"From pluri-activity to entrepreneurship: Swedish inshore commercial fisheries navigating in the service-oriented economy"

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ABSTRACT

For decades, inshore commercial fisheries of Sweden have declined in the number of fishermen. In parallel, the service economy has gained importance and the growth in tourism is one example. This implicates new conditions for small firms, active in traditional rural industries. While knowledge about the socio-cultural context of small tourism firms is underdeveloped and since policymaking assigns these firms a key role in sustainable rural development, this article aims to explore a traditional industry in change during the first decades of the twenty-first century. This qualitative study is based on a fieldwork inspired by multi-sited ethnography, conducted at the Swedish west coast for a dissertation published in 2019. Drawing on discourse theory and the concept of positioning, the analysis concludes that inshore fisheries in the service economy are expected to become sustainable entrepreneurs and hosts for their communities. The fishermen position themselves in a contradictory manner both resisting and conforming to the political management discourse. The contemporary service-oriented economy and social relations largely form these small firms, which are characterised by both a high dependency on authorities and by their encounters with harbour visitors.

KEYWORDS

Positioning; inshore commercial fisheries; services; diversification; lifestyle entrepreneurship

Introduction

A common understanding of tourism studies is that the economy has shifted from an industrial mode to the contemporary importance of services (Heldt Cassel & Pettersson, 2015; George et al., 2009). This is also the starting point for this article, based on a dissertation from 2019 (Andersson, 2019). The title, “From pluri-activity to entrepreneurship: Swedish inshore commercial fisheries navigating in the service-oriented economy”, refers to a number of change processes on different levels that have affected the fishing industry. It emphasises a discursive aspect of this field, in which fisheries diversification into tourism entrepreneurship is explored.

Fisheries engaging in other industries is not a new commercial practice. A vast body of previous research about inshore fisheries come from economic anthropology which gives

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a rich insight into the traditional self-sufficiency economy. Until at least the 1970s, many families along the coasts of Sweden engaged in both fishing and farming, primarily to secure their livelihood (Löfgren, 1977, 2002, 2014; Löfgren et al., 1984).

Nor coastal tourism is new. Before the twentieth century, the coast was commonly considered to be a dangerous place with poor people (Corbin, 1994). Over time the coasts started to attract broad interest, not least with the introduction of the annual leave act in 1938 (Swedish Government, 2003, p. 59). The domestic leisure travelling has continued to increase into our days and between 2000 and 2016 it rendered an 80% growth in consumption (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2016). In the summer of 2018, the number of sold guest nights in the west coast region of Sweden (2.3 million) exceeded the total of sold guest nights in the capital of Stockholm (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2016), not including the 20% of Swedish people who have access to a second home (www.sweden.se).

A parallel development in coastal communities is the closures of many large ports inside and outside of cities, of which several have been transformed into recreation facilities, museums and the like (Fredriksson & Larson, 2013). Also, traditional coastal industries such as freights and fisheries have been concentrated in location and rationalised, due to technical advancements (Poulsen, 2012). The Swedish statistics of commercial fisheries show that between 13,000 and 17,000 commercial fishermen were active during the 1930s (SCB, 1940). In 2019, the equivalent number was less than 1000, reflecting the annual number of individual fishing licenses issued by Swedish authorities (SCB, 2019). These developments are visible in many harbours, which are typically dominated by leisure vessels. Commonly none, or only a few commercial fishing vessels are active in Swedish harbours. The lion part of the remaining commercial fishing fleet is defined by authorities as small-scale, with a maximum of a 12 m long boats that are conducting inshore fishing during one day tours, using passive gear like nets and cages. The small-scale fishery is also a small firm in which the fisherman is self-employed.

A number of fisheries-related crises have taken place over the last fifty years across the globe. Overfishing is one of these problems, which have made its marks on the European fisheries management agenda and the latest common fisheries policy reform of 2014. The main purpose of the new policy is to “ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities contribute to long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability” (EC, 2013, p. 1), an ambition that EU aims to operationalise via the structural funds for both fisheries- and rural development (Mikalsen & Jentoft, 2008; Thuessen, 2009). In Sweden, the national agency for Marine and Water Management (HaV) regulates the use of the sea while the Swedish Board of Agriculture (JbV) facilitates fisheries- and rural development. Together with local authorities, they direct the EU financial means to public-private alliances and local bottom-up engagement, such as projects for fisheries- and rural tourism development (Thuessen, 2010).

