

Fisheries Local Action Groups: A New Theme For Researching Maritime Communities

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of the article is to outline consequences of Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) forming and implementing of Common Fisheries Policy by financial support of axis 4 European Fisheries Fund. Central point of the article refers to characteristic of FLAGs in Poland. On this basis, Author indicates two opposite processes in fishing industry: 1) intensive development and rising importance of inland fishing; 2) limitation of maritime fishing. The article attempts to attract scientific environment to establish partnership project for European Research Network and in-depth, international researches on maritime communities.

1. Introduction

Technological advances and increasing global demand for fish determine further development of the fishing industry, especially concerning fish processing industry. Nevertheless, at the same time there is no lack of evidences indicating, that global fisheries are dumping to deepen crisis induced by overfishing, significant reduction in fishing fleets, increased fuel prices and decreasing employment in fisheries sector (Brocki, 2008: 69). The above-mentioned cognitive dualism is an effect of Common Fisheries Policy' (CFP) implementation in EU. The aim of CFP is to make EU fishing grounds a common resource by giving equal access to all Member States. However, this principle has been modified by introduction of allowable catch quotas and legalization of ambiguous quota hopping practice (Lequesne, 2000; Coelho, Filipe, Ferreira, 2010). Poland as a member of the EU does not remain indifferent to those market and law regulations.

During the previous EU programming period (2004-2006), Poland benefited over 200 million of EU support under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), the result of which 404 fishing vessels engaged in Baltic Sea fisheries were withdrawn from the fleet and 92 fish processing enterprises were upgraded to meet EU production standards (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2008). Due to Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 of 27th July 2006, European Commission established a new European Fisheries Fund (EFF) for the period 2007-2013, that was set to provide financial assistance to reform Common Fisheries Policy. On this basis, Poland adopted The National Baltic Fleet Restructuring Plan and the Fishing Effort Adjustment Plan (FEAP), that allowed to launch 734 million fund allocation from EFF. The strategic plans co-financed by EFF support will be achieved through programme of modernization and development of the fisheries sector and maritime communities under Operational Programme "Sustainable Development of the Fisheries Sector and Coastal Fishing Areas 2007-2013" (named shortly: "Operational Programme FISHERIES 2007-2013").

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It is not the aim of Author to describe and evaluate the whole impact of OP Fisheries 2007-2013 on Polish fisheries industry. However, it seems to be appropriate to start from this short introduction to indicate and discuss processes of occupational and social changes in maritime communities, due to the implementation of axis 4 OP FISHERIES 2007-2013.

2. The State of Knowledge on Maritime Communities

Social scientists have worked on subjects related to fisheries, fishing communities and maritime communities around the world for decades. Nevertheless, studies on maritime communities belong to typically defined cognitive subject within maritime sociology. Beginning with Bronisław Malinowski's (1922) voluminous study on the Tribri and Islanders in Melanesian New Guinea in early part of 20th century (Malinowski, 1922), and continuing through the work of Raymond Firth among Malay fishermen in the 1940's (Firth 1946), Kunio Yanagita through his major publication on the life of coastal villages and living conditions of fishermen (Yanagita, 1949), Thomas Fraser among Thailand fisherman (Fraser, 1962), Jeremy Tunstall among English fishermen (Tunstall, 1962), Richard K. Beardsley and Takashi Nakano in studies of folklore tradition in maritime communities (Beardsley and Nakano, 1970), Michael Orbach among high-seas tuna fishermen. (Orbach, 1977). The pioneering studies on fisheries communities and fisherman in Poland were made by Zygmunt Dulczewski (1955), Aurelia Polańska (1965) and Ludwik Janiszewski (1967). However, most of the above references contain little or nothing about how to use the results of this research in policy and management. The stage of collecting general information on the subject of maritime communities studies gave a grounded starting position for more applied maritime studies on fisherman and coastal communities.

