



**STRUGGLING FOR THE GOLDEN EGG:
CONSERVATION POLITICS IN THE GALAPAGOS**

Lucia Stacey & Vlada Fuks

Reference: <http://rudar.ruc.dk/handle/1800/2355>









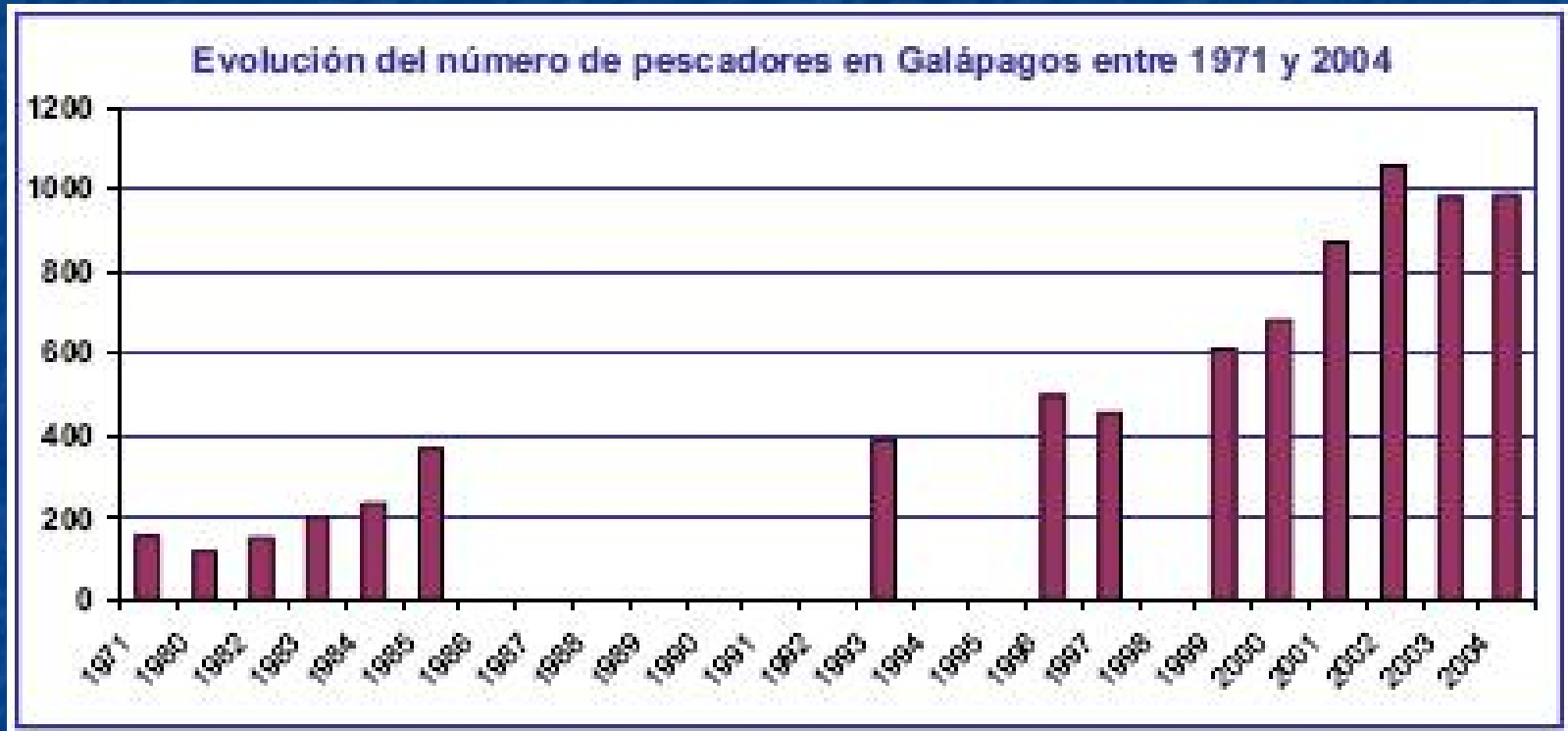




Background of a crisis

- Sea cucumber boom: export-oriented, high income, easy to collect.
- Massive extraction & over-fishing.
- Media & conservationists: fisheries collapsed.
- Nat. Park: prohibition of catch, bans & quotas: social conflict over fisheries.

Growth of the Fishing Sector



- Figure: Evolution of the number of fishers in the Galapagos between 1974 and 2004.
- Source: adapted from Diaz, N. et al (2005), "Estudio de Factibilidad para Dispositivos Agregadores de Peces (DAP) en Galapagos". Parque Nacional Galapagos.

