



From women in fisheries to more inclusive, gendered perspectives and social (blue) justice

Ancestral conservation roles of women and their association with the sacred have given way to subservience of many women in modern settings, hand in hand with resource degradation.

It is time to highlight that although women's labour and managerial contribution in contemporary fisheries are often substantial, denial of social recognition keeps their contribution largely invisible, unacknowledged and unaccounted for. Women are typically active in the postharvest sector, but also in net mending and management of family affairs, while the men are at sea. Their roles are remarkably similar across very different social systems and degrees of economic development of their communities or countries. Extra-effort expended by women to keep their men fishing despite declines in the resource can easily lead to social dumping and enable further overfishing. Often, as a last resort to ensure access to food and/or secure some additional income, women go fishing themselves or glean seafood from coastal flats. Such effects have been characterised as 'Malthusian overfishing'. Modern gender roles even in industrialised countries often prevent women's entitlement to health insurance, pension systems and social security in their own right.

Sustainable fisheries require not only resource recovery, but also social justice for women and men, particularly in the small-scale fisheries, to assume societal leadership roles, maintain and evolve maritime cultural identities and exercise active citizenship as part of recognised stewardship for the ocean and their communities. "Blue justice" and fairness of treatment are key to bring about the changes in coastal and ocean governance needed for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG14 "Life under Water".