This analysis focus on an observed intersection between the management of fisheries and everyday practices of inshore fisheries. On one hand, authorities have a public outlook in overseeing the commercial fisheries’ role in society, from the perspective of managing a common natural resource with for instance political visions, quotas and regulations. Authorities manage development and safeguard democracy principles in places where commercial fisheries are still active. This management is conducted from expert knowledge about how to handle commons, rural communities, sea and fish, a knowledge
that manifests in a management discourse. On the other hand inshore commercial fishermen who work in- and with these resources, relate to the management discourse from their outlook of everyday work in fisheries, a knowledge that forms a somewhat different discourse.

These change processes and discourses raise questions regarding the contemporary practices of small firms that are rooted in long-standing traditions. For instance, how is a traditional industry formed and negotiated at the intersection between political management and the everyday life of small firms who are active in the “service-oriented economy” (Cassel & Pettersson, 2015, p. 139)?

Research about small firms in tourism has developed relatively slowly over the last twenty years. This applies especially for studies that take the socio-cultural context of small firms into consideration (Kornilaki et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2011). Small rural firms in tourism have been analysed with a focus on the personal traits and skills of the entrepreneur (McElwee, 2006; McElwee et al., 2006; Pyysiäinen et al., 2006), firm innovation (Hjalager, 1996), the values of the firm (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000), as well as on enablers and barriers for firm growth (Lovelock et al., 2010). Enterprising is often seen as an economic activity, but in the literature about small businesses in tourism, there is a call for knowledge about the social relations and cultural aspects of the environment in which small firms work and thrive (Gaddefors & Anderson, 2017; Hall et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2011). For these reasons, this article takes a cultural analytical perspective on Swedish inshore commercial fisheries that offer fishing-related services.

The aim of this article is to explore a traditional industry in change, during the first decades of the twenty-first century, at the intersection between political management and the everyday life of inshore fisheries, focusing on the following three subsequential questions: How are inshore fisheries presented in visions about the future fisheries? How does visions about hospitality manifest in the everyday life of inshore commercial fisheries, and what does this mean for the work role of inshore fishermen?

**Studies on traditional firms producing services**

Fisheries are traditional in the sense that fishing work has a very long history. Two main orientations appear in theory about small service firms who are rooted in such traditional contexts. The first set of studies engage in the driving forces for offering services. A second set focus on the service firm and their relationships with customers, where the concepts of hospitality, the service encounter and authenticity constitute three dimensions of the service offering.

Looking into the first group of studies on driving forces, quite a few researchers seem to assume that the main purpose for offering services is to improve the firm’s economy. For instance, studies from a business administration perspective suggest diversification as a strategy that will increase the number of income-related activities (George et al., 2009; Hjalager, 1996). The diversification strategy is based on the idea that a firm that diversify is less likely to get financial problems if they can manage several sources of income. In this stream of research, there is an emphasis on the innovative element of diversification, viewing the added income as a result from a new way of working and a new form of value creation. Therefore, diversification is often associated with entrepreneurship (Hjalager, 1996). Studies that address global environmental challenges and tourism also
emphasise diversification strategies for economic sustainability, however, more as one part of sustainable systems (Gössling, 2001; Hall & Gössling, 2016). Activities of diversification have been explored in anthropology and ethnological research about local communities in subsistence economies. These studies show that various combinations of farming and fishing have been common for generations, in terms of traditional “pluri-activity” (cf. Ellis, 1998; Löfgren, 1977; Rosén, 1987). Löfgren (1977) show how these practices were pivotal for the survival of many small fishing villages along the Swedish west coast, for a very long period in time. Work for a secondary income, and in particular salary work, is still common within commercial fisheries (Salmi, 2005; Salmi et al., 1998). The forms of pluri-activities have however changed, today including also activities for environmental protection and tourism (Heggem, 2014). In summary, these studies on diversification and pluri-activities highlight economic values as a primary driving force.

