

## QUOTA POLICY AND LOCAL FISHING: Gendered Practices and Perplexities

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*Abstract* In April 1989, the Norwegian fisheries authorities declared a moratorium on fishing by the Norwegian fleet for Barents Sea Cod (*Gadus morhua*). It subsequently introduced a multi-level boat quota system within the coastal cod fishery north of the sixty-second latitude in 1990. This paper treats the quota regime as a national manifestation of neo-liberal globalising processes. It provides a macro-level, gendered analysis of trends in fishing registrants since the regime was introduced. At the micro-level it explores examples of gendered responses to the regime including the ways some women and men re-arranged their lives. The micro-level discussion draws on findings from gender-informed ethnographic research in Northern Norway's fishery communities carried out since the beginning of the 1970s including, in particular, fieldwork undertaken in 2003 and 2004 in Skarsvåg, a fishing village in the municipality of Nordkapp in the county of Finnmark. Following Ramamurthy, it focuses on some of the gendered *perplexities, or joys and aches of globalised life* that followed the introduction of the quota regime. The analysis shows that, for fisheries, as in other industrial sectors, the notion of *perplexity* can help us understand the uneven and conflicting consequences of globalisation for women and men.

### Introduction

This paper is concerned with gender aspects of the Norwegian quota regime for the coastal fleet that was introduced in 1990 in the wake of the 1989 moratorium on fishing Barents Sea cod.<sup>1</sup> In the years since the quota regime was introduced, attention to its ecological, political, social, organisational and technological aspects have coloured Norwegian public fishery discourse. Researchers have explored issues related to many of these aspects of the regime (see, for example, Maurstad 1997; Holm, Rånes and Hersoug 1998; Jentoft 1998). The gender aspects of the quota system have, however, been little explored in the Norwegian context and the work that exists dates from the beginning of the 1990s, shortly after the regime was introduced. There is a need to see how women and men in fishing communities are relating to the quota system in the new millennium.

During the 1990s, my ongoing interaction with and visits to Norwegian coastal fishing villages showed me that fishers were routinely complaining about the system, while nevertheless adapting to it. I observed that, while some individual fishers had bought several boats and quotas and seemed to be well off,

others had sold their boats and quotas. Some women had gone into fishing, while others had moved from the fishery to work in the service sector (Gerrard 2003). Against this background, in 2003 I decided to return to Skarsvåg, in the county of Finnmark, an area I knew well from earlier research projects (Gerrard 1975, 1983, 1995, 2000), to conduct some focused fieldwork on the gender dynamics of the quota regime. I wanted to study how women and men were re-arranging their lives while living within that regime. More precisely, I wanted to explore how the advent of the quota-based fishery had influenced women's and men's strategies and situations within Norway's coastal fisheries.

In order to obtain a better understanding of some gendered impacts of the quota system on the local level, I felt I needed more data, both about people's actions in the village and statistics on trends in the numbers of registered male and female fishers at national and regional levels. I lived in Skarsvåg more or less for seven months, participating in the village life, observing household activities and fishing with my partner, who is an active fisher and has a house in the village. I also participated in tourism activities such as guiding and activities at the school. I talked with children, women and men of all age groups and had formal interviews, lasting for two hours or more, with nine women and eight men. I discussed aspects of the quota regime informally with twelve fishers, among them my partner. Finally, since the regime was introduced, I have followed the coverage related to it in the fishery media and read Norwegian and international publications on gender, quota regimes and fisheries.<sup>2</sup> I draw on all of these sources in the following analysis.

One of the changes that first caught my attention when I arrived in Skarsvåg in 2003 was the fact that three of the twenty registered full-time fishers in the village were women. I knew this had never been the case before and that all three women had registered after the quota system was introduced in 1990. Was Skarsvåg unique in this change? What did it mean? My research revealed that there are no formal, procedural barriers to women's entry into fishing under Norway's quota regime and that the equality policy and related institutions to some degree have encouraged women to take up fishing. It would also show, however, that women's options related to fishing continue to be limited and that men's participation in fishing was changing.

The remainder of this paper begins by giving a short glimpse into the Norwegian coastal fishery quota regime introduced in 1990 and some of its subsequent changes. It then reviews feminist research on quota regimes and gender and fisheries. A gendered analysis of national and regional level data and some aspects of the policy-making process highlight larger trends in women's and men's engagement with coastal fisheries under the quota regime and some of the processes associated with these trends. Ethnographic data from Skarsvåg are used to deepen this analysis and bring into focus the relationship between the quota regime and the strategies and identities of women and men involved with coastal fisheries. Following Ramamurthy (2003) I argue that, as with changes associated with globalisation in other industrial sectors, the notion of 'perplexity' can help us understand the uneven and conflicting consequences of the quota regime for women and men in Norwegian fishery communities. By 'perplexity' I mean 'the

meeting point where multiple ideologies, cultural practices, temporalities, and place, conjoin and diverge' (Ramamurthy 2003:525).

### A Glimpse into the Norwegian Quota System

Within Norway's 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Norway and Russia share jurisdiction over large fishing areas in the Barents Sea. Since the 1970s, Norwegian and Russian (formerly Soviet) fishery authorities have met within the structure of the Norwegian-Russian Fishery Commission to discuss the resource situation in the area, on the basis of results submitted by marine science researchers from both nations. When the moratorium on the fishing of Barents Sea cod was declared on April eighteenth 1989 the Norwegian fishing fleet was close to exceeding the Norwegian portion of the total allowable catch (TAC) set by the Norwegian and Russian Fishery Commission. The Norwegian share had been exceeded in the previous years but this was the first time the Norwegian fishery authorities stopped the coastal cod fishing under this pretext. To avoid further over-fishing, in 1990 the Directorate of Fisheries introduced a multi-levelled boat quota system within the coastal cod fishery north of the sixty-second latitude.