It is entitled to claim that from the 1970's studies on maritime communities were given a new character, referring to so called "applied social research" – taking the results of social scientific research and applying them to the needs of those outside of the research realm itself (Orbach, 1987). It is not a proper place to describe the origins of maritime sociology and studies on maritime communities as these issues have been well described in summarizing monograph of Wioleta Bryniewicz (Bryniewicz, 2004) and article of Wioleta Bryniewicz, Agnieszka Kołodziej-Durnaś and Żaneta Stasienuk (Bryniewicz, Kołodziej-Durnaś, Stasienuk, 2010).

What is worth emphasizing, maritime communities constitute the subject of maritime sociology. According to Ludwik Janiszewski (1985) subject of maritime sociology consist of four sections: seafarers sociology, sociology of maritime institutions, sociology of social processes of a maritime character and sociology of maritime ecological communities. On this basis, marine sociologist treated all maritime and coastal collectivity as a subject of their studies, including maritime communities. But these issue beg the question, what is a "maritime community", and does it have a same meaning as "fishing community"?

According to United States legislative "The Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996" Sec. 102(16):

"The term fishing community means a community which is substantially dependent on or substantially engaged in the harvest or processing of fishery resources to meet social and economic needs, and includes fishing vessel owners, operators and crew and United States fish processors that are based in such community".

The critical reasoning for this definition is presented in article of Patricia Clay and Julia Olson (Clay, Olson, 2008). Simplifying, the above mentioned definition lacks in

catching the notion of social life, understood as all social phenomena, processes, institution and social actions of individuals and social groups. The existing problem in definition of “maritime community” lies in a term “community” itself. Ludwik Janiszewski claims that “community” term has wide range of designates as: social environment, collectivity, community and other small scale family based units consisting of groups that are neighbors and have common interests. It is explanation why it is hard to present one, broad enough, definition of maritime community. Nevertheless, he proposed to see “maritime community” as a part of wider territorial community and unique type of local communities, which stands out of them because of following factors concerning its inhabitants: they inhabit the geographic areas adjacent to sea or other sea basins, they share mutual bonds of emotion and obligation connected directly or indirectly with maritime affairs (social and occupational), they satisfy their necessities around strict area and share a common sense of identity. Summarizing, “maritime community” has broader meaning than “fishing community”, because it generally refers to every dimension of social life: spatial (ecological) and cultural (socio-psychological) and does not limit to fishing activities, but concerns every maritime profession and activity affairs directly and indirectly (Janiszewski, 1991).

The assignments of studies on maritime communities allowed to distinguish at least their five types: small fishing villages – consisting of few fishing huts and houses forming a lean-to a bigger village; large fishing village – consisting of compact settlements and small housing, where main occupation is connected directly or indirectly with fishing; port towns – differentiate because of population and localization of harbor and other maritime infrastructure; maritime holiday and health resorts (Janiszewski, 1991; Woźniak, 1991a, 1991b).

The upper sketch of achievement and findings in domestic maritime sociology have proved, that reflection on maritime communities and fisherman fatigue was at that time very rich in its substance. However, since the mid-90's crisis of the global maritime industry and changes caused by systemic transformation in Poland, maritime sociology experienced stagnation and lack of new in-depth studies. The recent in-depth studies on fisherman was conducted by Jan Nikołajew (1992) and studies of fishermen's families by Urszula Tarnowska-Jakóbiec (1998). Wioleta Bryniewicz indicates, that transformation process resulted in reevaluation of the research problems in social sciences, including maritime sociology. An attempt to adapt to changes was session of The Commission of Maritime Sociology at Polish Academy of Science in the year 1998. It was noted a lowering change at the profession prestige of seafarer and fisherman in Polish society. At the same time, it was considered necessary to focus cognitive effort on the impact of globalization at maritime professions and maritime communities (Bryniewicz, 2004: 55-56). The expression of these assumptions were desiderata of Jędrzej Porada (2000; 2002), Irena Zakidalska (2000), Jan Nikołajew (2000), Żaneta Stasieniuk (2005; 2009), Bogdan Gębski (2005), Włodzimierz Durka (2005), Wojciech Brocki (2008), Kazimierz Barański (2005), Urszula Kozłowska (2008), Maciej Kowalewski (2011), Robert Bartłomiejski (2008, 2011) and Robert Woźniak (2000; 2006; 2008; 2009, 2010) However, at that period subject of maritime communities was marginalized, except of studies on entrepreneurship in maritime communities by Paweł Bykowski (2002), local culture in maritime communities by Agnieszka Kołodziej-Durnaś (2004) and maritime ecological communities by Sebastian Kołodziejczak (2006).

