harbour blockades, provided at the beginning of this chapter, constitutes an example of such resistance.

Excessive capacity

Increased State interference in marine fisheries has, in Europe and elsewhere, been partly triggered by the trouble that fisheries itself has got into. Excessive fishing capacities and efforts have resulted in gross overfishing of stocks and led to ecological crises. That the State has contributed to this course of affairs,

through subsidies and other untoward policies is noteworthy.

The crisis enveloping fisheries is now widely recognized. The Dutch government and the European Commission have addressed the crisis through a finer mesh of measures, whose complexity has been illustrated in the preceding sections. One pervasive problem is that fishermen often do not trust the assessments of crisis on which State action is based, and also lack faith in the effectiveness of the measures taken.

State interference in fisheries also has another cause, however, external to the fisheries. Coastal and offshore areas are under pressure from a blossoming group of new users, such as tourism, the oil and gas industry, and the interests of environmental conservation. The multiple-use conflicts that result with fisheries are frequently mediated and decided by the State. This often leads to a further limitation—spatially or otherwise—of fisheries. The North Sea at present counts many spots and regions that, for one reason or another, have become no-go areas for fishermen.

Dutch fishermen have displayed varying reactions to the problems sketched above. These can be alternatively labelled as, capitulation, dodging, protest and co-operation. In view of the resource crunch and the ever-tightening regulatory system, one would expect that many Dutch fishermen would consider leaving the fisheries.

However, Dutch fisheries are dominated by family enterprises and most sons indicate a desire to continue the tradition. The fishermen who do leave the fisheries largely belong to families that lack male successors. Alternatively, the deserters are quota-hoppers, trading in their Dutch fishing rights for those in another country.

Dutch fishermen dodge regulations in at least two ways. The first method is termed 'quota hopping'. European regulations are such that fishing licences and quotas are only transferable between fishermen of the same country. International transfer of licences and quotas is not allowed. In reality, however, Dutch and Spanish fishermen are frequently known to switch

operations to other country quotas by procuring vessels there. Such vessels continue to fly their flags of origin, but are now Dutch-owned and operated. In this way, Dutch fishermen have greatly expanded their fishing rights in European waters. Needless to say, the catches of quota-hoppers are not reflected in the Dutch national quota even though they market their landings via Dutch auctions. Quota hopping was very popular in the 1980s and 1990s, but has reduced since.

A second method of dodging is through what has become known as illicit, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. With the tightening of State regulations, illegal fishing has taken flight all over the world. The catches are channelled not via the regular auctions, but directly to buyers. In the Netherlands, observers estimate that the co-management system has caused this practice to decline to not more than three per cent of the total volume of landings.

Riots, demonstrations and other expressions of fisher protest were common in the 1970s and 1980s, but rescinded in the 1990s. Recently, however, protests have again increased, particularly in connection with new restrictions on cockle and mussel seed fishing in the Wadden Sea. The 2001 harbour blockade mentioned at the beginning of this paper was a response to the 10-week cod fishing moratorium announced by the European Commission.

Table 2: Dutch Quotas: Sole and Plaice per ICES Quadrant, 2002 (tonnes)

	Plaice	Sole
Quadrant no. (tonnes)	Skagerrak (423), IIa-1 (22), IV (650), VII (10), VIIIjk (117)	II (12), IV (790), IIa (42), III (42), VIIa (125), VIIIjk (52), VIIIab (247)
Total tonnes	1,222	1,268

Source: Taal et al, 2003

An interesting aspect of that incident is that there were hardly any specialized cod fishermen involved, as this field of activity has nearly died out in the Netherlands. Instead, sole and plaice fishermen led the protest. Their motive for taking part was that cod is an involuntary bycatch of sole

and plaice. The cod fishing moratorium would, therefore, also have very real consequences for their major fishing activity.

The style of protest in the harbour blockade was aimed at maximizing political impact. It has not been emulated since, however, probably because of negative side effects, such as the attempts by port authorities to recoup damages from all participants. More generally, the polder model of decisionmaking prevailing in the Netherlands generally discourages wildcat strikes and pressure politics.

We mentioned above that the Dutch government appointed a steering committee in the early 1990s to investigate the adverse relations between government and fishermen, particularly in the offshore sector. The co-management arrangements recommended by the committee were based on (a) distribution of responsibilities between government and fishing industry and (b) co-operation between fishermen. The resulting Biesheuvel Groups have proved to be highly effective. Fishermen no longer overfish their quota, and tensions have died down.

One reason is that, with their investments in quotas, fishermen have gained an important stake in fisheries management.