The timing, initial design and subsequent evolution of the Norwegian quota system share certain similarities with quota systems elsewhere (Hersoug 2002) but have been shaped by the Norwegian context and the 'contested terrain' of fishery policies in that context. In Norway's coastal fisheries, open access to fish resources was the main management principle until recently. However, for a long time, there have been fishery-related regulations and laws that have been shaped by local customs and in response to negotiations between the Fishermen's Union and the state (Hallenstvedt 1982). Similarly, in some areas, fishers have developed informal, local regulation regimes (Gerrard 1975; Jentoft and Kristoffersen 1989; Maurstad 1997). Similar processes influenced the design of Norway's quota system for coastal cod fisheries in the Barents Sea. When the Directorate of Fisheries launched the quota system for the coastal cod fisheries north of the sixty-second latitude on January first 1990, they chose a boat quota system instead of a system based on Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs). Under the boat quota system, a quota originally had to follow the boat and was not transferable unless the boat was sold. The quota could not be sold on its own. The moratorium in 1989 and the discussions of the quota system focused initially on cod, but during the 1990s quotas were also introduced on other species including haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) and saithe (*Pollachius virens*) that are often harvested by the same group of fishers who target cod.

Under the quota regime, the initial allocation of boat quotas was mediated by a vessel classification system based on the owner's history of involvement in the fishery. Thus, there are two groups of coastal boats, Group One and Group Two. Group One boats are owned by primary occupation fishers. Quotas for cod, haddock and saithe for boats belonging to this group vary with the size of the boat. In Group Two, most of boat owners are registered as secondary occupation or part-time fishers in the register A. Group Two-boats generally have smaller quotas

than those in Group One. For Group Two-boats there is a maximum overall quota for the fleet as a whole. When this quantity is reached, fishing has to stop for all the boats belonging to this category, unless the boat is registered in Nord-Troms or Finnmark.

There are also two registries for the fishers themselves: the A Registry for the secondary occupation or part-time fishers and the B Registry for the primary occupation fishers. Seniors and persons who are not fully employed in fishing are registered as part-time or secondary occupation fishers. Registration in the B Registry as primary occupation or full-time fishers gives fishers access to public health insurance, unemployment benefits and pension rights. The registration system preceded the introduction of the quota regime. Before 1990, however, the registration criteria were less strict than they are today. In 1990, registration in one of these registries became a requirement for all those fishers wishing to obtain a boat with a quota registered in Group One or Group Two. In addition, steps were taken to streamline the registries by removing fishers who were no longer active.

During the first few years, the individual boat quotas were very small and many families had difficulties meeting their financial obligations. This was especially true for boat owners with loans and larger crews. Starting in the middle of the 1990s quotas were increased in size in response to a better resource situation and a recommendation from the Joint Fishery Commission between the Russian and Norwegian fishery authorities. Over time, many of the surviving skippers responded by buying more boats in order to obtain more quotas, thus reducing the overall number of fishers in the coastal sector.

From the introduction of the quota system the fish had to be fished on the boat to which the quota belonged. This created problems for some fishers because the additional boats tended to be smaller and often older than the original ones owned by the skippers. They often bought the boats from owners of smaller and older enterprises. Thus more boats entailed greater expense and maintenance efforts. The fishers that invested in more boats complained and asked for the right to transfer the quotas from several boats to one main boat, a system the trawlers had practiced for some years.

In 2003, the Fisheries Minister for the Conservative Party, Svein Ludvigsen, introduced a temporary, modified system for Group One boats, called a *driftsordning* or 'operational arrangement'. Under this system, registered primary occupation fishers owning more than one boat could transfer the quotas from other boats to one boat for up to three years. In the fourth year, the quota was supposed to be transferred back to the original boat or boats. It also became legal to rent quotas to other fishers for up to three years. Under the revised regime introduced by Minister Ludvigsen trade in quotas (which was already happening informally) was legalized and accelerated.

Once the quota regime was established, the value of the quota began to have a substantial impact on the price of boats. In many cases when a fisher sold his old boat with a Group One quota, he bought his boat back again for a symbolic sum thereby permitting him to continue fishing – although his boat would now belong to Group Two.

When a new government was elected in 2005, Helga Pedersen, the newly appointed Fisheries and Coastal Minister for the Labour Party and the third woman to hold this position in the history of Norway, criticized the quota system and its results and promised to 'keep the lights in the houses'. She established a new committee to look at the quota system. The committee came up with new proposals that prompted intense debate. In the wake of this report the ministry produced a White Paper (St. melding 21, 2006-2007) called *Strukturpolitikk for fiskeflåten* (Structural Policies for the Fishing Fleet). Its main recommendations were that the quotas allocated to boats should not be allocated in perpetuity but should, instead, be allocated for a period of twenty to twenty-five years. After this period, the quotas are supposed to be reallocated to vessels within the same length group. The White Paper also recommended that boats between eleven and fifteen metres in length should be *structured*. In other words, they recommended that boat owners in this category should be allowed to transfer an additional quota to their boats. A third recommendation was that boats less than eleven metres in length should be able to fish as much as they wanted without a quota. In June 2007 the Norwegian Parliament voted in favour of these new proposals.

Despite the limitations on the buying and selling of quotas under the new Norwegian regime, fishers concerned about the commercialisation of quota argue that it is ongoing and that the older principles supporting transferability, introduced by the former minister, are still in place. Supporters of the older system including, in particular, some of those who own several boats and quotas and those who are active in the Fishermen's Union and in the media, have expressed fears that the proposal from the Ministry was 'not good enough' (Fiskeribladet 2007). Many of the latter are afraid they will lose the quotas bought in previous years.

