

Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM)

Scientific Report

Conceptualizing fisheries interactions along the West African coast

By Henryk Alff

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Host Institution: Geography, Planning and International Development Studies,
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Purpose of the STSM

Thematically, the STSM of Dr. Alff at the University of Amsterdam from 17-22 July 2019 brought together, discussed, conceptualized and synthesized the research data collected by Henryk Alff & Anna-Katharina Hornidge as well as Remy Käller, in order to systematically forge knowledge production on interactions between Chinese DWF and small-scale artisanal fisheries. For that purpose, selected case studies from along the West African coast were brought together. Both Alff & Hornidge's as well as Käller's research has yielded unique, locally grounded findings on which a joint study on present and possible future materializations of fisheries negotiations is based. Additional benefits of the collaboration of Dr. Alff and Mr. Käller can be seen in the cross-cutting exchange between two of OceanGov's working groups, 'Land-Sea Interactions' that Dr. Alff is a member of and 'Nutrition Security and Food Systems', coordinated by Prof. Bavinck. The current STSM aimed to make sociospatially grounded research findings more visible and accessible to the interdisciplinary academic audience as the competition for and overexploitation of fish resources along the West African Atlantic already has severe consequences on nutrition and adaptation practices. Thus, there is increasing demand after scientifically grounded analysis of local conditions.

Description of the work carried out during the STSM

So far limited social science research has been carried out on how the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) is materialising on the ground/locally in the face of China's increasing demand after and extraction of fish resources along the West African coast (Jacobs 2017). Recent multi-sited team field research by Dr. Henryk Alff (and Prof. Anna-Katharina Hornidge), from ZMT Bremen, in Senegal, Mauritania and Ghana in September/October 2018 has yielded valuable ethnographic data on how oceanic and coastal resources have become subject to Chinese claims of control and how these claims have become subject to negotiation processes between different stakeholders in the fisheries sector of West African coastal places, particularly focusing on small-scale fisheries and fish processing (Alff & Hornidge 2019). Similarly, Remy Käller, MA student at Prof. Maarten Bavinck's working group and co-convenor of the MARE X conference at the University of Amsterdam, from 2017-18 has done fascinating long-term, and so far largely unpublished, in-depth research on fisheries interactions along the Ghanaian coast, particularly focusing on the transshipment of fish/bycatch resources.

The STSM was primarily used to discuss each others research along the West African coast in-depth and in a more academically inspiring way. At the same time, the STSM allowed us to focus thematically, develop ideas and conceptualize research findings for a joint publication in form of a peer-reviewed and/or open-access journal article (targeted journals are Maritime Studies and Regional Studies in Marine Science). Dr. Alff and Mr. Käller used the six-day period of the STSM at the University of Amsterdam to take up previous conversations (during a talk by Mr. Käller at ZMT's Social Science Colloquium in Bremen as well as at the very recent MARE conference in Amsterdam) on their research qualitative research along the West African coast. Based on a brainstorming exercise leading to a structured outline of the article including methodological and conceptual framing of empirical data, Alff and Käller came up with a reflexive approach to task-sharing while

starting to draft an initial version of the manuscript. Work on a draft version of the manuscript has started only due the limited time frame of the STSM. However, a timeline was set for collaborative writing and for the research article manuscript to be submitted by the end of the year 2019.

Description of the main results obtained

Henryk Alff's STSM at the University of Amsterdam enormously forwarded discussions and collaboration on a co-authored publication with Remy Källér. Based on our ethnographic research along the West African coast, and especially in the local context of Ghana, we decided to choose an ethnographic focus for the joint publication that goes beyond existing, rather quantitative research on the Chinese influence in West African fisheries (e.g. by the 'Sea around us' initiative at the University of Vancouver). Following our research findings, we developed a methodological and conceptual framework that draws attention towards the interactions of diverse fisheries actors along the Ghanaian Atlantic coast (small-scale fishers, actors in transshipment activities, local and regional actors in fisheries governance, Chinese trawler crews etc.) materializing in diverse socio-spatial negotiations and in consequence to competition, cooperation and adaption practices. In the course of fruitful discussions, we were able to develop and discuss an extended abstract and to delineate a preliminary structure for the joint article. In a reflexive writing process that will also include informal reviewing by colleagues with similar research interests, it is now planned to finalize an initial manuscript that is to be submitted by December 2019. The STSM visit deepened mutual understanding of the research themes and similarities and differences between the Swedish and Finnish contexts that are relevant for the governance of small-scale fisheries. This enhances opportunities for future collaboration, especially with regard to writing joint papers or making joint applications for funding international projects in relation to the Baltic Sea (and beyond) fisheries governance, and the challenges faced by small-scale fisheries. Two main projects regarding future collaboration are mentioned in previous section (1 and 2). Moreover, the hosts and the grantee shall collaborate in June 2019 when hosting a working group (Imagining sustainable futures for marine environments) in the 14th Nordic Environmental Social Science Conference in Sweden. After that collaboration continues, for instance, in the activities of the Fisheries Governance working group in the Oceans Governance COST action.

Future Collaborations (if applicable)

The STSM was helpful to fathom trajectories for future collaborations between not only ourselves but also our respective research institutions, the UvA and ZMT, but also an extended set of other actors from at least two of the OceanGov COST Action's working groups, particularly focusing on 'Land-Sea Interactions' and 'Nutrition Security and Food Systems'. We believe that this will have lasting effect on the future outreach of our research along the West African Atlantic as well as OceanGov, the funding period of which is soon coming to an end.