A growing stream of research about the driving forces of small service firms point in a different direction, focusing on lifestyle entrepreneurship. These small firms seem to be motivated by something more, or something else than financial growth. For instance, Shaw and Williams (2004) argue that the motivation of small businesses is part of “entrepreneurial cultures” and that those who run businesses “solely for survival” are “non-entrepreneurs” (Shaw and Williams, 2004., p. 99, 111). But the driving forces are not just about being entrepreneurial in general. Some small firms stress closeness to the family as a main driving force (Getz & Carlsen, 2000). A similar driving force seems to motivate social entrepreneurs, who desire to create social values in the form of commitment and responsibility for the local community and development (Keen, 2004, p. 143; Thomas et al., 2011, p. 966). According to some small firms, their driving forces tend to revolve around opportunities to create environmental values (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000) while others highlight the opportunity to work with their personal interest (Andersson Cederholm & Sjöholm, 2014; de Wit Sandström, 2018). In a study of farm tourism, Di Domenico (2005) believes that studies of lifestyle entrepreneurs have previously focused too much on business administration models and too little beyond economic values. According to Ratten (2018) lifestyle enterprising can be a matter of choosing to turn a private interest into a commercial endeavour, showing the links between a certain form of tourism as an element of an individual’s lifestyle and the intention to start a firm in that field (Ratten, 2018). Their motivation seems to be a mix of career opportunities and certain lifestyle preferences (van Rooij & Margaryan, 2019). These so-called lifestyle expat-preneurs choose to move, usually from a privileged position, to live temporarily abroad in order to run a firm in a host country. In one study of lifestyle entrepreneurs in tourism, the concept of identity construction is being used to problematise earlier conceptions (Bredvold & Skålén, 2016).

This article leans on this stream of lifestyle entrepreneurship research, in so far as it goes beyond a strict focus on financial motivation. An issue that could be explored more, however, is the emphasis on individual agency. Rather than enterprising being solely a matter of value creation or identity construction, small business enterprising can be understood as part of meaningful discursive practices which both respond to and are formed by the social and cultural context.

The entrepreneur is often understood as a creative subject who is able to act on the basis of his or her values, an assumed agency that analytically tends to mask the social relationships and the cultural context against which a lifestyle narrative identity is
always constructed. Following du Gay (1996), there is always “the other” against which discursive positions related to work and production are formed (see also Prince, 2017, p. 340). The fishermen doing tourism entrepreneurship in this article are therefore being regarded as mediators of socio-cultural positions where the formation and narration of their “working selves” emerge in relationships and groups of people. This is more in line with for instance a study about the “transition to tourism entrepreneurship” among fishermen in New Zealand. Lovelock et al. (2010) explore their lived experiences and motivations for offering services, which seems to be about a need to keep up with change. Tourism entrepreneurship is said to give the fishermen the opportunity to contribute to the local community, also being motivated by an increased stability and the prospect of meeting new people (Shaw & Williams, 2004, p. 275). Another similar approach is found in a study by Schilar and Keskitlao (2018), who argue that strong bonds to place are a key motivator for engagement in the tourism industry (Schilar & Keskitlao, 2018). The authors focus on the relationship between lifestyle entrepreneurship and attachment to place as a “stay factor” where the lifestyle is not seen as a means towards an end, but rather that the nature of place forms their tourism firm activities.

While the first set of studies in this literature review focus on driving forces and motivations of small business in tourism, a second set of related studies focus on the practices and interactions of small and traditional firms who offer services. Small service firm owners are often self-employed, work alone and encounter their visitors in person. Knowledge about the visitor preferences and expectations is critical as the customer experience of the service encounter preferably shall exceed the expectations in a positive sense (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). The service encounter thus constitutes an important opportunity for the tourism entrepreneur to fulfil promises that are typically communicated in various forms of traditional marketing (cf. Månsson, 2015). The customer or visitor thereby contributes to the encounter in “co-creating value” with the producer (Frow & Payne, 2018, p. 82). The service encounter can be considered as such a “resource integration”, where value is either co-created or co-destructed (Edvardsson et al., 2012). In service marketing theory, value is co-created in relationships with customers for a long-term income according to a certain “service dominant logic” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Since service encounters are relational, complex and heterogenic (cf. Andersson Cederholm & Sjöholm, 2014), the idea of a general service logic can however be problematised (Svingstedt, 2012), especially if “value” is understood as emerging in practices.