In Norway, as elsewhere, the most influential white papers and policy documents in fisheries have seldom paid much attention to women's situations or to the relationship between policies, equity and women's and men's roles in fisheries and fisheries communities (Gerrard 1883, 1995, 2003a).<sup>3</sup> As an example, the female representation in the Regulatory Committee that gave advice about the quota questions to the Directorate of Fisheries, had always been low.<sup>4</sup> The former Minister of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs, Svein Ludvigsen, suggested that the Regulatory Committee should be closed down. The formal pretext for this change was that the Fishermen's Union, the Fishermen's Association and other fishery institutions had not come up with sufficient female members to ensure the committee membership met the requirements of Norway's Gender Equality Act, which demands that public committees have at least forty percent of the underrepresented gender.<sup>5</sup> In 2006 the newly appointed minister Helga Pedersen replaced the Regulatory Committee with a meeting of a more informal character. Such a meeting did not need to follow this act. The deliberations at that meeting are open to all who wish to attend, but the result is that the meeting is even more male-dominated than the former Regulatory Committee. Some would say that the Regulatory Committee and the special meeting currently mirror the proportion of women in fishing. However, those making this assumption are ignoring the fact that many of the women married to fishers are integrated into the operation of the enterprise, vulnerable to the effects of policy change and are quite knowledgeable

about fishing and fishery politics. The lack of focus on gender equity in fishery policy-making and in assessment of its impacts more accurately reflects men's longstanding control over these processes as well as an underlying emphasis on resource control, efficiency and profit within the quota regime. This gender-disparity persists despite the fact that Norway introduced The Gender Equality Act in the 1970s.

### **Gender Analyses of Fisheries Quota Regimes**

Researchers have documented that quota systems are an integral component of neo-liberal globalisation within fisheries (Pringle and Pease 2001; Neis, Binkley, Gerrard and Manesch 2005; Power 2005). Advocates of quota regimes argue that the common property nature of fisheries results in too many fishers chasing too few fish, and consequently results in both resource degradation and poverty in fishing communities. Quota regimes, particularly individual transferable quota regimes, are supposed to prevent over-fishing and promote economic prosperity by limiting access to the resource, replacing state control with private ownership and reliance on market forces. From this perspective, the hope is that such an application of neo-liberal principles to fisheries will lead to economic growth and sustainable fish stocks. Critics of quota regimes have pointed to problems with the tragedy of the commons thesis as well as to the tendency for quota regimes to result in the concentration of ownership and control over fish resources in the hands of companies with corresponding negative consequences for small boat fisheries and fishery communities (Nilsen 2002). Despite these criticisms quota systems are the favoured management tool in most western fishing nations (Hersoug 2002; Neis 2005).

Feminist researchers have added a gender dimension to the quota regime debate. Power (2005) has argued that the implicit model underlying quota policies is the rational economic man as a breadwinner. Munk-Madsen's work (1996a) from the early 1990s showed that there were few women in Norwegian fisheries and few women with quota rights. She concluded that the quota system was part of a patriarchal system, of little benefit to women. The Feminist University in Steigen (North Norway) undertook a study on women's participation in decision-making processes within resource management in several North Atlantic countries, and documented that women have had little influence in the long run within these systems (Sloan 2004).

Feminist researchers have also shown that women were important supporters of fishing households and local communities when the Canadian cod moratorium and the Norwegian quota policy were implemented (Pettersen 1994; Gerrard 1995; Binkley 2000; Skaptadottir 2000; Skaptadottir and Poppe 2005). Grzetic (2004:17) documented an increase in the number of female fishers in the Atlantic Canadian inshore fisheries from 1981 to 1990. These years were the years of the decline in the inshore fisheries, leading up to the moratorium in 1992. In this period the number of female fishers rose by eight to ten percent in the provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia as well as in New Brunswick.

Feminist researchers in several countries have in this way contributed to a gendered understanding of everyday life in fishing households and communities, in decision-making and of the impacts of quota regimes. Since many of these studies, especially those from Norway, are from the early period of the quota regime, it is important to see how the practices of women and men have changed as they have lived longer with the regime and as it has changed over time. More generally, feminist researchers have focused on the relationships between the quota systems and neo-liberal globalization emphasizing the somewhat mixed but frequently negative consequences of the latter for women generally and women in fisheries particular (Neis et al. 2005). When viewed from this perspective, Norway's quota system is promoting the integration of women, men, institutions and communities into a new set of international neo-liberal organisational arrangements in the fishery. The development of these arrangements is ideologically driven and the arrangements value certain kinds of knowledge and options over others. Globalisation, as manifested in the quota regime, is affecting the identities of women and men in fishery communities as well as the ways they carry out their lives (Gerrard 2003). Thus, when assessing the gendered impacts of something like a quota regime it is important to understand how established and new practices and thoughts interact in relation to employment, education, leisure and settlement. Cultural aspects like the negotiation of meaning and the consideration of appropriate behaviour for men and women are also of special interest.

In Norway as elsewhere, work in small fishing villages has been associated with more than doing a job. It is also associated with a way of life (Gerrard 1975, 1995, 2000, 2003; Højrup 1983; Nilsen 2002). This means that fishing and fishery work have coloured men's and women's household and community practices and relationships. Research from Norway and Canada has demonstrated that, while under-represented in fishing, women participated in many fishing related tasks (Gerrard 1983; Porter 1995; Thiessen Davis and Jentoft 1992; Grzetic 2004). In this literature women respectively were characterized as the ground crew, the shore crew or the veiled crew of the fishery districts or the fishing. The concept ground crew indicates that women carry out important tasks, increasing the efficiency of the fishing, yet, without social rights for the fishery related work. Saugestad (1988) described and analysed women and men in fisher-farmer households as *partners in enterprises*, implying tight relationships and dependencies between women and men within such households despite a strong division of labour. Fisheries management initiatives including quota regimes have the potential to erode and change these practices and relationships, turning fisheries into businesses, disconnecting them from their community and household base, and changing relationships between women and men (Skaptadottir and Proppe 2005). Introduction of a quota system may lead to more business-oriented values, practices, knowledge and related changes in identities for women and men.

