

## **FISHERIES SOLIDARITY NETWORK AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ARTISANAL FISHING**

Sidney Lianza

SOLTEC/UFRJ - Solidarity Technical Center/Federal University of Rio de Janeiro  
Brasil

Felipe Addor

SOLTEC/UFRJ

Fátima Karine Pinto Joventino

SOLTEC/UFRJ

Vera de Fatima Maciel

SOLTEC/UFRJ

Vicente Nepomuceno

SOLTEC/UFRJ

### **Introduction**

This article presents the construction process of the Fisheries Solidarity Network (Rede Solidária da Pesca - RSP), an initiative that involves a combination of people, projects and institutions that operate in the productive chain of fishing such as: fishermen and their representative bodies, government agencies, universities, nongovernmental organizations and community organizations. All institutions have the common goal of economically and politically fortify the workers of artisanal fisheries and familiar aquaculture.

Historically, the Brazilian government gave little attention to the fishing sector, especially for the artisanal fishermen. As described by Rebouças et al. (2006), government incentives were designed to meet the interests and development of industrial fishing. The artisanal fishing remained in second plan in the view of the bodies responsible for supervision and long-term planning. This kind of policy of the executive power in Brazil can be characterized as a mixture of paternalism and patronage, whose speech was always turned to the artisanal fisherman as a priority, while investments were almost always destined to industrial fisheries (SECEX, 2007).

The fishing as an economic activity has in Brazil today approximately 3.5 million workers and a total fish production of 1 050 000 tons. The production related to fisheries is 770 000 tons of which 60% comes from artisanal fishing (MPA, 2010). It is also important to detach that in Brazil, is also recent the concerning about the monitoring and fishing statistics.

In the first year of Lula's government in 2003, it was created the Special Department for Aquaculture and Fisheries of the Presidency of the Republic (SEAP / PR). In 2009, SEAP was transformed into the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture (MPA), which represents a higher degree in the hierarchical power of the federal government. With the creation of the MPA, the artisanal fisheries and familiar aquaculture have received more

support in: marketing and infrastructure projects, education and other initiatives focused on strengthening small-scale fisheries, like the conduction of national and regional conferences on Aquaculture and Fisheries.

It easily verified the weak influence that traditional fishery workers have on the process of definition of policies for the sector. Part of this lack of articulation is due to the weak capacity of the social organization of fishermen, either in order to make propositions, either in monitoring the implementation of policies. Moreover, the lack of programs and initiatives integrated into instances of government makes harder the implementation of actions focused on solving these problems, thus further aggravating the contradictions related to environmental problems and social exclusion of the fishery working class. The combination of social and environmental factors has contributed to the deterioration of living conditions of fishermen.

In this context it is urgent to strength the organization of workers in the productive chain of artisanal fisheries, so that it has greater political influence in order to pressure the federal government for appropriate policies geared towards the category.

### **The process of implementation of the Fisheries Solidarity Network - RSP**

The development of the Fisheries Solidarity Network started in 2006, from three projects that focused in the fishing and familiar aquaculture into three different regions of Brazil: the project Action-Research in Fisheries Supply Chain (Projeto Pesquisa-Ação na Cadeia Produtiva da Pesca (PAPESCA/UFRJ), developed by the Center for Technical Solidarity/UFRJ in the North Coast and Lakes Region in the state of Rio de Janeiro; the project Fishes, People and Water (Projeto Peixes Pessoas e Água, PPÁgua), which actuates in the Upper and Middle São Francisco, in the state of Minas Gerais; and the Project for Natural Resource Management of Amazon Lowland from the Brazilian Institute of Environment (Próvarzea/Instituto Brasileiro de Meio Ambiente - IBAMA) that was developed in the hydrographic basin of the Amazon and Solimões rivers in the states of Para and Amazonas.

The Fisheries Solidarity Network aims to contribute with the sustainability of the productive chain of artisanal fisheries and familiar aquaculture, based on the Solidarity Economy. It is understood that the fishing and familiar aquaculture are models that best contribute to equitable and sustainable development of the productive chain in question.

The initial objectives of the RSP were defined as follows: 1 - To promote exchange of experiences among community leaders and facilitators of the projects. 2 - To establish support networks for initiatives that promote equity and sustainability of fishery production chain. 3 - To promote reflection on the consistency and feasibility of concepts, strategies and methodologies used and inserted in the movement of solidarity economy in the country. 4 - To encourage discussion of methodologies and tools used for developing, monitoring and evaluation of projects that generate income and work in the area of fishing. 5 - To identify and analyze the feasibility of a link between projects within a proposal for action-research in an international network. 6 - To promote the access of women and young people in the work market in a stable and fair way. 7 - To subsidize more specific public policies and consistent to the artisanal fishing sector. 8 – To expand the Fisheries Solidarity Network in Brazil, in conjunction with other countries in Latin America and Africa.

## **Social and Environmental Solidarity**

In order to comply with these objectives and because of the huge complexity of social, environmental, economical and technological issues related to fisheries management in Brazil, the RSP has sought to substantiate their actions based on two important strategic ways: the Shared Management of Fisheries Resources and the use of Solidarity Economy, trying to contribute to ecological balance and social equity.

