

# ”At least they can’t buy the sun quotas”

*- A case study on the part played by Individual Tradable fishing Quotas in the articulation of identity narratives in Råå, Sweden*



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*Long ago...*

*No one tore the ground with ploughshares*

*or parceled out the land*

*or swept the sea with dipping oars -*

*the shore was the world's end.*

*Clever human nature, victim of your inventions,*

*disastrously creative,*

*why cordon cities with towered walls?*

*Why arm for war?*

*- Ovid, Amores, Book 3*

## **Abstract**

In 2009, an extensive reform of the Swedish fisheries was implemented. After several decades of regulation based on the principle of fish resource as common property, fish was put in a system of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) and released from the state and given to vessel owners. This thesis examines how labour and the implementations of a market-based system in fishing has (re)shaped the fishermen's identity narratives in Råå and how meanings and rationalities are produced within discussions and discourses on ITQs. The findings showed marketization process has led to a large social disruption within coastal communities in Sweden, and has effected a lot of the fishermen, both active and formerly active in the former very active and dynamic fishing village of Råå, Sweden.

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## 1. Introduction

This thesis actually began more than a year ago, on a sunny Saturday afternoon in April 2016. I just didn't know it then. After a short visit to my hometown Helsingborg in Sweden, and more specifically to the old fishing village Råå, just south of the city, where I grew up, I passed by a couple of fishermen sitting soaking some sun in the harbor while enjoying a cold Danish beer. Råå, a former dynamic fishing village, with a peaceful atmosphere and charming cobblestone-paved streets and houses. The old fishing booths are still standing there, in a row, as a reminder of what used to be a lively harbor and a vibrant fishing market.

The narrative of Råå is closely connected to the harbor and the sailors and fishers who helped shape the village. Around 1900, Råå was the largest fishing port in Sweden with around 100 fishing boats, and the home port of a commercial fishing fleet with more than 50 ships. As a child, I remember running around that same harbor with my parents and grandparents, watching them buy fresh fish for tonight's dinner. Everybody was involved. Everybody helped everybody. It was a lifestyle. Very shortly into the conversation with the two men, we ended up talking about how they experience the way in which fishing management is now, as of a few years, run in this part of the country, with individual tradable quotas (ITQs) for each vessel, if you are a professional fisherman. A system that allows vessel owners to buy and sell their allocated fishing quota and that was implemented less than ten years ago. The conversation ended with one of them saying; *"Well, at least they can't buy our sun quotas,"* while the other (a few years older) stated, *"They can never stop me from fishing here, this is my life,"* indirectly criticizing the management of their labour, and as I walked away, watching them enjoying their beer with the sun in their face, those sentences got stuck my mind.

Who were "they"? And what were these two fishermen threatened by? Visiting Råå again after that, I was now guided by the interest in the local identity in a time of ecological and economic pressure where Råå is facing changes. Whether these changes are welcomed or not, is to a less extent my focus in this thesis, instead I present a case where fishermen that have seen vast changes in the management system, reflect on and perceive their relation with their work as fishermen, their relation to peer "colleagues," and the landscape that they work in and surround themselves with.

I will look at the ITQ system with the help of Karl Polanyi's book *The Great Transformation*, originally from 1944, as the theoretical basis. I also wish to connect his thoughts with a contribution to the discussion of an understanding of individual narratives as telling of a wider social context with the help of Andrea Nightingale's notions of different rationalities or irrationalities. To do so, I look at which narratives fishers in Råå apply to their labour and the landscape they inhabit. At the same time I recognize the relationship between capital accumulation and nature as a contradiction, known as 'the second contradiction of capitalism,' coined by James O'Connor, in which the transformation of the landscape and sometimes the destruction of it are the only possible ways to accumulate maximum profit. I explore the process and discourses that are used to motivate the

current fishing management system and find it specifically interesting how fishermen in this context can be seen as the center point in this discussion. Through their labour, however it is managed, they provide an embodied link between natural resources and food on the table, hence the very core of human survival.