In Norway, Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002) have made an important contribution by studying the meaning or symbolic dimensions as well as economic and social aspects of work and employment in general. They advocate analyses in which the symbolic aspects are connected with social institutions, as well as with social structures. This approach provides an opportunity to study invisible



or 'hidden' power relations. When studying 'hidden power relations', it is necessary to look for methods and perspectives that lead beyond what is immediately observable in research terms. We have to understand why the actors behave the way they do in a specific situation and set of relationships. We also have to analyse such situations as part of a broader context. We may thus encounter challenges relating to the *level of study*. While gender studies often deal with the micro level – in many cases the *local* level – studies that are concerned with external and often global processes, such as fisheries management, require consideration at a *macro* level. As argued by Doreen Massey (2001), the challenge of global-local studies is to 'grasp the powerful nature of social relations at all levels'. In the case of feminist studies this involves attempting to trace women's and men's interrelated experiences and related events from local to national, as well as international or global levels. One research option is therefore to choose specific events or patterns where interacting fields can be traced and the gender dimensions can be revealed. In the case of quota regimes, this means looking at how a globally inspired quota system is implemented at a national level and then exploring examples of how local women and men experience and respond to that quota system both in their day to day lives and over time.

Ramamurthy (2003) has argued that the processes associated with globalisation are multiple and complex producing joy, but also confusion, doubt and uncertainty. She used the concept '*perplexity*' to capture the puzzlement and related combination of happiness, doubt and confusion she found among women cotton-workers who were grappling with globalisation in their daily lives. For her, perplexity is:

a conceptual platform to think about the experiential contradictions of globalization as a series of processes that overwhelm subjects. As an analytic with multiple subtexts, perplexity is a way of marking the tension between overlapping, opposing, and asymmetric forces or fields of power. Perplexity indexes the puzzlement of people as they experience both the joys and aches of the global everyday, often simultaneously. Individual feelings of confusion, of loss, and of desire are not separate from the processes of capital accumulation, especially the changing dynamics of the relationship between consumption and production, but these also do not coexist in a directly derivative relationship either. The separation of what one consumes from what one produces, for example, may be experienced as a form of rupture as well as fulfillment of the desire for modernity (a break with the past and good riddance too). Perplexity is the meeting point where multiple ideologies that constitute the subject – cultural practices, temporalities, and place, conjoin and diverge (Ramamurthy 2003:525).

Not all groups of women and men are equally vulnerable to the effects or asymmetric forces or fields of power but all may experience, to varying degrees, both positive and negative sentiments, joys and aches in the sense described by Ramamurthy. The perplexity concept therefore provides us with an analytical tool to grasp the ambiguities and the multiplicity of meanings of the established and



new practices associated with a quota regime that is multi-leveled, varied, complex and problematic, as are the strategies of government, the industry, the fishers and their family members who interact with the system. It can also help us see more clearly how power is ‘...constituted materially and culturally, and mediated by social relations, difference and politics’ (Ramamurthy 2003:529).

### **Gender and the Quota Regime: Perplexities at the National and Regional Level**

A gendered study of changing patterns in Norway’s coastal fisheries in the wake of the introduction of the quota regime revealed a perplexity. Behind the statistics one could find both an increase and a reduction in the number of female fishers. In the wake of the introduction of the quota regime an increase in the number of formally registered fishers took place in Skarsvåg. The general tendencies showed another tendency. The number of male and female fishers has been heavily reduced.

For as long as we have statistics, the number of Norwegian women registered as fishers and their proportion of the overall fishing labour force has been low (Gerrard 2005a). In 1988, before the quota regime was introduced, there were 29,350 registered fishers of which 575 (2 percent) women and 21,473 (73.2 percent) men were registered as primary occupation fishers. Among the secondary occupation fishers 102 (0.3 percent) were women and 7,200 (24.5 percent) were men<sup>6</sup>. By the end of 2006 the total number of registered fishers had declined by roughly 50 percent to 14,626 fishers, and this is the most profound change after the introduction of the system. Of the survivors, 263 (1.9 percent) women and 10,797 (77.5 percent) men were registered as primary occupation fishers and 102 (0.8 percent) women and 2,826 (19.3 percent) men who were registered as secondary occupation fishers.<sup>7</sup> This indicates that while the relative proportion of part-time to full-time fishers declined among men registered over this period, it doubled among women while remaining low overall with little change in the relative proportion of females to males in the full-time category. In Finnmark, the most fishery dependent county in Norway, 43 (1.6 percent) women and 1,951 (73.5 percent) men registered as full-time fishers and 15 (0.6 percent) women and 647 (24.3 percent) men registered as part-time fishers in 1990. This compares with 29 (2.2 percent) women and 1,009 (77.7 percent) men registered as full-time fishers and 15 (1.2 percent) women and 245 (18.9 percent) men as part-time fishers in 2006.

There continue to be few female boat owners and thus quota holders in Norway. In the whole of Norway, 161 women and 7,386 men were registered in 2004 as owners of boats less than 28 metres in length. Women owned 11 (0.5 percent) of the boats in Group One, while the remaining 2,417 (99.5 percent) boats belonged to men. In Finnmark there were 28 (2.6 percent) female and 1,065 (97.3 percent) male boat owners. Only one woman was registered as a skipper and boat owner in Group One in 2004, compared to 444 men.<sup>8</sup>

These figures show that in Norway, as a whole, women own a very small share of today’s boats and quotas. This indicates that the quota policies have not contributed to any substantial improvement in the overall gender balance among

registered fishers except among registered part-time fishers, and that women personally own very little of the capital in the industry in the form of boats and quotas. While overall there has been an approximately fifty percent decline in the number of registered fishers, the percent decline in Finnmark is less than that in Norway as a whole. The proportion of both female full-time and part-time fishers in Finnmark is a little higher than in Norway as a whole; and higher in 2006 than in 1990. Overall, based on these data, women are still a tiny minority in a man's fishery world.

The quota regime has also been associated with overall declines in the number of plants and in overall employment in the processing sector. Since 1987, North Norway has lost seventy-two filleting factories of which thirty-five were situated in Finnmark (Nordlys 2007). In 2006 the Finnmark filleting plants employed 883 men and women compared to 2183 men and women in 1995, a reduction of about sixty percent (Bendiksen 2006).<sup>9</sup> Today the great majority of processing workers work in small fish plants with less than twenty employees without filleting production.