The focus on eco-development can be considered as one among the various schools of thought currently interested in elucidating and tackle global environmental crisis (VIEIRA, 2005). According to Jablonski (2005), the points of view on the adoption of an ecosystem approach on fisheries are still varied, but there is one thing in common: the management of fishing activity should shift the focus from the fish stock to a new one, in order to conserve ecosystems in a more integrated way - in other words, fishing as seen from a broader sustainability criteria. The author suggests that the main goal of the ecosystem approach is to obtain the "environmental sustainability". For doing this, strategies have been proposed involving different management concepts: adaptive management, co-management and spatial management (establishment of protected areas in the marine environment).

The approach of the Shared Management of Fisheries Resources seeks to divide between State and civil society - communities in particular, the responsibility and authority for managing fish stocks (categorized as renewable natural resources of common use). The aim is to collectively define the rules - rights and duties - that specify the use of decision tools and control means. It is based on the point of view that plurality gives incentives for cooperation and, thus, one can obtain a result that benefits the community in a sustainable manner, strengthening the eco-development.

The Solidarity Economy, in its more complex interpretation, arises as a new project of society, seeking another mode of production, based on solidarity, fairness, self-management in production and in the territories, where the economy's central objective is the promotion of human being - in material, psychological and spiritual ways. The Solidarity Economy concept would refer to the "life enjoyment" as the utopian citizenship (BOFF, 2009) as defined, both in the constitution of Bolivia and in Ecuador.

The Atlas of the Solidarity Economy, published by the Department of National Solidarity Economy that is a part of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (SENAES / MTE, 2005), highlights that the economic and solidarity enterprises (ESS) have their most representative activities in agriculture, extractive and fishing (42%). Even with the necessary caution, since data are shown in aggregate, the estimate is significant, whether it is an economical, social or environmental point of view.

This set of factors appears to have caused on the SENAES / MTE an enthusiastically welcome to the joint of RSP. After two seminars of the RSP, in December 2006 and March 2007, a series of meetings have been led by SENAES, which resulted in a seminar in September 2007, involving, besides the SENAES / MTE and MPA, other departments and ministries of the Brazilian Government: the Ministry of Environment (MMA), IBAMA, the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), the Ministry of Culture (MINC) and the Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN). In this

seminar, it was decided that the 'Continuing Education for Citizenship' would be the priority axis of action for the work of the RSP.

The approach of Continuing Education encompasses different actions, since the promotion of learning of communication from writing and reading, to the conduction of technical training courses that addresses issues such as ethnic equality, the preservation of the environment, the identity cultural and health and safety of the fisherman. The result of this process has been materialized in several projects, two of which were approved recently: the first project, under the Sectorial Plan of Qualification in Solidarity Economy (MTE-PLANSEQ ECOSOL / SENAES), provides the training of 300 workers in cities of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Amazonas and Pará, where they are offering courses in Social Management of Artisanal Fisheries Productive Chain and Shared Management of Fishery Resources; the second project, funded by the MPA, is focused on the training of fishermen in the elaboration and monitoring of projects and in the construction of an educational project for fisheries workers.

### **Final Considerations**

This article presented the experience of development of the Fisheries Solidarity Network (RSP), which operates in four regional centers in Brazil: Rio de Janeiro Coastline (RJ), Upper and Middle São Francisco's River (MG), Higher Amazon's River (AM) and Lower Amazon's River (PA). The actions developed by the RSP seek to strengthen the solidarity economy movement, promoting autonomy, self-management and solidarity among the fishing communities, as well as between projects and institutions involved. The RSP's approach also values a type of management of fisheries where fish stocks are managed in an integrated and participatory way, encouraging cooperation and sharing of responsibilities between the artisanal fishermen.

Despite the achievements, the fact that the network does not have their own financial resources difficult the execution of physical meetings of technicians, researchers and community, what has hindered the development of RSP's actions. This condition is considered critical to the dialogical construction of a network that has as one of their main goals, encouraging and creating conditions in which fishers may be players in the process, and therefore values the dialogue in person, by affection, by personal ties.

The RSP has completed its third year, keeping linked four different and distant regions within a continental country. The recent approved projects together with the completion of the IV RSP Seminar in Manaus - capital of Amazonas state, between 13 and 17 September 2010 - bring new energy to the network. The RSP is now facing the challenge of the construction of an Educational Project for Artisanal Fisheries that is integrated with the principles and values emanating from the network, and contribute in the construction of another possible world. For this, we hold dear the methodological principles of Participatory and Action Research (THIOLLENT, 1996) and Pedagogy of Alternation (FREIRE, 2007; GADOTTI, 2009), which form the basis for the formation's processes under construction on the RSP. Through these principles it is intended to transform fishermen in political leaders who can be protagonists in this movement and achieve, for workers in the productive chain of fishing, a range of integrated and consistent public policies which will help to improve their working conditions and lifestyles.

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