This thesis does not offer a better solution to the current system, nor does it seek to explain how the quota system works, but aims to promote and contribute to further discussion of how social and cultural values can better be integrated in the policies concerning resource management. The very starting point of this thesis was two objectives. The first was to explain the principles and motivations behind the implementation of the ITQ model to be able to examine the effects on the fishermen of the coastal community Råå. The second objective was to look at the fishermen as an embodied link between 'nature' and 'culture'. I find it interesting to see which role fishing plays for the cultural values of Råå and the links between ecological and social conditions represented in the fishermen's work. The narrative of Råå builds on many things, but among them there is a constant element, the relation with the ocean and its practices. I understand that the two objectives represent two very different policy directions and schools of thought, but are at the same time very closely related in the context of this thesis. Local and municipal development investments and protection of small scale fishing harbors are worth little if the very core of why they initially exist, can be sold or traded from one day to another.

My thesis begins with my research questions, to be followed by background and context, which will address the development and issues of ITQs. I will then describe my theoretical framework followed by a section on methods and methodology. Next, I go through the process of my data collection and fieldwork interviews in the context of my chosen theoretical framework. In semi-structured, in-depth interviews I have built an understanding of how fishermen in Råå find meaning in their labour out at sea and the interplay in which the new system has forced them to change their lives. In the narrative of the fishermen, I found a common thread centered around four topics: 1. A critical thinking regarding the process of the development of tools/technique and the ITQ system. 2. A lack of trust or faith in the government/state, dependency on the system, and the attachment to places under threat. 3. A feeling of closeness to the landscape and places inhabited by the fishers. 4. Collective identity in which fishing as a lifestyle becomes an important meaning-making mechanism for individual lives. I have then divided the themes into the three pillars upon which this Human Ecology master's program is built: *Culture*, *Power* and *Sustainability*. Finally, I summarize the analysis, the importance of this study, and how it could contribute to further research.

## 1.1 Research questions

A) *How has labour, as the interface between society and landscape, and the ITQ system (re)shaped fishermen's identity narratives in Råå?*

- How do identity narratives of the fishermen help explain human-nature relations?
- How has the ITQ system changed the relationship between humans and nature?

B) *Which meanings/rationalities are produced or constructed in the discussions on ITQs (Individual tradable quotas) by national and international actors?*

- How does 'quota' function as a commodity?
- How do people's embodied interactions with their resource and surroundings create particular kinds of behavior towards their environment?
- How does the concept of sustainability fit into the discussion and how is it defined in the context of ITQs?

## 2. Background and context

In 2009, a reform of the Swedish commercial fisheries was made by the parliament to introduce the system of Individual Tradable Quotas in fishing for specific species. After many decades of regulation through rations based on the principles of the fish resource as common property, fish quota were then to some extent privatized and distributed to vessel owners. With the phenomenon of fishing quotas as private property, a new market of commodities was created. Vessel owners can buy other vessel owners' quota, meaning their specific allocated right to fish, and accumulate a larger amount of quotas, but at the same time making them increasingly dependent on the financial system. The new market has enabled some vessel owners to accumulate more quota, while others are trying to remain independent of banks, investors, and the financial systems. The fish quotas are now, for various reasons, concentrated to less but larger vessels. To understand these changes, I look at the development of quotas, how the fishermen in Råå are talking about it, and more importantly, how this directly impacts them and their daily life practices.

### 2.1 Motivation

Why should I as a human ecologist master student dive into the world of management? At first, it seems to be a field for the economist, the biologist, or other specialists in resource management. But planning and managing the marine environment is ultimately about managing humans. Cultural perceptions of nature and how they are generated, make fishing management not just about fish but also a social issue. The way in which the ocean as a landscape is commoditized and consumed contributes to the discussion of identity, which could be seen as the broader platform and common ground for this thesis. While ecological, social, and economic considerations are part of the process,

marine planning entails societal choices which reflect specific visions of what the marine environment ought to be. These visions reflect human values and world-views that are generally accepted as being the 'truth'. But different values often conflict with each other.