Nevertheless, it can be observed that, the collapse of high-seas fishing industry in Poland, caused lack of continued research on fisherman and fishing communities. This status should be recognized as incomprehensible and demanding determined action. Since the year 2008 Polish fishing industry experiences significant political and

legal changes, stimulated by European Union. Priority axis 4 of European Fisheries Fund provides support for the sustainable development of fisheries areas and maritime communities. In particular it supports measures to promote economic diversification (ex. tourism) and improved quality of life in areas affected by a decline in fishing activities. What is important, from sociologist point of view, the concept of the EFF support mobilize local actors from all maritime sector: public, private and civil society, to work together as “groups” to design and implement integrated local development strategies for fishing industry, that will have impact on maritime and fishing communities. Recently, European Commission (2011) has ordered and publicized case studies on maritime communities of Polish port-towns: Darłowo, Władysławowo and Jastarnia to predict how “Fisheries Local Action Groups” (FLAGs) will be implemented in Poland. The article is entirely dedicated to that matter.

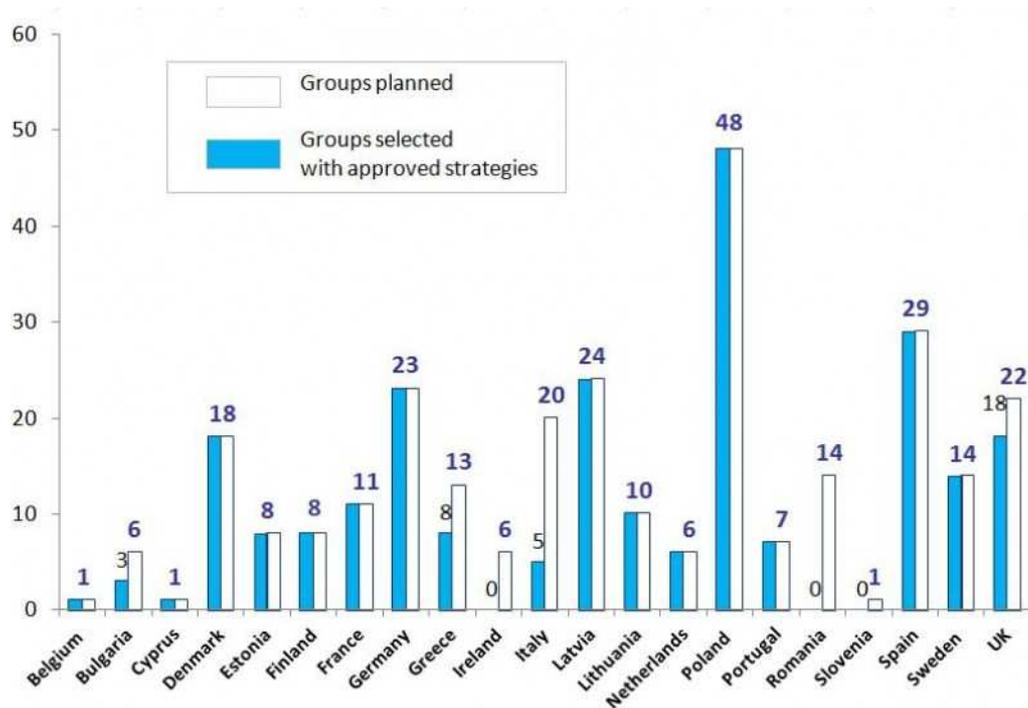
3. Fisheries Local Action Groups in EU Common Fisheries Policy

The easiest way of explanation, what are Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) is to say, that they are partnerships between fisheries actors and other local private and public stakeholders. Together, they design and implement a bottom-up strategy that fits and addresses their area needs to increase economic, social and environmental welfare. Close cooperation between the economic, public and social sectors as well as joint identification of development priorities create an opportunity for the development of areas having a strong connection with the fisheries sector.