What is interesting, however, is that regionally and nationally, the moratorium and response to the quota regime brought more women into fishery politics, either through membership in committees and action groups or through involvement in political parties (Gerrard 2005a). The Women's Fishery Committee, initiated and funded by the Minister of Fisheries, was founded in the early 1990s. Later, female representatives in the Sami Parliament drew attention to gender by influencing the content of the *Fishing as Industry and Culture in Coastal and Fjord Areas* report (Sami Parliament 2004). This report included recommendations concerning ways to secure the position of women in fishing.<sup>10</sup> Some female members of parliament have also been critical of the different forms of quota arrangements. However, more recent years have seen political mobilization and initiatives related to women, fisheries and the quota regime contained and to some degree reversed. The conservative Minister of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs eliminated the grant to the Women's Fishery Committee in 2000. He was also the one that first suggested some years later that the Regulatory Committee should close down.

At the political level, while on the one hand women became more visible as activists and politicians in the public arena in opposition to the moratorium and quota regime after 1990, on the other hand permanent, positive results of women's political work are hard to find. This can in itself be analyzed as an example of perplexity. The few women who have been politically successful have rarely succeeded in putting gender issues on the agenda (Gerrard 2003a), but recently the female Minister organized a committee that has looked into the recruitment of women to the maritime sector and how it could be improved. The committee delivered their report in September 2007 (Fiskeri- og kystdepartementet 2007a).

As confirmed by others, despite some women's efforts and some institutional support for changing the situation, fishery politics and especially quota matters are still primarily male domains (Angell 2004; Sloan 2004). Such facts point to power differences between female activists and new female politicians on the one side and established male politicians and leading bureaucrats on the other.

The low number of women in fisheries and the relatively high degree of women's visibility in the public fishery political sphere is in itself an example of perplexity.

### **Gendered Practices under the Quota Regime: Perplexities at the Community level**

Although useful in other ways, national and regional level data can tell us little about the gendered practices and identities underlying these statistics and their consequences for coastal fishing households. Community-level ethnographic research from Skarsvåg will be used to help fill this gap.

Skarsvåg was settled because of the rich inshore fishing grounds nearby. As with other parts of Finnmark houses and industrial buildings were rebuilt after the retreating German soldiers burned everything down in 1944. During the 1970s more than thirty men were fishers and the local filleting factory employed 25-40 women and men. All together there were 220 inhabitants in 1980 (Gerrard 1980). Despite its adjacency to rich fishing grounds, Skarsvåg has lost many inhabitants in recent years with its population dwindling to 118 in 2002 and to 70-80 inhabitants in 2007 (Gerrard 2003; 2007a). About fifteen women and men, adults and children, left the fishing village in the spring of 2007.<sup>11</sup> More people say they plan to move. The number of primary occupation fishers has decreased to twenty and the fish plant employs only five to ten primarily male workers who receive and process fresh whole cod or split and salt it for transfer to processing plants in other places. The plant is currently owned by one of the biggest fishery corporations in Norway, Aker Seafoods, the ascendance of which was intimately linked to the introduction of the quota regime and their quest for supplies of fish for their filleting plants in other places. Today public sector and tourism employment are more important for women in this community and other similar fishery communities than in the past (Gerrard 2003). The number of full-time jobs in the community is limited. In addition, all of the existing positions in Skarsvåg are filled and the out-migration jeopardises future employment in the public sector.

#### *Female Fishers and Women Involved In Fishing: Perplexing Practices and Patterns*

As indicated above, three women in Skarsvåg were registered as primary occupation fishers in 2003, compared to seventeen men. The presence of these registered women represented an important shift in the labour market. These three female fishers were all in-migrants to the community; they were married to local fishers but had lived in the village for many years. Two of the women registered in 1994. The third women, who is educated and has worked as a teacher, registered in 2003. When they registered, they were between forty-five and fifty years of age with grown up children. All continue to be responsible for organising the onshore work including baiting the lines – a type of work they have been doing for many years that has been largely invisible within the fisheries management infrastructure and government statistics. Only one of the women, the youngest and a former teacher, participates in fishing. The other two restrict their fishery work to shore-related tasks typical of women in the past, including administra-

tion, accountancy and baiting lines. That said, the quota regime has increased the bureaucratic complexity of this work and its potential importance to the survival of the enterprise. Husbands continue to be the skippers, a pattern supported by the frequent lack of critical fishing knowledge among women. In the words of one of the female fishers, 'My big challenge is that I have too little experience in starting and steering the boat. If I could manage the wheel I would not be so dependent on my husband'.

In Skarsvåg, as is generally the case elsewhere, no boats are registered in women's names. Two of the registered women and their husbands originally owned boats between ten and eleven meters in length. One of the women is no longer registered. When her husband died, she rented the boat to her son until he bought it from her. The second of these couples bought a second, slightly smaller boat in order to have more quota allocations. The third woman and her husband originally had a boat of about fifteen meters in length but have now sold it with its quota. They are planning to buy a smaller boat, however, suggesting that they are downsizing their operation in preparation for retirement.

The quota regime and small quotas often coupled with reduced employment alternatives in fish processing encouraged two middle-aged women, married to fishers, to register as fish harvesters in this community. One of the three women who registered during the early period of the quota system indicated that she hoped her registration and engagement in the fishery could help keep down fishing costs and concentrate fishing earnings within the household. It could also help secure women's employment and welfare rights connected to employment by formalized fishing related work carried out informally in the past.<sup>12</sup> The advantages of registration are illustrated by the experience of the woman who lost her husband. Because she was registered, she could rent out her boat to her only son thereby accessing an income from the boat. After a while he decided to buy the boat from her and she expressed joy at keeping the boat in the family.<sup>13</sup> However, there were other reasons as well for registering and going fishing. The former teacher talked about her interest in fishing and the pleasure she experienced performing outdoor work as reasons why she chose to stop teaching and start full-time fishing (Gerrard 2005a).