In a sub-set of studies about service encounters in tourism, two themes stand out: the hospitality dimension and notions of authenticity. Hospitality is a wide concept that seems to be a fundamental condition for tourist destinations based on offerings of food, drink and accommodation (cf. Gössling & Hall, 2013). Some studies focus on the concrete activities of welcoming people and the ways in which hospitality relates to ethics and moral issues (Gibson & Molz, 2012). Widtfeldt Meged and Zillinger (2019) believe that hosting is about helping people and creating social bonds from a moral starting point. What unites these studies on hospitality is that it presupposes interactions between people. Hosting is studied from a relational perspective, stressing that the relationship must be maintained and constantly recreated in everyday practice (Lynch et al., 2011, Hunt & Johns, 2013). If we are to understand the social and cultural context of the small service firm, it seems important to also explore practices beyond the actual situation of the encounter.
Another subset of studies focuses on host–guest encounters in contexts similar to fisheries. For instance, a group of researchers show that one of the most expansive niche markets in Swedish tourism is built on a growing interest for nature experiences such as hiking, hunting and fishing (Fredman & Margaryan, 2014; Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010). Sjöholm shows that hosting is not only about delivering such activities *per se*, but that it also implies satisfying visitors’ longing for “the real thing” (Lynch et al., 2011, p. 10; Sjöholm, 2002, pp. 130–131). This applies also to coastal tourists and temporary locals who are looking for an “alternative everyday life”, typically constructed as extraordinary, unique and authentic (Osbaldiston, 2012). The ways in which tourists demand “the genuine and authentic”, either in the form of experiences or as original artefacts, has been debated in the tourism research (Hall, 2007). In order to clarify this article’s understanding of authenticity, people construct authenticity in different forms. Studies within the framework of so-called farm tourism are helpful in this regard. Di Domenico and Miller (2012) show, for example, how farm visitors have certain idyllic expectations on what a “real” farm is. The service producer is expected to match the preferences of the visitors and their ideas about an “authentic” countryside and what a “real” farmer is (Di Domenico & Miller, 2012, pp. 292–294). The farmers view their professional role in relation to this and it appears that their self-images deviate from such expectations. This discrepancy between these different constructions of authenticity is also being presented as a stressful issue by the producer. It is important to emphasise that the study does not claim that there is anything that can be objectively defined as genuine or authentic, but that there are notions of what is considered to be genuine and how this could and should be staged. For that same reason, tourism researchers Cohen and Cohen (2012) emphasise the activity of constructing different forms of authenticity. This article elaborates on that activity dimension with a special focus on positioning. Positioning is a frequently used term within business administration studies and in place marketing. In that sense, the purpose of positioning is to identify firm advantages in relation to competitors (Kotler, 1968). This is highly relevant also for a small firm. Positioning can however also be understood as a social and cultural practice in which the commercial aspect is only one part. This understanding of positioning originates in the overlapping social constructivist fields of discourse theory and discourse psychology. Here, positioning is discursive in how it relates to other people and groups of people in terms of “us” and “them” (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 16). Positioning is a part of people’s discursive practices (Gieben & Hall, 1992, p. 102; Hall, 2001, pp. 72–73) in the sense that all actions and speech acts have a discursive aspect (du Gay, 1996, p. 46). Through exploring positioning from this perspective, this article takes the socio-cultural dimension into account. This offers insight into issues connected the dynamics of relations and change. It is important to distinguish positioning from the concept of identity. Identity implies a personal inner core and the individual ability to choose a personal identity. In discourse theory individuals convey positions from socially established frameworks and from particular ways of knowing, according to socially constructed notions of the world. From this perspective, the “self” is less connected to the individual in terms of identity or personality traits and is rather mediated through positions that are considered appropriate, for instance in the presentation of a work role. When the individual has taken a decisive position, they tend to interpret the world from and through that position, consciously or unconsciously. This implies an ever-changing navigation between possible and/or impossible positions that emerge
in practices, acts and speech-acts that address the future, in the practices of everyday life and in narration of life histories (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 359; Nicolini, 2012, p. 190).

**Methods**

This article is based on a service studies dissertation that was published in 2019 (Andersson, 2019). It is built on empirical material that was collected inspired by multi-sited ethnography (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus, 1995). The field work was conducted in several time periods between 2011 and 2016, visiting and observing in total fifteen fisheries along the Swedish west coast and five fisheries governance sites. Before this section continues to explain more details about the methods, the fieldwork site will be briefly presented.

The west coast of Sweden faces the seas of Skagerrak and Kattegatt. The region stretches from the Norwegian border in the north to the west of county Skåne in the south. The area has experienced several flourishing economic periods, not least “the great herring period” between 1750 and 1800. During this period the population increased at the cost of forests that were cut down for housing and boats. The remaining bare cliffs still give the landscape its character. The west coast resort history is linked to the European tradition of travelling for the social life and curating baths. By the middle of the nineteenth century, communications had improved with steamboats and railways, laying the foundation for several resort establishments by the coasts (Nilsson, 2016). In 2018 the guest nights in western Sweden had exceeded 10 million, an increase and a record that is partly due to Swedes choosing the west coast as their holiday site (West Sweden Tourist Board, 2020).