My point of departure is that the existence and influence of cultural values are not as recognized in marine science and policies at national and European levels of governance as economic value. Yet it is the collective choices, made by people, through the resources that they use and the places they visit and inhabit that also drive many pressures on marine management. Public perceptions and contemporary discourses on the marine environment play an important role in supporting major changes to that environment and these changes in marine management have considerable social and economic consequences. I would argue that a better understanding of local level perspectives will be critical in shaping the unfolding policy of the seas. The scientific understanding of human-environment value systems in the context of the sea is not yet well developed, but as the fishermen I met clearly stated, management methods will affect many people in their daily lives, and specifically in how they perceive themselves. The introduction of the ITQs raises the questions of what it means to transform an ecosystem (nature) into a collection of market goods and what the existential consequences of the commoditization of those "goods" are.

## **2.2 Selling nature to save nature: From commons to privatized commodities**

There are as many varieties in ways of fishing, and different sizes of vessels and boats, as there are various management initiatives and together they create a complex historical background, but was until 2009 in Sweden all still based on equal access to fish resources. The finiteness of natural resources, in this case fish, in combination with technological growth has contributed to shaping an era of individual property rights as an inevitable solution to the free access of fisheries. I will develop this notion further into the thesis. To understand the development of the new regulation, and how it has effected some fishers, we need to look at the history of, and responses to, the threat of overfishing. The change brings up the question regarding the relation between quota owners and those who rely on others for access, market, price, value, and other mechanisms for how natural resources are managed.

Apart from quota size and price, there is a new social relationship that is crucial for the access to the exclusive marine resources, and for the opportunity (or lack of) to pledge your life to professional fishing. I will focus on the actual life-worlds of the fishermen in a time that is mediated by the presence of the ITQs and with this recognition as my orientation, my aim is to build an understanding by engaging in the reflections of the fishermen. There is a vast system of ITQs applied to different types of vessels, different areas, different fish and tools, which have all emerged in a complex mix of policy making, but in this thesis I do not seek to investigate or explain *how* the quota system works or how it is designed, but rather to understand which the *effect* of the system changes has been to a group of fishermen in the village of Råå. As one fisherman I spoke to said:



*"I just want to continue doing what I have always been doing, I just want to be out on the ocean and catch some fish! Now, there are all these rules and regulations and nobody appreciates the old knowledge anymore. But I know these waters, they don't, they really really don't."*

### **2.3 Polarization of vessels as part of the rational**

To deal with the crisis of overfishing, ITQs were pushed forward as a solution and tool for creating a more sustainable fishery by reducing the number of vessels fishing around the Swedish coasts and waters and by controlling/allocating how much they could actually fish. Before the implementation of the ITQs, vessel owners with enough capital could invest in larger, faster, and better equipped vessels to catch a bigger share of the shared, but limited, quota. With an implementation of individual quotas for vessels, the race for fish was considered to be prevented as fishers got their share allocated each year. With the sector already being overcapitalized and with the ITQs then being shared between a large number of vessels, some actors pushed for a "rationalization" of production - to combine quota from two or more boats into one and to reduce the number of inefficient fishers.

According to the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (HaV), the new regulations were developed for several reasons. One was a fishing fleet that was out of balance with the available resources, which meant poor economic performance for some vessels. Another reason was to relieve the management challenges when distributing the limited resource and to promote the shipping structure of the Swedish fishing fleet to contribute to resource conservation and for fisheries in general to contribute to an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable ocean. A third reason for the implementations of ITQs was to increase the productivity of the fishery and reduce the fleet (the amount of vessels) (Brady & Waldo 2008). In using market-based instruments to manage the fishery, the fishermen who have low profitability or for other reasons want to quit fishery may earn money by selling their quota or concession, while those who want to expand their fishing activities or enter the fishery could buy quotas. The number of harvesters would decline and the number of inefficient producers would be reduced. This system is by its advocates seen as a win-win system both for those who leave and for those who remain. These are some reasons why the ITQ system has been defined as both socially, economically, and environmentally more sustainable.

