STRUGGLING FOR THE GOLDEN EGG:
CONSERVATION POLITICS IN THE GALAPAGOS

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Reference: http://rudar.ruc.dk/handle/1800/2355
The Galapagos National Park & Marine Reserve

- 127 islands and islets
- 30,000 residents
- 125,000 tourists yearly

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.

Confrontation between fishers and conservationists

Figure: Days of fishers’ strikes between 1996 and 2004

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

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tourism (million of USD)</th>
<th>Fishing (million of USD)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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.
“It’s 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.