Going back to the methods of the study that this article is based on, over 270 h of fieldwork generated a mix of qualitative data. About 20 non-participant- and participant observations took place in formal fisheries management meetings on the national (1) regional and local levels (8) and in fishing-related tourism work (11). Over 100 photographs functioned as support for these observations. Policy texts were collected and printed from the websites of the EU directorate for maritime affairs and fisheries (4 fisheries legislation documents and 10 guides for EU-funded fisheries development areas), HaV (8 statistical annual reports of Swedish fisheries) and JbV (5 national rural development strategic documents). The text material contains also a set of editorial articles in the Swedish union of fishermens’ (SFR) newspaper “Yrkesfiskaren”, published between 2010 and 2014 (12 articles). The interview material includes 30 qualitative semi-structured recorded and transcribed conversations, from 30 min to 2 h long (15 with fishermen and 15 with different public and private actors in EU-funded fisheries governance projects). All respondents presented in the analysis have fictive names.

Ethnographic methods mean collecting a mosaic of qualitative empirical material early in the research process. This gives the researcher a rich variety of perspectives on the study object and indications about what themes are currently relevant in that empirical field (Ehn & Löfgren, 2001). The multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) is used when the empirical field cannot be limited to one site, in order to reach saturation in the data. The geographical distribution forces the researcher to be mobile, which was the case in this study.

The data collection phase was followed by several readings of the material, identifying emerging themes. In line with cultural analysis (Ehn & Löfgren, 2001) the themes and sub-
themes were later organised, re-organised and constantly compared to studies like those presented above. The result of this process was three overarching themes that conveyed practices related to time; visualisations of future fisheries, doing hospitality in the harbour and onboard, and fishermen presenting their work-role in their work-life narratives. Finally, these themes were analysed with a special focus on positioning practices, as described earlier.

**Visions of future fisheries**

Fisheries depend on state regulations for the use of a common resource. One topic that the union of fishermen (SFR) and individual fishermen kept coming back to, was their relationship to authorities. Exploring this relationship further, authorities formed a quite specific version of inshore coastal fisheries in their policy texts:

> One of the criticisms often levelled at the fishing sector is that it “does not sell its fish, someone buys it”. However difficult and demanding the fisherman’s or fish farmer’s job may be, that hard work is often not enough to guarantee a decent income. Maintaining sustainable local fishing must also involve actions to maximise the value-added generated locally. The aim of this guide is to give local producers the elements necessary to become fully-fledged players in the market, and in so doing, add value to local production. (EC, 2011, p. 7)

In a similar vein, the Swedish government action plan for rural development (Swedish government, 2010) portrayed visions in which local coastal communities and its food culture were presented as untapped assets, where fishermen could “add value” (EC, 2011, pp. 7–8) for local communities. Diversification was presented as a key strategy for future fisheries. Some of the activities proposed were to create “experience tourism”, refine the “high-quality food” and create “local produce” (EC, 2011, p. 8). The purpose was to support small and medium-sized fishing companies, because “our long coast and many inland waters constitute a unique resource for fishing as well as for recreation and tourism” (EC, 2011, p. 14). A recurrent theme was the “local sustainable fishery” in which fishermen were recommended to become more business oriented and market aware, take financial risks and become profitable tourism entrepreneurs (EC, 2011).

Also, in the fieldnotes from a start-up meeting of a local EU-funded governance fisheries area in September of 2011, it is clear that the ideal fisherman of the future was a tourism entrepreneur. A famous writer and sea biologist was contracted to inspire the participants with a lecture. Local officials and private actors, among them several fishermen, were in the audience. The lecturer argued that the fishermen could become storytellers with the support of the local fisheries area and claimed that their stories would have the potential to market the fishery and offer potential customers “added value”. This would contribute to the education of the public, as “people need to learn more about how nature works / … / The sea is one of the places that the public really knows the least about”. This would also protect commercial fisheries, he continued. The lecturer emphasised that commercial fishing had potential to generate incomes for the whole local area. Another benefit of turning the fishery into a business of storytelling and of “marine education”, would be that the industry would attract potential future fishermen. Another thing that would play an important role for the future was the marketing of various activities, like fishing tours.
In the middle of the lecture, one of the commercial fishermen shouted out from his seat in the audience, noticeably annoyed: “This is a coulisse!” Nor the presenter or the audience asked for an explanation and the lecture continued. At the end, the lecturer claimed that “The willingness to pay is great and the one who does it the best, he competes best!”