A Fisheries Local Action Groups (sometimes translated as: Local Fisheries Group), as the very name suggests, has to consist of people employed in the fisheries sector, employees, household members, and other non-governmental organization' members dealing with organization and promotion of fishing industry. Those groups should have a substantial influence on the text of the key document developed by the Group, that is a Local Strategy for the Development of Fisheries Areas (LSDFA).

The aim of FLAGs is to provide a sustainable development of fisheries areas, with an emphasis on tackling socio-economic problems, maintaining economic prosperity and jobs in fisheries areas to fulfill priorities of Common Fishery Policy. The target aim of FLAGs will be reached though financial support of The European Fisheries Fund for 2007 – 2013 for the bottom-up implementation of the axis 4 CFP: “Sustainable development of fisheries areas”. Projects of FLAGs should aimed at adding value to: fisheries products or promoting economic diversification into areas such as tourism, renewable energy etc.; strengthening the competitiveness of fisheries areas; restructuring and redirecting economic activities in particular by promoting ecotourism, provided that these activities do not result in an increase in fishing effort; diversifying activities though the promotion of multiple employment for fishers though the creation of additional jobs outside the fisheries sector; protecting the environment in fisheries communities and their architectural heritage; promotion of inter-regional and trans-national co-operation among FLAGs mainly though disseminating best practice (European Commission, 2011). In February 2012, a total of 242 FLAGs are now active in 18 Member States (see figure below).

Fig. 1. Number of FLAGs in European Union (February 2012)