They have a sense of belonging to the group and, not to be ignored, the groups also function as a quota market.

Inshore fisheries now also enjoy varying forms of co-management. The main characteristic is that producer groups, within the context of a framework agreed upon with government, have been put in charge of regulation and enforcement.

The Dutch fisheries in the North Sea has gone through a process of fundamental change since 1970, the main feature of which is the imposition of a cordon of external restrictions.

Of course, the Dutch fisheries was never wholly free of interference; moreover, some sections such as the semi-cultures practised in the inshore zone have suffered more than others. The general trend, however, is clear: Dutch marine fishing has transformed from a relatively free vocation into one that is almost impossibly curtailed.

Several dimensions

Curtailed has a variety of dimensions, including a geographical one. We thus pointed out how, as a consequence of other users, the various inshore fisheries have been pressed into smaller spatial zones. We also noted that offshore fisheries now possess fish quotas that are linked to circumscribed quadrants of the North Sea. Dutch fisheries is, therefore,

not only curtailed, but also pinned down. For many fishermen, this process has not been easy to handle.

State intervention in North Sea fisheries has provoked at least four coping strategies among fishermen, two of which—protest and dodging—were particularly prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. Since 1990, however, fishermen appear to have adopted a strategy of co-operation. This move was partially reactive, as the State had adjusted its policies and introduced a co-management model. But fishermen too have changed their attitudes toward the State. Their motto seems to be: “If you can’t beat them, join them”.

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A Management Fantasy?

Rights-based management of inland fisheries in the Netherlands through parcelling out areas of water may remain a bit of a fantasy

They stole my fishing rights," says professional fisher Ruub Klop from Hardinxveld, a small riverside town in the Netherlands. The thieves in question are from the federation of anglers in the southwest of the Netherlands. It was in 1975 that Ruub suddenly discovered that the federation was renting the so-called 'scaled fish rights' from the State, in the same area for which he has a permit from the State to fish with legal professional fishing gear.

To understand this fisher's anger and frustration, we need to know more about the history of inland fishing in the Netherlands. In terms of geography, the Netherlands is not much more than the mouth of the river Rhine, spreading out in a huge delta. The inland water surface area is around 380,000 hectares (ha). Still, 10 per cent of the country's surface area is freshwater, although a large part of the lakes and, especially, the swamps was converted into agricultural land through the construction of polders. Inland fisheries is only a small sector in the Dutch economy, with some 500 persons employed in the capture fisheries. Still, it is seen as a valuable part of Dutch history and culture.

Like marine fisheries, inland fisheries in the Netherlands was, for a large part, an open-access fisheries until the early 1900s. A system of fishing licenses was in place for regulation purposes (some licenses were for free), but the main function of the licenses was taxation.

Anyone who wanted to catch fish with pots, traps, spears, fykes, nets or hooks-and-line, and could afford to buy a fishing licence, could do so. There were a few exemptions to the open-access character of the fisheries. Some

noblemen claimed the rights to the fish in the lakes and parts of the rivers in their territories. These noblemen did not fish themselves but handed over their rights to others as a kind of favour or sold them off permanently. Also, the economically important salmon fisheries was regulated by very expensive annual permits that were auctioned off to the highest bidder.

During the Second World War, when fishing at sea was too dangerous, inland fish became very important as a source of food. It was during that period that common inland fishing areas were subdivided into parcels that were

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rented out by the State to individuals who were allowed to use professional fishing gear like pots, traps, nets and longlines. (The types of gear that are allowed are specified in the national fisheries laws.)

Overfishing

In this way, the government prevented unlimited access to the resource so as to prevent overfishing in an era with many mouths to feed and few alternative income opportunities. Overfishing manifested itself mostly in the lakes and less so in the rivers. In the rivers, the decline of stocks of migratory fish like salmon and sea trout was, however, alarming. As always, fishers were blamed for the stock decline, but today we know that heavy pollution of

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Fishermen on the river Rhine pulling in a large fyke net used to catch salmon. The system of fishing lots gave fishermen in the Netherlands the incentive to optimize their fisheries

eel, carp, pikeperch, pike, roach and bream. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, angling rapidly became an important recreational activity for industrial workers and retired citizens. Their numbers expanded rapidly. At first there was good harmony with the professional fishers, who often earned additional income from selling bait fish to the recreational fishers, but, after some time, disagreements arose on the amount of fish to be harvested and stocked. The anglers organized themselves rapidly, and some of the region-based organizations approached retiring professional fishers and offered to buy them out. In the case of the fishing rights owned by the noblemen, this meant transfer of rights to the anglers; in the case of leased fishing rights, a transfer from the fisher-lessee to the anglers' organization-lessee. Some, mostly retiring fishers without successors, accepted the offers.