The critics, on the other hand, focus on quota accumulation and a fear of losing the local-based and small-scale fishery which means a lot for coastal communities in terms of jobs, identity, attraction, and potential for development. The system is also often criticized for making it impossible for new, younger fishermen without large capital assets to enter the fishery (Interview, Ida Wingren, Lund University 3/3-2017). For some, the regulation has meant being fully dependent on leasing quotas from others, and therefore vulnerable to the changes in leasing prices, opportunities to fish, and market prices. According to HaV, the number of ships in Sweden was

reduced by 55% in 2009-2013, from 82 vessels to 37. During that same time the total Swedish fleet was reduced from 1471 ships to 1299. Within the pelagic system (all vessels that have quota) the vessels smaller than 24 meters have been reduced by 43 % during 2009-2013, while the vessels over 24 meters have been reduced by 62 %. Out of all vessels in the pelagic system, there are 12 vessels left that hold the whole national quota (HaV, 2014).

## **2.4 Who decides how much to fish?**

Sweden, as a member of the European Union since January 1995, has its fisheries policies covered by the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). HaV is then responsible for the conservation and management of the Swedish fish stocks. Current management systems are predominantly based on quotas and Total Allowable Catches (TACs), where a specific amount of a species is allocated to a country, state, or individual operator. TACs and other regulations of EU fisheries are decided at the Fisheries Council meeting and are based on proposals from the Commission who primarily get their data from two main bodies: The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), and The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

The change of fisheries management based on ITQs is a new step in the historical expansion of property rights as a method of economic organization and can be compared to the right to extract a certain quantity of mass from a given area or colony. Although diverse and complex with separate rules and regulations, they all share the establishment of a market to replace the prior management with limited entry, or open access, aiming to bring both environmental and economic benefits. To understand the preconditions for the shift in regulation, I want to look at the historical background to the growth in the 20th century.

## **3. Theoretical lens**

The analyses and findings that have guided my research draws on critical Polanyian and Marxist theory and other selected studies in political ecology closely related to identity narratives in connection to labour and landscape (see e.g. Castree 2008; Heynen et al. 2007; Fairhead et al. 2012). I have been very inspired from the work of Gisli Pálsson and Agnar Helgason and their studies on the implementation of ITQs in the Icelandic fishery. The book, *The Tragedy of The Commodity* (2015) by Brett Clark, Rebecca Clausen, and Stefano B. Longo, has also greatly benefitted this study. When discussing identity, one approach takes as its point of departure Andrea Nightingale's notions of (ir)rationalities. In this approach, people's thoughts and conceptions of themselves are constructed in a life-world that is characterized by emotions and experiences by which people are intertwined with nature and other people. In this flow of emotions, a unity forms, which is the self, and the only way to make sense of this self is to look at cultural, natural, and social surroundings and how they interact. The narratives I seek are those from landscape and

labour and in this thesis labour is understood in Marxist terms as "the fundamental interface between society and nature" (Barca 2015:74). In order to understand identity and the interactions within that identity, I seek to find them in narratives that connect the individual to the social world. Karl Polanyi's theories will work as a theoretical lens and background knowledge, a sort of 'cradle' in which I illustrate and embed my case study. I have chosen to introduce some literature along the way as it is presented in the analysis, rather than devoting it a section in this part of the thesis.

### **3.1 A short history of the market**

The political debates about how to solve environmental challenges are usually conducted by disciplines such as natural sciences and economics, and there is little difference when it comes to ocean management. But humans are embodied physical systems as well as ecosystems, hence it seems important to approach environmental challenges through a social science lens (Longo et al 2015:20). How does a society organize itself around the order of capitalism where the direction is turned toward production of commodities and where economic growth is its very core? The rush to control land is so well established in today's world order, and the fact that land and natural resources can be traded on a market are such embedded parts of society, that a lot of people have even stopped questioning it. The similar rush for aquatic resources is less researched but has recently been coined 'ocean grabbing.' The needs of vulnerable populations and environmental concerns are being pushed into market-based mechanisms, advocated as the only 'sustainable' solution and response to the threat of overfishing.

Market-based conservation initiatives on land has historically had socio-ecological consequences, displacement being one of them, and the question is if similar approaches to the ocean will in the end have a similar effect? The development of natural resources such as land and fish into tradable commodities is a fact, although it has not always been conceptualized as such. Karl Marx described this change as 'primitive accumulation' when referring to the processes of land going from being communal to being private property. The system changes in regards to property in England between the 17th and the 19th century had intentions of "converting the land into a commercial commodity." Through the enclosure of fields, land then became an asset, a property that could be monopolized (Marx 1990:885).