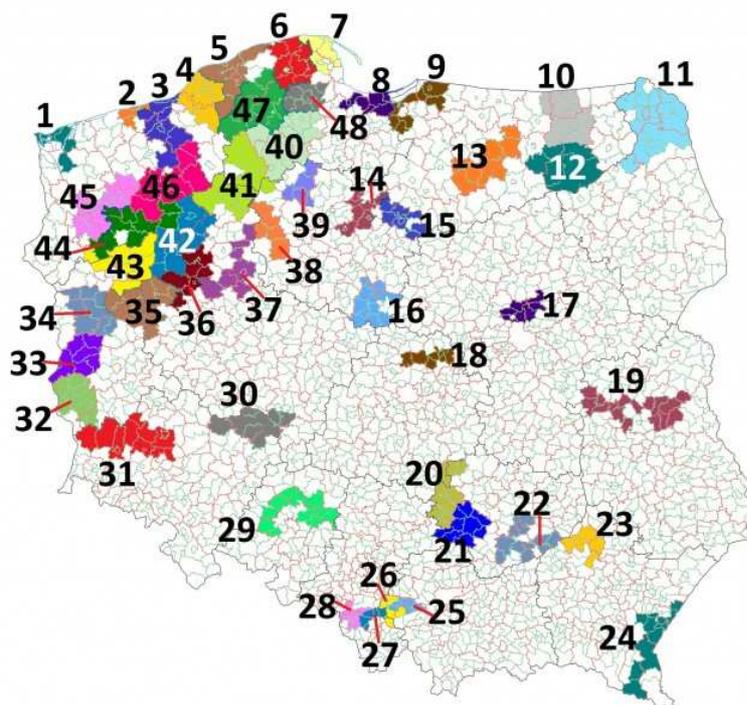


Source: European Commission – FARNET SUPPORT UNIT, 2012

4. The Characteristic of Fisheries Local Action Groups in Poland

Poland has approximately 550 000 hectares of inland waters and its Baltic coastline stretches for almost 500 km between Russian exclave of Kaliningrad to the east and Germany to the west. However, fish production in Poland is low in terms of overall GDP as well as the tonnage of its production which accounted for less than 3% of EU production. Poland's fleet of some 800 vessels is among smallest in the EU. Nevertheless, the fisheries industry is an important element of the economies of the coastal and inland regions. It is worth noting that fish products constitute much as 10% of the total Polish agri-food export. The fisheries sector makes up just 0.1% of overall employment in Poland, providing jobs for approximately 2 700 people in sea fishing in 2008 (down from 9 400 in 1995) and 1 650 in inland fisheries. The number of people in the fish processing industry is substantially higher (16 096 in 2007) and increasing gradually. Poland places on 3rd place in number of persons employed in the processing sector in EU (Brocki 2008; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2010). What is more, in 2007 there was 398 processing companies, including 101 companies with 20+ employees, what also places Poland on 3rd place. Only Spain, United Kingdom and France had relatively higher indicators (European Commission, 2011). Taking this into account, it is surprising, that Polish coastal voivodeships are characterized by comparatively high unemployment rate: West-Pomerania Province (16,0%), Pomerania Province (11,4%) and Warmia - Masuria Province (18,5%), comparing with average rate: 11,6% (state on: August 2011 by Central Statistical Office, 2011).

Fig. 2. The Map of FLAGs in Poland (February 2012)

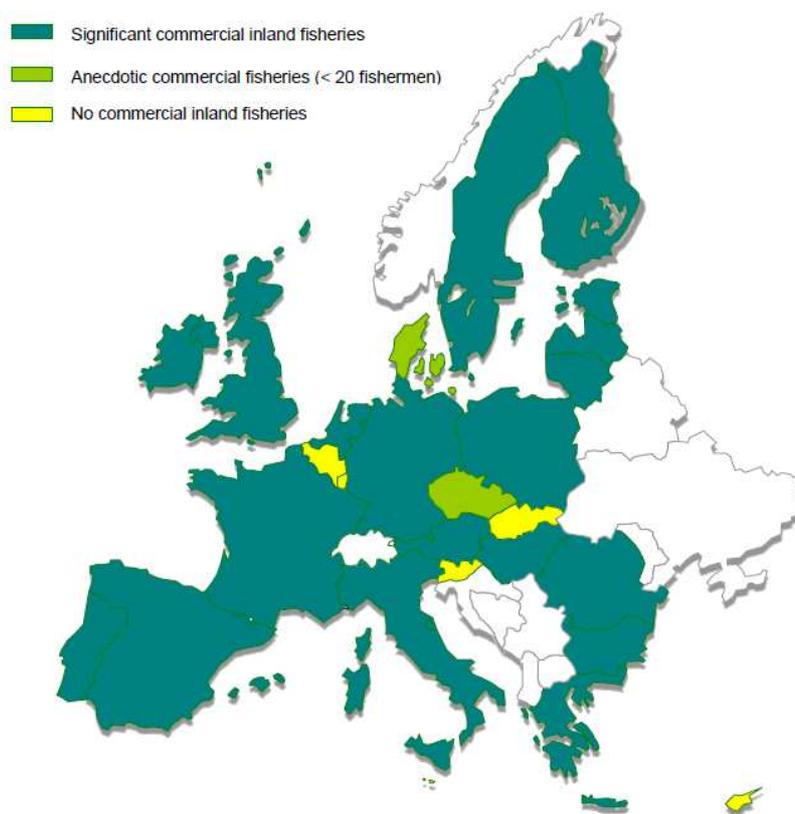


Source: European Commission – FARNET SUPPORT UNIT, 2012

On this basis, curiously Fisheries Local Action Groups have been created throughout the whole territory of Poland. However, this situation results from the fact, that entire Poland belongs to the priority of “convergence”, in accordance with the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11th July 2006. Up to the present, there are 48 FLAGs located in 16 Polish provinces (see figure 2), that is majority in EU. Other EU countries created from 1 to 28 FLAGs. To tell more, Poland has received the highest average amount of subsidy per one FLAG (€ 7.8 milion) in European Union. What characteristic in most of EU Member States a relatively large number of inland FLAGs was formed for commercial inland fisheries. In Poland, only 9 out of 48 groups is located in coastal maritime communities. The majority of FLAGs is located in the hinterland.