This local governance start-up meeting, leaning on the EU fisheries- and rural development funds, can be considered as an operationalisation of what Säwe and Hultman (2014) call “the rhetoric of responsibility and resource management”, observed in the EU fisheries policy reform. The market participation suggested, both before- and in the policy reform, becomes a “frame for environmental responsibility” (Säwe & Hultman, 2014, p. 518). The start-up meeting is only one example of how the commercial fishery is presented as a potentially lucrative future business, where it is assumed that the coastal visitors demand for experiences in nature will continue to grow. The visions are constructing coastal fishermen as potential profitable tourism entrepreneurs and maritime storytellers and in the fishery of the future, it is not enough to “just” fish, the fisherman also need to act as a host for the community.

Interestingly, the national union of fishermen SFR, founded in 1940 and dissolved in 2016, formed a very similar outlook. The author of the leader article urged the associated fishermen to take more responsibility and approach consumers directly, for instance in one issue of “Yrkesfiskaren” from 2011, under the headline “Who will put the fish on the plate?“:

There is a greater tendency (for consumers) to buy a product if it can tell a story, so-called storytelling. The more you can tell about the product’s origin, handling and preparation, the more likely consumers are to pay the right price for a product. By telling stories, you connect the buyer closer to the product. (SFR 2011)

From a discourse theoretic perspective, the contemporary fisherman is indirectly being positioned as unprofitable and asocial also by the fishermen’s association. As implied before in the governance start-up meeting, the individual fishermen in this study however imagined their future quite differently, which is reflected in the fisherman “Nils” talk about regulations:

It’s just a dead stop! / … / I live under the Swedish government and the rules that exist here. The fishing is completely insane in my eyes / … / Then they go through the whole boat / … / looking and looking and looking to see if they can find something that I may hide / … / It’s like fishing with your hands tied behind your back, we are not allowed to fish, we are not allowed to sell / … / There are many more people who control fishing in Sweden today, than those who fish. / … / The whole cultural heritage of fisheries, it will end / … / The younger ones will not take over / … / We will stand here without both fish and knowledge and opportunities / … / we do not have many percent left of the fishing we once had / … / all of the Swedish fisheries, that is my personal opinion, it feels like … yes, it will peter out.

This dystopic vision constitutes a representative complaint from many individual accounts regarding regulations. In the material the narratives constantly form groups of “we” and “them”, where people position themselves with the purpose of distancing, enhancing and/or reinforcing certain claims about themselves (du Gay, 1996; Elliott & du Gay, 2009). This makes an intersection between the management discourse and the fishermen’s knowledge about their situation visible. It constitutes a form of resistance in which fishermen position themselves as victims of fisheries management. From these accounts, the authority visions about hospitality in fisheries can seem abstract
and unrealistic. The fishermen’s stories are however also contradictory considering the ways in which many small firms in this study had already developed into a rich variety of service offerings, very similar to the policy visions.

**Doing maritime hospitality**

Until less than one hundred years ago and for generations back, any Swedish fisherman had inherited their work role from their father. This is not the case in the service-oriented economy. The respondents in this study had typically had various types of other work during their careers, such as construction, engineering and army work. Very few had worked in fisheries during their entire work life, while no one had done only that. Several of these fishermen had also been summer visitors in the area during their childhood. Fishing had been a hobby at first, and some had started commercial fishing after a life crisis. Their family backgrounds were also different. Only in two firms were all family members fully engaged in fisheries. A few of the fishermen were singles or divorcees, while others had a partner that had a different career.

The services offered were very divergent. An odd group of fishermen annually arranged a popular cray-fish festival. In many places, fishermen had put together small exhibitions of old fishing gear and photographs in the harbour sheds. Three of the fishermen arranged “lobster-safaris” and fishing tours, while one couple visited schools on a regular basis to teach pupils about fish and fishing. This couple also pondered on offering fishing tours for impaired visitors. One fisherman offered handcrafted maritime-related products in the harbour. Another fisherman rented out kayaks and rooms, while others ran harbour restaurants and fish carriages. In addition, some were doing non-fishing-related wage work, such as shovelling snow during the winter season. A few fishermen had moved from the city to the coast, and all of them were explicit about that they indeed pursued their private interest.