In Skarsvåg there are still examples of women who perform ground or shore crew work (Gerrard 1983). The money they bring in from employment outside the fishery reduces their husbands' household financial obligations. In this way the family can survive with less income from the husband (Gerrard 2003). Women are also discussion partners with their husbands when new investments and other important choices concerning the boat have to be taken. By doing so women have had to acquire more insight into the complex and continuously changing world of the quota regime that has potential social and economic consequences for themselves and their families. The new living and working conditions have changed women's ground crew work from the practical work that dominated their fishery lives in the 1970s and the early 1980s to discussion partners that the husbands consult in the 1990s and in the new millennium. This must of course also be related to women's own education and employment strategies.

What is interesting is that women's unpaid shore-based fishing work still does not bring with it access to political, social and welfare rights. Women were rarely considered as candidates to the Regulatory Committee, for example. In this way commercialisation of the quotas has perpetuated the relegation of women's fishing-related work to the informal sector. In Norway, as elsewhere, efforts to obtain formal recognition of women's shore-based contributions to fisheries have not succeeded (Gerrard 1983, 2003a; Munk-Madsen 1996a; Frangouides and McDorothy, 2005).

These examples demonstrate both the fear and the pleasure associated with women's experience of the quota regime. Although many were critical of the regime (Gerrard 1995) some women and their fishing husbands also saw new possibilities. Although most wives of fishers did not opt for registration, some could and did. At the same time women's roles as ground crew have changed into complex tasks like consultancies while this type of work continues to be unrecognized (Gerrard 2007).

#### *Ownership, Gender Relations and Perplexing Practices*

Male coastal fishers have changed their relationship to the fishery, shifting from a situation where each skipper owned one boat and one quota to a situation where some fishers own multiple boats and quotas. The quota system has also been associated with social differentiation among fishers in this community. The majority of the fishers living in the village own boats with only one quota while among the fishers living outside the municipality and those who use Skarsvåg as a fishing base, two enterprises own several boats and thereby control several cod quotas of varying sizes. This means that these boat owners perform their fisher role differently when compared to the majority of fishers in the village. Thus they are more likely than the others to follow and try to influence the policy, the quota market and financing opportunities, in addition to fishing (Gerrard 2007).

Some fishers, particularly those with multiple boats and quotas, have changed the legal structure of their enterprises. Before the introduction of the quota regime most boat owners had one boat and were registered as a private enterprise owned by one person (*enkeltmannsforetak*) or two persons (*partsrederi*), well-known models in smaller fishery communities. Under this system the owner of the boat was fully responsible for the associated loans and debts of the boat; if their enterprise went bankrupt they might have to sell their homes in order to pay their debts, thereby affecting the lives and livelihoods of their whole family. The alternative ownership model is a private, incorporated company with limited liability thereby protecting personal property in the event of bankruptcy. These companies have boards of directors that make decisions about the enterprise. In Skarsvåg two of the registered boat owners have chosen this form of ownership.

In the old structure women contributed informally to decision-making related to the enterprise but were at greater personal risk in the event of bankruptcy. In the incorporated enterprises decisions are made by boards of directors not in the households, potentially excluding fishers' wives from discussions. In Skarsvåg, the boards consist only of men, including male relatives now living outside the village. The same trends are found elsewhere. Strømmesen (2007) has report-

ed that in Troms, the neighboring county to Finnmark, not a single woman was registered as a board member in the enterprises associated with vessels of about twenty-eight meters in length. She argues that when the individual enterprise represented the main form, discussions took place between the skipper and his wife. With the new company structure more investors have come into the sector.<sup>14</sup> Strømmesen reflects upon the fact that investors are more apt to choose strategies that maximize profit, giving less consideration to effects on household and community life. She argues that these strategies contrast with the old decision-making practices which involved informal discussions, attention to household interest and discussions with wives. Strømmesen found in her material that the wives strongly argued for the new ownership form in order to reduce the insecurity and fear of bankruptcy they experienced under the old ownership form, where the owner was responsible for all debt. Strømmesen also argues that the price the wives of boat owners who have incorporated have to pay for more security is less influence.

Finally, in Skarsvåg there is an age difference between the boat owners who have incorporated and the ones who have not. The boat owners in their 1930s with boats around fourteen meters chose to invest in new boats and quotas while the husbands and some wives with smaller boats around ten meters, and who are near or in their 1950s, have formalised their fishing collaborations by the women registering as fishers.

The impact of the quota regime on ownership patterns can also be analysed as perplexing for women and men in the industry. Overall, the number of fishers and inhabitants in the fishing villages is declining, potentially threatening the future of the community. The quota regime has stimulated new practises and a new rationality compared to the past. Both small and big boat and quota owners are involved in a system that is created with the hope of achieving sustainability and while it may help sustain the resource, it is not clear that it will sustain a fishery from this community in the longer term. Small scale fishing, as a way of life, now exists side by side with a profit oriented approach to fishing. Age differences in the different fisher groups suggest that the business approach to fishing will replace the livelihood approach in the near future.

The three women who registered as fishers chose to stay with the traditional form of ownership and reduced their risk by registering as fishers. On the other hand, the wives of bigger fishing enterprises supported their husbands' decision to incorporate even though this had the potential to reduce their influence over decision-making within the enterprise. Seen from a researcher's point of view one could say that since the tight relation between the household and the boat continues, the women who register and continue to collaborate with their husbands maintain a household-based way of fishery life. For the boat owners who choose to incorporate and change the ownership structure, the household is formally separated from the boat reducing the risk of losing their homes.

