

# Marine Aquaculture Growth in Europe from an Environmental Justice Perspective

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## INTRODUCTION

The global demand to fish consumption has doubled in the period between 1985 and 2011, and is expected to sustain its growth in the next decades (FAO 2012). Since the end of the 1980s, global wild fish captures are stagnated due to ecological limits, and the increased demand to fish has been met with aquaculture production. Aquaculture is a globally expanding sector, whose contribution to world food fish production has increased by almost 12 times between 1980 and 2010 (FAO, 2012). By providing 40% of worldwide fish supply between 2009 and 2011, which is estimated to grow up to 46% in 2021 (FAO 2012), aquaculture attracted a great deal of attention.

Meanwhile, the sector in Europe faced a moderate growth or even stagnation in the last decade (Lechner, 2012). This fall back of Europe is generally associated with some obstacles to its growth such as high environmental standards set by national and European authorities, competition for spatial allocation, lack of clear priorities for the development of the sector and fragmentation of competences for the authorization of new sites (Lechner, 2012).

In Europe, only 30% of the current consumption is obtained internally (EC, 2012). This gap between internal demand and supply is key to understand why the most important European institutions including the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament support a new growth strategy for aquaculture production called as the "Blue growth strategy" (EC, 2012).

Would these initiatives deliver and the marine aquaculture in Europe, which is the focus of this study, grow in the next decade? One aspect that has been ignored in the analysis of main barriers to marine aquaculture growth in Europe is the increasing number of resistances to the establishment of new marine intensive aquaculture activities or to their expansion.

Would the European strategy for marine aquaculture growth exacerbate or diminish these conflicts? It will depend on how the measures are implemented and on the characteristics of the conflicts that are taking place. At a first glance, there are diverse actors involved in European marine aquaculture conflicts such as fishermen, representatives of tourism sector, local communities and local or international NGOs. The characteristics of these conflicts in terms of intensity and typology vary considerably as well.

Finally, the justifications underlying these resistances are not well studied in the literature, but in fact they embody some environmental justice concerns playing a crucial role in their increasing importance. Much more research on the European marine aquaculture conflicts needs to be done in order to be able to grasp the underlying reasons for these conflicts and to develop a successful European aquaculture strategy. This research wants to contribute to increase the knowledge on this area by analyzing the European marine aquaculture sector and the associated conflicts from an environmental justice perspective.

## OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research is to evaluate which discourses are being deployed in European marine intensive aquaculture conflicts and resistances, and which actors are being the most active in these conflicts and resistances. The aim of this analysis is to understand to which extent they can be considered as environmental justice conflicts in terms of distributive justice, recognition, procedural or capacities perspectives (Schlosberg, 2007).

I will analyze whether discourses in these conflicts include claims of:

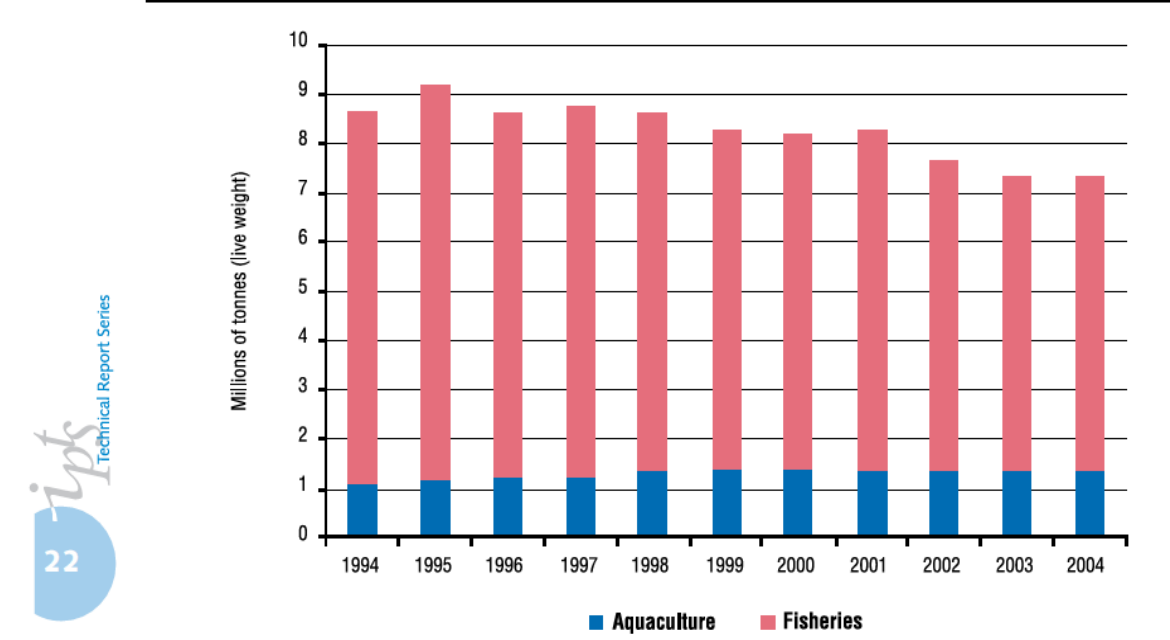
- environmental ethics
- compensation (rectificatory / corrective justice)
- incommensurability