From a Widtfeldt Meged and Zillinger (2019) perspective, many of these fishermen can be understood as entrepreneurial migrators who on one side are service producers and on the other side are consumers of a lifestyle. This lifestyle entrepreneurship seems however not only to be a matter of creating their own values (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Di Domenico & Miller, 2012;) but it constitutes also a practice of conformity to contemporary norms and values in line with policy visions. This is visible not least in the positioning of the maritime educator, explained in the next section.

**Positioning the maritime educator**

The driving forces for offering services can be found in numerous positions related to knowledge. One position that reappeared in several of the fishermen’s narratives and in the encounters between commercial fishermen and visitors, was the maritime pedagogue. The fisherman “Nils” found for instance that his role as a fisherman was typically neglected and misunderstood by people and he emphasised that he, on the contrary, had a valuable role in teaching visitors about “the real fishery”:

Some people think that just by pressing a button, the plaice comes up / … / It is very noticeable how far from reality people have come / … / They have no idea / … / and they think that you smoked the fish while you drove the boat ashore.
The fieldwork reveals that harbour visitors asked for fresh fish and produce that they required to be “… fished by myself. And no one else.”, ”Nils” continued. The fish shop visitors literally required the fisherman to walk ashore with the box of fish in his hands. Several fishermen in the study portrayed visitors and fish consumers as uninformed, naïve and ignorant of fish and fisheries. Hospitality in fisheries was therefore presented as a form of a pedagogic activity in which the fishermen positioned themselves as unique and knowledgeable actors.

This, together with other themes in the empirical material, shows points of tension where fishermen constantly have to face not only the visitors’ low knowledge but also their prejudice and misconceptions about fisheries. The indirectly constructed authenticity is connected to the fishermen offering experiences of traditional fisheries. Similar constructions of authenticity are found in for instance in an observation with the fisherman ”Jonas”, on his tour boat. His sportfishing visitors demanded an experience of fishing “for real” in their unison chanting for more of ”Långö strömmar, Långö strömmar”, referring to the well-known sways of that local sea.

Taking Grönroos and Voima (2013) into account, such customer expectations are critical for the success of service encounters. At the same time, these fishermen have to consider safety issues, which means that this type of firm requires a flexible balancing act of offering the “real”, yet acting responsible as the captain of the boat.

Several fishermen also communicate their “tough terms” of being a fisherman to harbour visitors via conspicuous signs, symbols and images placed on their boats and sheds.

In summary, the fishermen engage in a form of authentication (Cohen & Cohen, 2012) of the commercial fishery, which is typically being portrayed as real and traditional. Offering hospitality in fisheries requires that the fisherman is informed and aware of not only visitor expectations but also about their preconceptions, emphasising this “more authentic fisherman” although they know such a fisherman does not exist. Although it is clear that the service encounter is understood as a valuable opportunity for such communication, they would typically trivialise this service work, explained further in the next section.

**Distancing the working self from service**

Curiously, no-one in the study compares their work with any other forms of service work. They rather present the service work as the “easy” part of their work compared to fishing, and as something that other people do better. For instance, the fisherman ”Mats” found his personal skills to be inadequate; “I am bad at it/ … /I cannot do it, really”. On the other hand, he continues: “I do not like to have people onboard, it is not my thing”. Whether it was a matter of not being able, or even to get out of doing service work, ”Mats” had solved the issue by arranging a self-service system. His customers were allowed into the fishing shed, to pick up the bags of crayfish themselves, leaving their payment in jar. According to Lovelock et al. (2010), fishermen in the tourism industry seek the social encounter, which is partly the case here. It is however not the actual encounter in a personal sense that is conveyed as most important, but rather the opportunity to be “seen” and “heard” as an actor in the fringe of the economy. Distancing the working self from service work, this service encounter mediates the “realities” of fisheries. Visitors are
invited into a workspace that is not intended for them. While indirectly communicating their lack of time by not always being present in the harbour, there is also an element of trust with the visitor.

The empirical material show numerous examples of displays of old fishing gear and old photographs from fisheries. These “authentic spaces” contributes to the visitor experience, with a stark contrast to conventional food stores and an experience of an authentic fishery that historically was the core of the traditional coastal living. The role of the inshore fisherman in the increasingly globalised service economy is further explored in the positionings of the qualitative and sustainable fishery.