#### *Gender Identities and Power Relations*

Ramamurthy (2003:525) states: 'perplexity is the meeting point where multiple ideologies that constitute the subject – cultural practices, temporalities, and place - conjoin and diverge.' From this perspective, relationships between living

within the quota regime and the identities of women and men in fisheries are another source of perplexity for both groups. Registered female fishers in Skarsvåg are local pioneers since they were the first women to register in their local context. As pioneers, all three women have few role models with which to identify and through which to build their identities as women fishers. An additional challenge relates to differences in their relationship to fishing, as described above. Like other women fishers in Norway who are thinly scattered along the coast, these women lack common, visible signs or markers with which they can identify as fishers. Female fishers therefore have to select the elements they use to construct their own identity from their personal situations, resulting in diversity even among the small sample of women in Skarsvåg. To illustrate, some use the term fisher to refer to themselves while others talk about themselves as fisherwomen when they speak English. In Norwegian the concept is *fisker*.<sup>15</sup> This means that the word is more or less neutral. Using fisherwomen may indicate that the speaker wants to stress the point that she is a female fisher.

Most Skarsvåg women are employed in and also tend to identify with their new jobs in teaching and social and health assistance (Gerrard 2005a). This includes fishers' wives who work outside the fishery and seem to have looser connections to fishing, shore based work, and processing than they did in the period prior to the quota system (Gerrard 1995; 2005a). In this way a woman may identify as a professional as well as the wife of a fisher depending on the situation in which she is acting and whom she relates to at the moment. Such an understanding is in line with Stanford Friedman (1998:23) when he writes about identity that resists fixity in contrast to changing roles and identities. Changing gender identities and identity challenges are also found among men who fish. As harvesters, fishers have always been expected to handle the boat and to be good hunters, bringing home big catches. These were core elements of their masculine identity (Gerrard 2007). The boat is a material thing that is required in order to fish. Boats also have a strong symbolic meaning. Boat ownership and handling boats continue to be important markers of male identity in Norwegian fishery communities. Under the quota regime, however, quotas have acquired a symbolic significance and, for some, have become just as important for their gendered identity as the relationship between the man and the boat. Under the quota regime, fishing success requires the ability to accumulate quota and, increasingly, to manage a business enterprise, in addition to the ability to find fish. Successful fishers thus have to be clever at sea as well as able to cope with fast-changing rules and regulations associated with the quota regime on shore (Gerrard 2007). Such practices contribute to the local standards of masculinity. Just as not all fishers are boat owners, which has always been the case, not all are owners of quota and thus not all have access to these symbols of masculinity. Under the quota regime, quota ownership is not only a prerequisite for fishing; quota can be bought, sold and controlled to some degree by board members of fishing enterprises who are not from the fishing sector. Thus, whereas in the past one became a fisher through membership in a fishing household, apprenticeship, and investment in a way of life, fishing is now a business where entry and exit is governed by the market for quota and by the attractiveness of alternative investment opportunities both for those who stay and



for those who leave. Such changes might also have consequences for the fisher's gender identity. My argument for this is the fact that many aspects of the male identity in a fishery context are related to being a fisher (Gerrard 2007).

In Skarsvåg, as elsewhere, a handful of men are gaining more and more control over the groundfish quotas, while increasing numbers of men leave fishing with few coming in to replace them. The connection between a man, his boat and the quota points to the hard-wired, gendered identification of masculinity within the Norwegian fishery. Consistent with Ellingsæter and Solheim's (2002) understanding of the relationship between symbols and power, it could be argued that today, as in the past, men not only control the capital in the fishery but the symbolic realm as well. A boat and a quota are more than financial capital. They are also symbolic capital in Bourdieu's sense (1995:6).

The underlying tensions between the perspectives associated with fishing for livelihood and fishing for profit reflect the presence of opposing and asymmetrical forces or fields of power within the fishery. In public discourse about the quota regime the voices of those who support the right to have more than two quotas connected to one boat are very strong. This is the case even though a majority of fishers still own only one boat and one quota. Support for the claim that quota politics reflect underlying power relations in the industry comes from the fact that the president of the Fishermen's Union in Finnmark was replaced by another member and resigned his position at the annual meeting 2007 because of '*internal turbulence*' in the union. His views on the quota policies, but also on other matters, were not in line with the policy that the majority of the representatives present at the meeting wanted (Finnmark Dagblad 2007). While the president argued for the policy suggested by the government that only one quota in addition to the quota of the boat should be allowed, the spokesmen with the biggest boats and with several quotas argued for more quotas attached to one boat. The new president supported the spokesmen's viewpoints. The fact that identities can be in constant transition is another example of perplexity. What is interesting is that identity also seems closely related to interests and thus to power differences.

### **Conclusion: Gender, Neo-liberal Globalisation and Perplexities in Fisheries**

This project began with a search for examples of practices and survival strategies 'invented' by women and men in the Norwegian small-scale fishery and fishing villages after the quota regime was introduced. The picture that emerged from macro- and micro-level research was complex with opportunities and challenges emerging from the analysis, as well as risks and benefits. These findings, and a review of the literature on gender and quota regimes, suggested that an understanding of the research field could benefit from the use of Ramamurthy's (2003) perplexity concept as a representation of the dynamics of neo-liberal globalisation for those living with and responding to its effects in their day to day lives. A focus on perplexity helps us grasp the ambiguities and the multiplicity of meanings of the established and new practices associated with the quota regime. It can also help us see more clearly how power is 'constituted materially and culturally, and

mediated by social relations, difference and politics' (Ramamurthy 2003:529). The quota regime and its outcomes are perplexing for women and men in fisheries at multiple levels. At the level of the gendered individual, women and men living with the quota regimes have experienced both joys and aches, often simultaneously. Women had to find new solutions, some, but few, initiated political action, because they felt they were facing an uncertain future. Some took the step of registering as fishers, some started higher education and some went into other jobs, for example tourism. Men on their side got more leisure time, especially at the beginning of the quota regime. Some used the spare time to do more housework and be together with children. At the same time the fear of not managing the economic responsibilities were present. Little by little when the quotas increased, some boat owners started to buy more quotas and new choices had to be made, for example by restructuring the ownership form. One aspect of the quota regime is that it seems to be designed to promote capital accumulation within fisheries and the risks and opportunities of capital accumulation have changed not only to those who fish but also to fishing as a way of life and fisher identities. It has produced individual feelings of confusion, loss, and desire that are not separate from the processes of capital accumulation (Ramamurthy 2003:525). Perplexities can be found at the level of the fishing boat deck, in changing household dynamics, in changes in where people live and what they do, in the registration system that is linked to the quota regime, in the community, the quota market and at the level of fishery politics and activism.