## Facts and Figures

| Aquaculture Types in EU | Growth | Volume            |
|-------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Shellfish               | -2.4%  | 0.6 million tons  |
| Marine                  | 3.1%   | 0.35 million tons |
| Freshwater              | -0.4%  | 0.3 million tons  |

Source: Lechner, 2012

Figure 6: EU-25 fish production (aquaculture & capture fisheries - live fish equivalent)



Source: Eurostat 2007

Source: JRC (2008)

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Are there conflicts and resistances to marine aquaculture growth in Europe? Which are their main characteristics? Who are the actors taking part in these conflicts and resistances?
- Can they be interpreted as environmental justice claims? In which cases? Which of the 4 dimensions of environmental justice defined by Schlosberg (2007) are included in these arguments?
- Are the proposed aquaculture politics proper to address these problems and resistances?
- Is there any relation between the characteristics of the aquaculture installations and the level and characteristics of conflicts? May this relation lead to more intense conflicts with the growth pursuit of the European marine aquaculture strategy?

## HYPOTHESIS

- In the European areas where marine aquaculture is more important, and may grow, there is already a history of conflicts and resistances between supporters and opponents of aquaculture projects.
- Taking into consideration the actors and the discourses that are used in these conflicts, in many cases they can be interpreted as environmental justice conflicts.
- Some of the current proposed politics may not work because they do not address properly the roots of these concerns.
- A change of the predominant marine aquaculture form in Europe such as shifting from small or medium scale farms to more intensive-industrialized and technologically advanced practices with less labor-intensive methods will most probably lead to greater conflicts at the local level.

## METHODOLOGY

### European level analysis with case study in Galicia

#### Advantages:

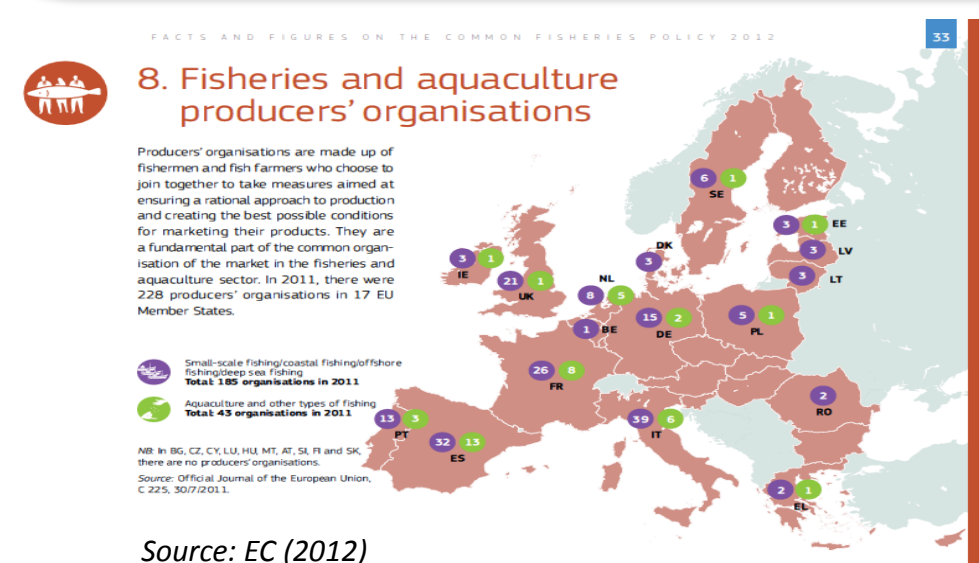
- Analysis of European level legislations and strategies promoting aquaculture growth
- Analysis of European level actors
- Analysis of aquaculture strategy documents of some countries
- Investigation of these strategies and conflicts from an environmental justice perspective
- Manifestations of these strategies at local level
- Drawing attention to the neglected conflicts in Europe
- Consequences of already existing national and regional policies
- Arguments on how the conflicts will affect and be affected from these strategies

