THE SMALL-SCALE FISHERY FOR GREENLAND HALIBUT – A LIMIT TO GOVERNMENTALITY?

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Where: Greenland
What: A Management Plan for the coastal Greenland Halibut Fishery
Who: People and some 1250 fishing entities: Larger boats, dinghies, dog-sledges and snowmobiles.
When: Now
Research Problem: Governance, Rationalities and Representations
Method: Long-term fieldwork in Nuuk since July 2010

ANALYSIS
The study analyzes the way certain truths about the coastal Greenland halibut fishery are produced in the ‘Greenland Halibut Long Term Management plan’ and the way these truths relate to a governance problem.

The study argues that the small-scale Greenland halibut fishery system poses a challenge to the possibilities of governing it through a ‘conduct of conduct’ in line with the visions of the dominant governance paradigm.

Whereas many studies document how fishery governmentalities succeed in transforming subjectivities, this study is a comment to that which happens when governmentality fails to control.

The case study forms part of a Ph.D. Project on power and participation in Greenlandic Fisheries Governance.

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Photos of fishing ‘vessels’ in Upernavik and Ilulissat. Communities in North-west Greenland are highly dependent on commercial fishery of Greenland halibut. Some rely entirely on the income from this fishery and related processing activities. To others, it mainly provides cash to sustain a mixed economy that includes a broader range of commercial and subsistence activities.

The plan will divide the coastal fishery into two categories: Boats larger than eight meters will receive ITQs and enter a consolidation game. Persons who fish from dinghies, dog-sledges and snowmobiles will continue to fish on a common quota, but no new entrants will be allowed into the fishery. Through the allocation of fishing rights the management plan prioritizes the replacement of many small actors with a few vessels equipped with ‘enough quota to be profitable’.

The interesting question is: Why?

The Context that Matters to Planning Rationality

- New government in 2009 - a new fisheries governance paradigm emphasises biological sustainability and MSC certification.
- The power of coastal fishers and the political opposition to undermine government TAC policy.
- The other’ in Greenlandic planning today: ‘ad hoc solutions’ and ‘status quo’.
- The Greenlandic shrimp experience: ITQ inserted and consolidation process completed in the sea-going fleet.
- From fishing society to oil-society? Discourse on necessary reduction of coastal fishers meets future need for labour in oil and mining.

Contested Representations of a Fishery

A SUBSIDIZED FISHERY LOCKED IN POVERTY?

“Let me mention the coastal fishery for Greenland halibut as an example of the need for change: In this profession 150 vessels above eight meters and 1100 small entities in the form of dinghies, dog-sledges and snowmobiles are dependent on the fishery. Sum-ups from 2009 concerning 1,268 fishers and hunters show that only 12% of these sold for over €[28,851] Euros and that a whole 63% sold for less than €[10,049] Euros. Anyone can see that these are conditions that make it impossible to sustain an economically sensible livelihood without public subsidies – not to mention being able to afford material renewals and purchases within this fishery”

(Greenland’s Minister of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture in National Newspaper 15.10.2010).

A FISHERY WORTHWHILE?

“We are one of several fishing families in Ilulissat, who have handed over the family fishing business from the older to the younger generation and the new generation of fishers are ready. But there is great frustration as we feel that the fishery profession is to be out-phased. Everybody talks a lot about the oil and the job opportunities it will provide. But we are fishers and we would rather see our profession developed than out-phased. We have so many living resources that our politicians are unable to govern these riches. It is not only Greenland halibut we are thinking of. There are many different species which we do not use sufficiently. For example, we throw out the liver instead of producing it like other items.”

(Anthon Lindenhann, local fishers representative from Ilulissat in National Newspaper 22.10.2010).

Equipment used for long-line fishing from dinghy.