**Positioning the qualitative and sustainable fisherman**

A couple who were fishing together and ran a fish restaurant in the harbour, expressed their approach to their work-role as a matter of dividing the modern fishery from the unmodern, and to distinguish their qualitative fishery from the quantitative:

"Jens": That is the problem with sluggish fishermen. "Eva": They want lots. "Jens": Mm, they do not endure … "Eva": Quantity before quality! (puts the mug down hard against the table and sounds determined). "Jens": So that’s what’s wrong with that generation / … / you have fished plenty and thrown the fish in the boxes and sent them away / … / No one considered that the fish should be put neatly and straight in the box, but it’s just: ‘down in a box. Away with it’. Make sure to get the money and then they fish again / … / "Eva": But they may have been doing this for so many years, so they have a hard time to think differently.

According to the couple, their small-scale fishery has a larger potential to deliver quality rather than quantity, an approach to fishing that they also connect to the “modern” generation of fishermen. Positioning the modern qualitative fishery constitutes a response to the contemporary criticism of commercial fisheries as a resource depleting actor. Doing hospitality in fisheries requires the fishermen to continuously communicate this environmental awareness to visitors. Other elements of positioning the small-scale fishery as a sustainable fishery, is that it is conveyed as more clean and spatially closer to the consumer, for instance by fisherman "Nils", saying:

For example, is an eel that is organically farmed in China better than something that is locally fished? Is it not better to fish just fifty meters from the place where it is consumed? Wild in the sea, without preservatives and dye? Compared to a produce from a country with completely different requirements than what we have here? And being transported around the whole world. Or even twice rounds. And being smoked in one place and filleted in one another place and so on.

Here, the global level of fisheries is woven into the story, where food transportation, large-scale fishing and fish farming are regarded as immoral. The fishermen mediate their “professional selves” as a representation that connects to societal and cultural norms, communicating that they themselves “walk the talk” and act in ways that supports sustainable fisheries and the environment on a long-term basis. The fishermen position themselves as qualitative and responsible fishermen, in relation to industrial fisheries. They act as marketers of their own products and services, but also of “their” group: the inshore commercial fishermen who belong to a specific part of the whole fishing industry, the sustainable fishery. This positioning is not only communicating their entrepreneurial
ambitions and nor are these fishermen merely engaging in service marketing and value co-creation. They are neither only a matter of constructing a professional identity or pursuing lifestyle motives. It rather constitutes a self-reflexive response to the social and cultural context, which in this case is characterised by traditions, industry decline and environmental crises on a global level.

**Conclusions**

In this inquiry, all actors aim to stabilise meaning and create an order that establishes definitions of what a commercial fishery is or should be, against which fishermen position themselves. Doing hospitality in fisheries requires an ambivalent navigation between positions, from being the economic and market aware enterpriser, to presenting the work role as a passionate lifestyle choice. The contemporary norms connected to inshore fisheries become visible, where economic diversification through services in tourism and sustainability are two strong features.

This research contributes to a deep understanding of the social and cultural conditions for self-employed individuals and small firms in traditional industries, who are expected to offer-, who offer- and who have offered services. This specific actor is especially dependent on regulations, compared with for instance a farmer who have exclusive rights to her or his land.

The driving forces for offering services seem to be interrelated and changing depending on the situation, ranging from increasing the low income to passing on knowledge to visitors. The fishermen negotiate what the fishery “is”, positioning themselves as valuable experts on the verge of disappearing. The service encounter is considered as an opportunity to make amendments for small-scale fisheries. When positioning this historical actor, they legitimise the existence of small-scale fisheries. The fishermen stress their role as educator, but the learning goes in both directions where the service encounter enables fishermen to learn about visitors and their expectations, their level of knowledge and preferences.

Visitors have been a part of the coastal everyday life for a long time and rural work and small firms have always been engaged in “pluri-activities” for survival. There are however novel ways of addressing the visions and contemporary practices, like authorities promoting the “fully-fledged player in the market” for “local sustainability”, implying the responsible entrepreneur. Even if fishermen do not use that same terminology, they do stress their entrepreneurial activities and knowledge about sustainability issues, while also criticising their terms of work and peoples’ prejudice. The constant talk about responsibility can be understood as a local response to multiple change processes on a global scale. These positionings constitute an ambiguous interplay of resistance and conformity or, in metaphorical terms, a navigation in a sea of norms and values surrounding this particular type of service firm.

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