Culturally, the quota regime has been associated with the construction and reconstruction of gender practices, knowledge and identities. The introduction of the quota regime in Norway's coastal fisheries, the increasing identification of fishing success with quota accumulation and of fishing with a 'business' versus a 'way of life' framework seem to have perplexing impacts on the dynamics of fishing households, communities and of the industry as a whole. They are becoming more tightly integrated into the surrounding industrial capitalist society and into neo-liberal global capitalism with a focus on capital accumulation and individualism. In the process, the gender dynamics of the industry and identities of those related to the fishery are changing without any meaningful improvement in the relative power of women and men. Fewer women and men are able to find employment in the fishery or to access wealth generated by the industry; the employment options in fishing and processing at the community level are more constrained than in the past. Women's and men's practices for dealing with these changes are reflected in increased out-migration from fishing communities threatening their future survival. Survival strategies for affected households include: exit from the industry, which many have done; using the quota windfall for financial support; women taking up work on the family vessel, potentially instead of the younger generation, thus undermining the historical strategy of intergenerational male apprenticeship and succession and setting the household up for a delayed exit from the industry at retirement; and adopting a business and profit maximization approach to fishing based on quota accumulation, incorporation and administration by a board of directors.

At the national level there are fewer registered female and male fishers today than there were during the years when the quota system was introduced. Quota rights are concentrated in fewer, primarily male hands. Since few women have quota rights, particularly in Group One, they have less direct access to resources, and less influence, as compared with to the past when community of origin, kinship and gender were the main factors mediating access to the fishery. The examples from Skarsvåg illustrate that even if three women were registered fishers a majority of women no longer have paid work in the fishery and, where enterprises have incorporated, women are not members of boards of directors. Male fishers who have not invested in additional quotas have had to change their fishing practices while those who have invested in quotas face high costs and pressure to pay more attention to profit, politics and the quota market.

From the point of view of gender, the flip side of these changes is that women today are well educated and generally have better opportunities for qualified jobs in the national labour market than in the past – although most such opportunities are in the service sector, the demographic basis for which is being eroded in rural and remote areas like many coastal areas in Finnmark. Fisheries policy making is still largely male-dominated although, interestingly enough, concerns about the social impacts of the quota regime may have supported the appointment of the first female Minister and some of the work that she and her Ministry have initiated. Quota regime policies continue largely to support the individual male fisher and tend to give those who support these policies increased financial and symbolic capital contributing to internal divisions between groups of fishers.

Global, neo-liberal values are providing a breeding ground for new thoughts, practices, challenges and opportunities in Norway's coastal fisheries. The longer-term question is not only if women and also many men will lose control of the fishery, something that has already happened to a significant degree, but whether the coastal fishery carried out from small fishing villages will exist in the future or be replaced by a larger scale, profit-oriented fishery operated from bigger towns and cities. The analytical lesson from this is that gender, economic situation, age, and place of residence have to be taken into consideration along with associated material and symbolic capital if we want to understand what is going on in fisheries today.

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- 2 Publications from Norway: Pettersen 1994; Munk-Madsen 1996; Nilsen 2002; Strømmesen 2007. International publications: Davis and Gerrard 2000; Binkley 2000; Neis, Grzetic and Pidgeon 2001; Grzetic 2004; Porter 1993, 1995; Power 2005; Skaptadottir 2000; Skaptadottir and Proppe 2005; Sloan 2004).
- 3 There are examples of actions aimed at women in coastal areas, but they are not integrated into the main policy papers.
- 4 In the early 1990s there were some very active female members promoting small-scale fisheries. Bente Aasjord, representing the environmentalists, together with Ruth Rye Josefsen and Mary Mikalsen, representing the Sami Parliament, are examples of women who have acted as observers in this committee.
- 5 [http://www.fiskeridir.no/fiskeridir/layout/set/print/aktuelt/fiskets\\_gang/forvaltning\\_i\(17.4.07\)](http://www.fiskeridir.no/fiskeridir/layout/set/print/aktuelt/fiskets_gang/forvaltning_i(17.4.07))
- 6 It should be mentioned here that Norway had some shellfish draggers and factory trawlers where the crew was registered in the Fishery Register. Today there are no draggers left and the number of factory trawlers has decreased.
- 7 These statistics are generated from several tables. Information about the female and male fishers was provided by the Directorate of Fisheries, Norway (16.8.04): *Fiskarar som har fiske som hovedyrke fordelt etter hokjønn for kvart fylke i perioden 1983-2003* and from *Fiskarar som har fiske som biyrke fordelt etter hokjønn for kvart fylke i perioden 1983-2003*. The information from 2006 is also from the Directorate of Fisheries and statistics from 19.2. 07: Registered main occupation fishermen by sex and county and registered secondary occupation fishermen by sex and county. *Table:Hovedyrke og biyrke fordelt etter kjønn 1990-2006* (Table: Excel\_hoved\_biyрке\_kjonn\_1990-2006(1).xls).
- 8 The Directorate of Fisheries provided the information mentioned in this section in October and November 2005. It is based on the various registers in existence. The information is valid for boats less than 28 metres in length and with an owner share higher than 49.99 percent.
- 9 I have not been able to find data broken down by gender.
- 10 My own translation of the Norwegian title of this report.
- 11 Among the families that moved there was one fisher/teacher family, one fisher/ fishery worker family (retired), one fishworker/teacher family, and one teacher/teacher family with 15 family members.
- 12 In the Norwegian welfare system most rights are connected to employment.

- 13 This information was given in a conversation with the former fisher.
- 14 According to the fisheries legislation non-fishing people can never have more than 49 percent of the shares in a company.
- 15 Conversation with Åshild Pettersen, Skarsvåg, November 2005.

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