Referring to the above observation, it is important to emphasize one of the conclusions derived from EU wide report “EU intervention in inland fisheries” (Ernst&Young, 2011). According to the report, commercial inland fisheries is developing very intensively in 19 Member States of EU, including Poland. The example of it, is a location and number of inland FLAGs in Poland. Additionally, the number of Polish anglers, that are officially registered, oscillates around 1,5 million of people (EC-FARNET SUPPORT UNIT, 2010). Trade press reports and web-pages of certain FLAGs suggest that anglers are strong group of interest, aspiring to acquire rights of inland fisherman for commercial use. The problem disseminates across Member States, that have significant commercial inland fisheries (see figure 3).

Fig. 3. Commercial inland fisheries within the EU



Source: Ernst & Young, 2011

Based on the information, it may be recommended to define inland fishing and maritime fishing. Referring to article 33 of Council Regulation (EC) 1198/2006, “inland fishing means fishing carried out for commercial purposes by vessels operating exclusively in inland waters or by other devices used for ice fishing”. Term “fishing” means: “all activities aiming at extracting wild fish from natural waters, as opposed to rearing of aquatic animals in controlled environments and with human intervention (stocking, feeding etc.)”. By contrast to maritime fishing, that is fishing carried out for commercial purposes by vessels operating exclusively in sea waters and registered in the EU fleet register. In Poland, there are two legal acts, that defines those two terms: Sea Fishery Act and Inland Fishery Act, nevertheless the meaning and legacy is comparable to presented above.

It may also be required to distinguish meaning of recreational, subsistence and commercial fishing. The EIFAC has recently proposed definitions:

- “Recreational fishing: fishing of aquatic animals that do not constitute the individual’s primary resource to meet nutritional need and are not generally sold or otherwise traded on export, domestic or black markets.
- Subsistence fisheries: fishing for aquatic animals that contribute substantially to meeting an individual’s nutritional needs. In pure subsistence fisheries, fishing products are not traded on formal domestic or export markets but are consumed personally or within a close network of family and friends. Pure subsistence fisheries sustain a basic level of livelihood and constitute a culturally significant food-producing and –distributing activity;

– Commercial fishing: fisheries whose primary aim is to generate resources to meet nutritional (i.e. essential) human needs; in both full-time or part-time commercial fisheries, fish and other aquatic organisms are sold on domestic and export markets. Commercial fisheries include fisheries that supply feed to the aquaculture and agriculture sectors and raw material to other industrial sectors (e.g. the biomedical sector)” (EIFAC Code of practice for recreational fisheries – Glossary – FAO 2008 cited by Ernst&Young, 2011: 3).

5. The Cognitive Purpose of European Research Network on Maritime Communities

The implementation of axis 4 of the EFF and Common Fisheries Policy have widened the cognitive perspectives for social sciences. However, the wider scope gives a chance not only to maritime sociology, but also to sociology of work and occupations and sociology of family. The described situation of FLAGs in European Union and Poland suggest that, at the present, there are two opposite processes in fishing industry: 1) intensive development and rising importance of inland fishing; 2) limitation of maritime fishing to guarantee sustainable development of maritime communities, restoration and protection to human environment of fisheries areas, preservation of diverse socio-economic structure and increase quality of life by contribution of jobs outside the fisheries sector. The situation is not just a Polish phenomenon, but concerns majority of EU Member States. In that meaning, FLAGs provides a new momentum to researches on maritime communities, as well as, inland communities with fishing industry. On this basis, the obvious consequence of above observation, should be emergence of European Research Network and in-depth, international researches on maritime communities, developing under FLAGs impact, supported by EFF and CFP.

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