Polanyi (2001[1944]) also critically examined economic history and some of the most classical assumptions that have had great influence in economic thinking. Economist Adam Smith (1776) notes that to "exchange one thing for another is common to all men (...) and is to be found in no other race of animals" (Smith 2010[1776]:17). From this point of departure, individual humans are seen to have a rational capacity to trade with one another, and in many ways, complex society is based on the notion that humans have a universal, rational behavior of exchanging goods. According to Smith, it is this behavior that results in the division of labour, where different individual, rational humans will specialize in one type of labour and through that position, supply

themselves with different types of services or goods. He also argues that it is the power of exchanging that makes the division of labour possible, therefore the extent of this division must be controlled by the extent of the market (Smith 2010[1776]:31). It has since then been argued that the market itself enables rational behavior.

These ideas are the foundation of the "economic man" - an individual, able to rationally maximize. To put this in context, market-based fisheries management systems are based on that same idea, and problems within that system are claimed to come from lack of property rights, something that has been known as "the tragedy of the commons", a concept developed by ecologist Garrett Hardin in 1968. In the context of fishing, when every fisher has had equal access to the same stocks, it has seemed logical to some that each has tried to take as large share of the stock as possible, based on their capacity, before someone else does. The most fair solution and response has been to establish some kind of private rights, to stop the overcapacity, the race for fish, and the environmental exploitation and over-harvesting of the oceans. But as I wrote in the introduction, this has created new relationships between people and thus the behavior toward the resource has changed with it. What used to be a race for fish is now instead a race for fishing rights.

In contrast to the rational behavior Smith describes, Polanyi argues that the idea of the market as an integrated human behavior and exchange being a universal human tendency are only projections of the classical economists and he thus claims that market as the dominant organizer is everything but universal but exists in many societies but without playing an organizing dominant role. What was new and what he points out in *The Great Transformation* was the market economy.

### **3.2 Fictitious commodities: A summary**

The commodification of land, money, and labour is what Polanyi describes in his book *The Great Transformation*. Since the market for these commodities was crucial for the production of value, Polanyi was concerned with how the market and the role of trade of these 'goods' would develop. For the markets to function, society needed to be transformed, hence the commodification of labour, land, and money was necessary in order for industrialization to take place. Machines and techniques reshaped relations within production, creating a pathway for markets which needed land, labour, and money to function as commodities. This radically changed the system, and people's connection and relationship with land, to become producers of labour instead.

Polanyi argued that the very core of these thoughts were, in themselves, fictitious. What did he mean by that? In simple terms, true and real commodities are those that are produced for the purpose of being sold, such as coffee, beans, clothes, etc. Fictitious commodities, however, are not originally produced for trade, but created and sold as if they were. Hence, the commodification of labour did not make sense to Polanyi, since labour is a human activity. Land is not human made and money is a made up, symbolic demonstration of power. In this way, the society, the way in which it

was organized, and its intertwined social relations, changed drastically. It was in opposition to the new transformation of society that labour unions and new social security institutions emerged. In contrast to what Adam Smith proposed, Polanyi argues that markets are not to be seen as universal and radical, but as contextual and tied to a specific time and place. He feared, based on these facts, that society would fail to maintain this system without jeopardizing the natural and human substance of society.

Stefania Barca writes about how the 'second contradiction of capitalism' often takes place in labour and workers' bodies, in the environment that they inhabit (Barca 2015). I would argue that that very same contradiction also plays an important role in the articulation of the fishermen's identities as well. Other scholars like John Barry and Kimberly Smith write about how landscape and land, created in a dynamic co-creation, play a crucial part in who 'we' are and the values and practices we have in relation to the land" (Barry & Smith 2008:565). Hence it is important to look at not only the practice of fishing, but to get a sense of how these fishermen relate to their surroundings in which the fishing takes part. There are countless ways to approach the case I have chosen and I realise I have built this thesis on a broadly defined choice of framework, but all with a hope of opening up new debates on where these fishermen, a soon to be extinct group of people, "end up" in society, and more importantly, which cultural value they provide the context of fishing.