#### Methodology:

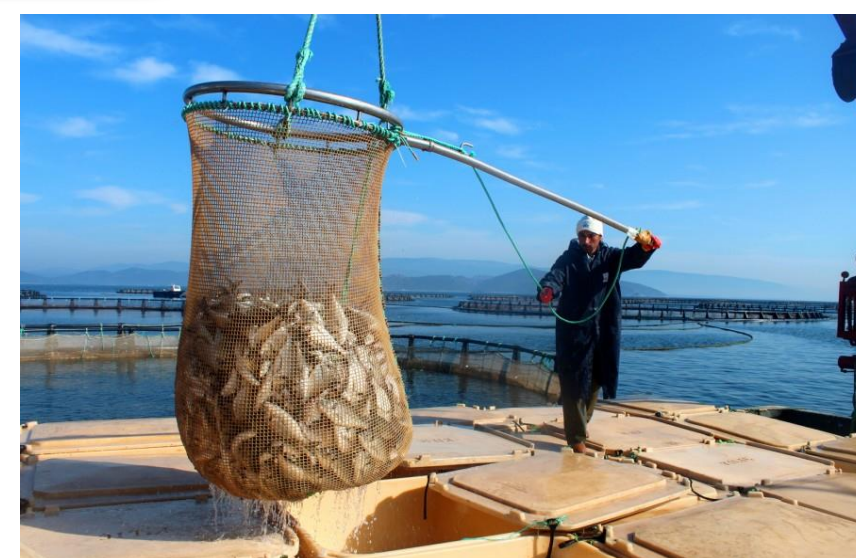
- Literature review
- In-depth interviews with key actors
- Identification of main aquaculture and conflict areas
- Definition of research areas: Galicia
- Analysis of each area including identification of actors, investigation of administrative data and media coverage

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to make this research, I will use an environmental justice perspective as proposed by Schlosberg (2007). I will analyze the characteristics of some European marine aquaculture conflicts in terms of distributive justice, recognition, procedural justice and capacities.



Source: EC (2012)



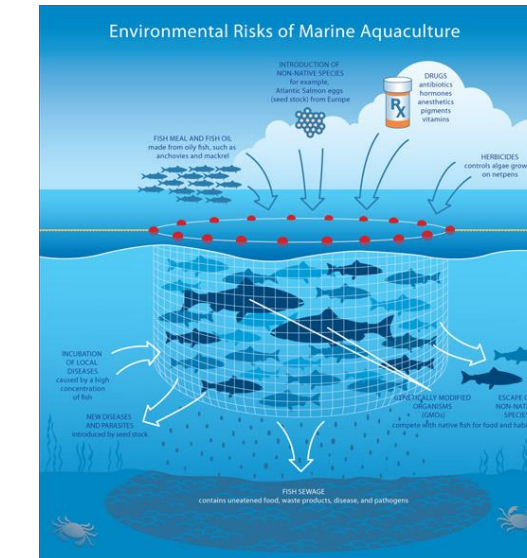
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