In many places, buying out fishers was, however, not possible since the waters were rented by the local organization of professional fishers, not by individual fishers. Feeling themselves limited in their expansion moves, the organized anglers used their numbers—claiming more than a million members—to exert political pressure. The government was amenable to such pressure since it came with the seemingly valid argument that quality recreational activities for workers was an important aspect of maintaining the quality of life in a rapidly industrializing country. Also, politicians feared rubbing the anglers the wrong way during election time—their voting power was often exploited by the organizations of anglers. In the 1960s, the industry that developed around angling also began to assert a role. In 2000, the estimated value of the angling business was around seven times that of professional fishing and processing.

In 1972, the civil servants in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries wrote a policy paper that, if implemented, would have increased the role of the anglers' organizations and, at the same time, allowed the continuation of fishing by small-scale professional fishers. The idea was that recreational fishers and professional

the rivers and the destruction of gravel banks are the main culprits. The gravel banks were the natural spawning grounds for migratory fish.

With the system of fishing lots, a professional fisher no longer had to fear that the small fish he let escape would be caught by other fishers in the same area. The system gave fishers the incentive to optimize their fisheries, at least for non-migratory species. Another advantage of the new renting system was that the period covered was six years. In contrast to yearly bidding, the fisher was ensured tenure of the area for a longer period. This made management measures like stocking of

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young eels (called glass eels) or carp feasible in the area.

The system of individual and group access rights through renting out parcels of water worked well for several years, while some regional governments initiated collective lease contracts. The professional fishers were the ones stocking and harvesting

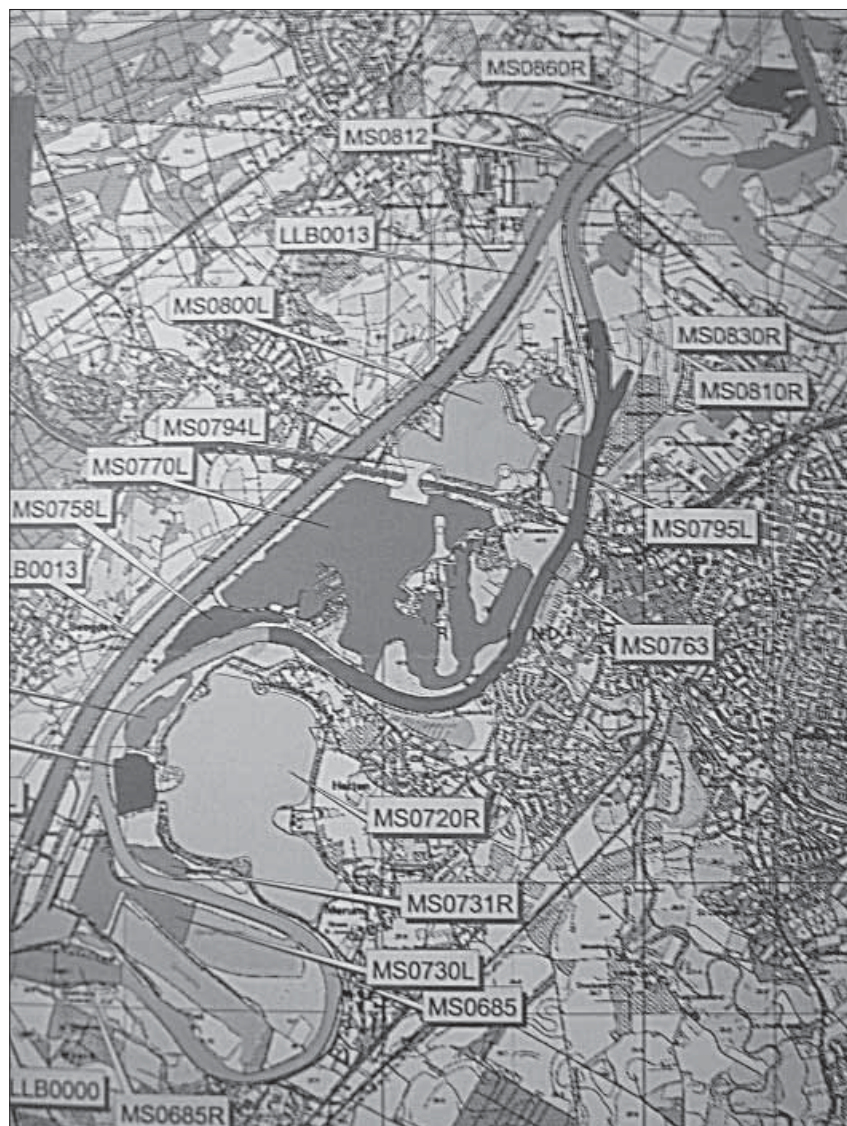
fishers could—and should—fish peacefully together in the same area, but that anglers should depend on professional fishers by leasing out fishing rights. The idea of anglers' organizations owning fishing rights and binding anglers to their organizations through the issuance of fishing permits was very attractive.