Among other processes, the Hardinian perspective from the tragedy of the commons have most definitely influenced the development of the market-based management and the rise of ITQs. The discourse of conservation and sustainability would not be possible without the scientific processes that identified the status of environmental threat (Fairhead et al. 2012:241). Converting nature into having a monetary value which is related to Polanyi's notion of fictitious commodities, and the fact that accumulation is converting different pieces of the ecosystem into money, makes us understand better, why growth is linked to creating new ways of finding new non-monetary forms of capital. ITQs can definitely be understood as one of them.

I have no intention to test and question the theories of Polanyi as such, but I wish to see if they can help support the findings and if so, contribute to a different understanding of the case. A case where the fishermen in Råå, help me understand different narratives by looking at how they perceive themselves and the landscape around them. The human-environmental relation is specifically interesting in the present society of Råå as the landscape, both environmentally and politically is changing around the people living there.

#### **4. Methods and methodology**

As a researcher I seek to understand what meaning making mechanisms shapes our surroundings, in this case the identity narratives of the fishermen in the context of system changes in fisheries management. I tried to do so without assuming that the meanings I found are stable or fixed, but

rather fluent, and I seek to discover what is told at a particular point, in a particular time. I will aim to present my results as accurately as possible, with a thorough acknowledgement of my background based on ethical research guidelines. In designing my thesis I took help from the guidelines stated in Jensen and Laurie's article on research design (Jensen & Laurie 2016:5). What was specifically important to my study was to understand the problem statement, go through my material several times, coming back to the research question to reaffirm my goal, and from that point of departure, carefully decide on what methods would properly meet that specific goal.

As my purpose is related to identity narratives connected to labour and landscape, my choice of method was developed based on my assumptions and personal experiences on how I would conduct the most representative and accurate information. Rather than using quantitative methods e.g. surveys, where no deeper human relation would be established, and considering the sensitivity of my research topic, the methodology was qualitative and I carefully chose, prepared and planned my interviews as I would have a more trustworthy approach and longer time to explain my purpose to the interviewees.

Some interviews were organized in order for me to increase my own knowledge about ITQs and the processes around fishing. As I have read policy texts to understand and grasp the complex system, they show little about what the actual fishers and their practices involve at a more personal level. At times, I have asked questions about the distribution and selling that have come across as somewhat provocative, all in a comradely tone, but to which I have received answers that have turned my views around and challenged me. I truly appreciate the honesty and courage I've been met with from those who have shared their stories and sometimes secrets, with me. The large flow of information I have received from my interviewees has thus made me go back to my research questions, and have them re-formulated and developed and changed as I have stayed close to my material and as my knowledge has expanded. My way of interviewing has had a central theoretical position where the concept of fictitious commodities and rationalization of nature is central.

#### **4.1 Applied method: Fieldwork interviews**

My fieldwork took place in Råå and the city of Helsingborg between March 6th and April 17th 2017. I then engaged in semi-structured, open-ended, qualitative interviews in order to in the best way possible collect my primary data. I conducted five in-depth interviews in total with fishermen, with a couple of additional phone calls and informal meet-ups afterwards. At one point, without the intention of interviewing, only observing, I was invited out on a vessel to experience hands on net-fishing which became a great learning experience. Not only did I get a chance to see and witness the hard labour it takes to fish with nets, coming back to the harbor and taking part of the context of cleaning, and handling the fish was an even more eye-opening experience. During the research and data collection process, I also conducted interviews with key informants relating to this field of study. I have thus chosen to narrow the thesis by only focusing on the information gathered in the in-depth interviews with the fishers. I chose to do so mainly because: a) Their narratives and experiences are central to the phenomenon I wish to examine; b) The reports and articles written on

this matter in this specific area, although the concept of sustainability and protection of coastal communities are mentioned, rarely bring forward the voices of the people actually conducting the work, but focus more on the guidelines from international and national environmental management institutions. The key informant interviews did thus provide me with a background knowledge to this field and topic, an economic system and overall a complex field I have not before been exposed to. The interviews conducted should therefore be considered as a reduced sample for the purpose of study and cannot be considered as representative of the whole anthropological and sociological universe that the fishermen of Råå identity narratives constitute. Neither should they be seen as representative of a general opinion regarding ITQs.