Confrontation between fishers and conservationists

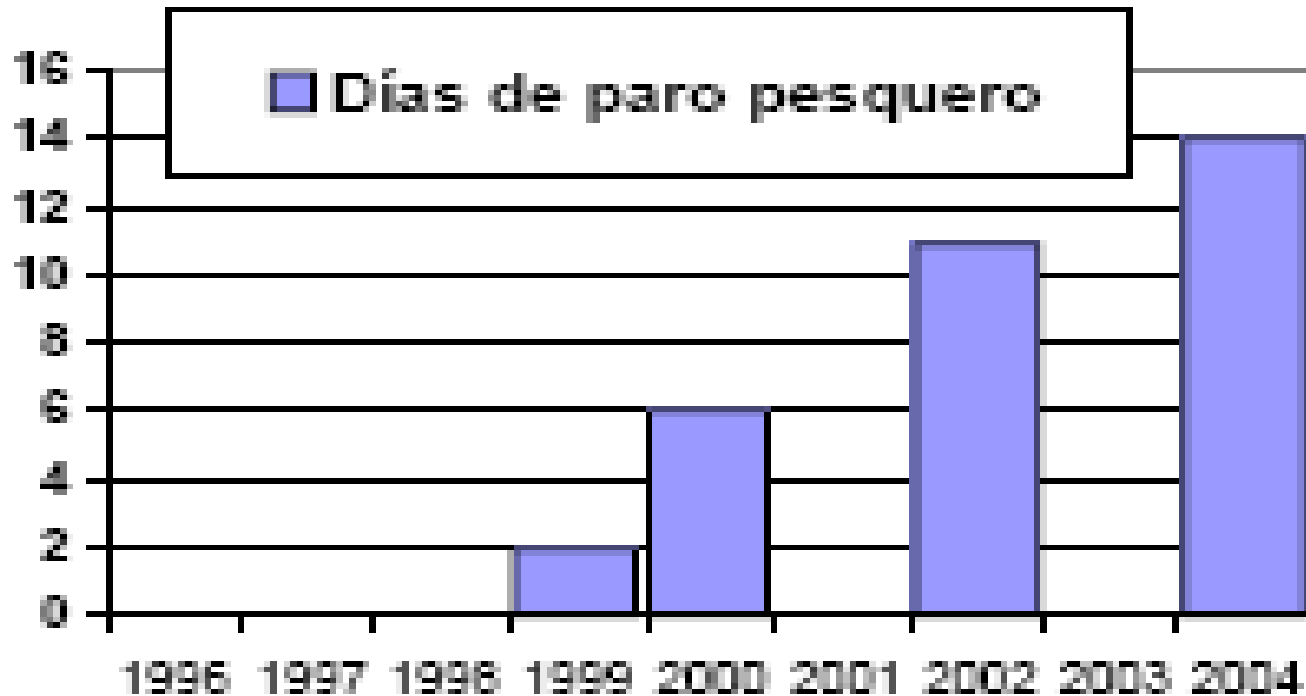


Figure: Days of fishers' strikes between 1996 and 2004

Source: adapted from Ospina, P. (2005), "Las organizaciones de Pescadores en Galapagos", Informe presentado a TRAFFIC, Version final, Quito.

The main users of the Galapagos Marine Reserve

- Conservationist sector: Galapagos National Park, Charles Darwin Research Station, NGOs.
- Tourism sector: tour operators, naturalist guides
- Fishing sector: local artisanal fishers

Conservationist organizations

- Galapagos = Pristine & unique.
Restoration, preservation.
“Back to Eden - The last chance”
- Fishers = Threat to ecological integrity




Tourism sector

- Galapagos = Marketed as “pristine paradise”, wild, pure nature, without human intervention
- Fishers = Threat to “pristine” image



Local artisanal fishers

A fisherman wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a white cap, and black pants with a red waistband is standing on a small boat. He is holding a large, dark blue fish with yellow spots along its side. The background shows a vast blue ocean under a sunset sky with orange and yellow light. The boat has various fishing gear, including a blue net and a white container, visible in the foreground.

Dichotomy between “El Dorado” and unstable fisheries & strict regulations.

Income generated by the expenditure of tourists in the Galápagos and income generated by the sea cucumber and lobster fisheries.



Source: Informe Galapagos 2001, Fundacion Natura; Murillo, S. 2002, Linea base de la biodiversidad de la RMG; adapted from Parque Nacional Galapagos & Fundacion Charles Darwin (2003) "Galapagos y el Manejo de la Reserva Marina".

Participatory Management System of the Galapagos Marine Reserve

- All three main actors represented.
- Platform for common decision- making.
- Fisheries crisis and impacts of fishing are the main point of discussions.
- Solution to crisis: to take away pressure from fisheries - fishers into new activities.

Why are the fishers at the centre of the discussions and the bud guys of the Galapagos?

What about the other sectors?

- Farmers, researchers, traders, transport, etc.
- Marine ecosystems are healthier than terrestrial.
- Tourism activities at much higher scale than fishing.
- Tour operators commit more illegalities than fishers.

Negotiating at the participative management system.

- Political alliances: conservationists & tourism sector.
- Who provides and controls data? What kind of data is needed to negotiate?
- Who administrates funds and controls projects?
- Science/scientific language legitimated vs. empirical knowledge.

“Its not only a matter of sitting together around the negotiation table, but where you sit and what you can say and sustain.”

Asymmetric relations

- Fishers are in a weak negotiating position.
- Media : illegal fishing.
- Domination of the conservationist sector.
- Tourism illegalities ignored by authorities.
- Fishers withdraw or chose strategies of strikes and illegal fishing.

Participation in co-management

- Power relations jeopardize collaboration.
- Lack of political will for change: only fishers should change and be controlled.
- Not all users participate.
- The process of implementation of alternative activities for fishers is stagnated.
- Illegal fishing continuous, crisis & conflict remains.

Struggling for the Golden Egg of the Galapagos:

Actors seem to be engaged in a competitive struggle for the same prize: “The golden egg”, the wealth of the Galapagos:

- Fisheries
- Pristine scenario
- Inflow of funding for development & conservation



An ever lasting crisis attracts ever lasting donations and projects.