The civil servants introduced the idea of renting out split fishing rights in the same area. The rights to eel should go to the professional fishers, and the rights to scaled fish (all other species) should go to the anglers. In the 1970s and 1980s, the catches of eel and the prices fetched were so good (forming 90 per cent of the fishers' income) that other freshwater fish like pike and bream became less and less popular. Many old fishers were attracted to the idea of splitting their fishing rights in exchange for a sum of money.

Politically, it was not acceptable to withdraw fishing rights from the professional fishers and lease them out to the anglers' organizations without just compensation. Civil servants of the Department of Fisheries were, therefore, tasked by their superiors to approach retiring fishers and leaders of organized fishers with the request to turn over the scaled fishing rights to the organizations of anglers. The fishers were paid by the anglers' organization and the government for transferring the lease contract of the scaled fishing rights to the anglers. In the history of Dutch inland fishing this has come to be called the "splitting of fishing rights".

In case of the popular fishing grounds in the Rhine river estuary, the case was somewhat different. The professional fishers held the right to fish in this area through fishing permits issued to them by the national government. These permits allowed them the use of different fishing gear in the area, while the area itself was not rented out to them, as the State retained the fishing rights. The professional fishers did not mind individual anglers fishing in the same waters as they did. The government, however, accommodated the anglers' organizations by giving them the authority to issue fishing permits to anglers wanting to fish in the area.

In the case where fishing is regulated by the issuance of permits to fish in a certain area, it is the government that continues to be responsible for the day-to-day management of the fisheries in the area. The professional fishers could live with this management practice since the government never interfered in their fisheries, and the stocks in the area flourished with the improvement of the water quality in the 1970s. The anglers, however, complained and accused the professional fishers of overexploitation of the stocks of predatory fish. With the help of civil servants in the Fisheries Department, they manoeuvred to obtain the scaled fishing rights. With the scaled fishing rights come the power and the obligation to manage the fisheries.



Map of part of the Meuse river, the Netherlands

ARJAN HEINEN



Members of the Dutch Association of Artisanal Inland Fishers fishing for eel. Netherlands' professional fishers are willing to take up the challenge of fisheries management

participation of representatives of professional fishers, anglers and water managers. The Department of Fisheries is not participating yet. Irrespective of the fishing rights, anglers and professional fishers should formulate common management objectives, including setting separate targets for harvests by anglers and professional fishers. The FMBs should also see to it that agreements, based on the objectives, are enforced. The process of arriving at a management plan is slow and involves many experiments where, through trial and error, a workable management system will hopefully evolve.

Currently, the Netherlands Professional Inland Fishers Organization is pushing the Fisheries Department to take final responsibility for the management agreements, a responsibility that, until now, they did not wish to take up. However, without a central authority that can compel parties to look beyond short-term profits and acquired fishing rights, the idea of different stakeholders coerced into an FMB jointly managing the fisheries will remain a fantasy. 3

Owning these rights, instead of the mere right to issue fishing permits to anglers, makes a huge difference. With the lease contract, control could be exercised over the professional fishers fishing for scaled fish.

At present, a very complicated legal arrangement governs the Rhine river estuary. On the one hand, it is the government that is responsible for the day-to-day management of the fisheries using professional gear. On the other, it is the organizations of anglers that are made responsible for the management of the scaled fisheries. They cannot seriously practise the management responsibility since they are not the ones regulating the professional fishing gear that catch the scaled fish. (Whether, if allowed to, these organizations could actually regulate the catch of the tens of thousands of anglers fishing with rods, is a question that can be tackled only in another article.)

The professional fishers also dislike the situation. They feel they are much more capable of managing the fisheries than the anglers and their organizations, and are willing to take up the challenge.

The government has now embarked on a project in which bigger areas, such as a province or a large water body, are managed by fisheries management boards (FMBs). This is a kind of co-management system with the

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