## **4.2 Finding the informants**

I first approached this research with a very optimistic view. Being born and raised in the area and with a personal and emotional connection to Råå, I was assuming it would be easy to find people willing to talk to me about these issues. In a way I saw myself as an insider but would soon find out this was not the case, I was definitely an outsider. This has thus been beneficial to my study as I have approached the topics with a 'clean' slate (Flowerdew and Martin 2005:125). When first contacting two of the fishermen I was met with suspicion although I tried to explain in as detailed way as I could, why I was conducting this study, and why I thought their voice was important. The topic about quotas and fishing rights seemed to be sensitive and delicate for reasons I then did not fully understand. I also realize I have been somewhat constrained by being new to the field and topics. In the light of this, I approached the research in Råå with a sense that I had to 'make do' with the people I possibly could get to interact with. But ironically, the problem with the industry that I aim to emphasize in this thesis is that there are not many active professional fishers left in Råå.

## **4.3 Process and snowball sampling**

After a couple of weeks of despair, I decided to take a different approach and contacted a "non-professional" fisher, but someone who have been fishing his whole life and who is considered somewhat of a "Råå profile", Lars. This meeting turned out to have a snowball effect which can be described with the help of Creswell (2007:127). The specific group of people I wished to approach, turned out to be a hard-to-reach group. But one thing led to another. A snowball sampling can be described as "identifying respondents who are then used to refer researches on to other respondents" (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). As I aimed to establish a deeper human relation with my interviewees to gain a more trustworthy approach, this approach turned out to work to my advantage. After a long conversation and having explained in greatest possible detail my purpose to Lars, he then contacted his cousin, who in fact turned out to be the person I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. I had gained instant trust. This phone call and the interview that followed, created the effect that, all of a sudden, more people wanted a part in telling their story, concerns, and experiences, and on one occasion, one person even called me to say "*I have heard you have been talking to such and such. I would like to tell my story too!*" Some people were almost "demanding" to participate and not be left out. I realise snowball sampling techniques of qualitative research lie in the margins of research

practice, but each interviewee gave me a name of another person to contact. This method can be placed within a wider context of link tracing methodologies which take advantage of the human relations and social networks of respondents to provide an expanding set of potential informants. My sample criteria, without any limitations to background, age, or gender, was based on the core demand that I wanted the informants to be professional, active, or formerly active/retired fishermen in the area of Råå or close surroundings.

#### **4.4 Structure**

One aim in this thesis is related to identity narratives and from that point of departure, qualitative methodology would most likely meet my specific goal. I believe that this choice of method provided me with a broader scale platform from within which the interviewees could best formulate their answers in their own words regarding the topic I specified. When I approached my interviewees, I was convinced that semi-structured, open-ended interviews were the best option (Flowerdew & Martin 2005: 118). The interview was considered open-ended because this means that, even though the questions can be scripted, the interviewer usually does not know what the contents of the response will be. The interviews had questions to frame the conversation but the focus was more on the participant's thoughts, feelings, experiences, knowledge, skills, ideas, and preferences. The interviewees were informed beforehand on why I was conducting the study, and what type of topics we would discuss. To achieve a sense of comfort, I gave them the opportunity to choose the spot for the interview, which in all five cases ended up with me going to their private homes.

Open ended questions are those I considered could provide broader parameters within which interviewees could formulate answers in their own words concerning topics specified by me. Questions beginning with "Tell me about..." invited the interviewees to tell a story, and generated detailed descriptions about topics of interest to the interviewees. These topics were then further explored when I followed up on what had already been said by asking several open-ended follow up questions, or probes (carefully asked follow up questions, to try to discover information that might be more sensitive and hard to reach) that included the interviewee's words. When I asked open-ended questions, I tried to be sure that the topic was specific enough, so that the interviewee was able to respond properly. If the topics had not been explained, or been unclear, there might have been difficulties answering these broad, open-ended questions. When I as interviewer and the interviewees both felt comfortable talking to each other in this semi-structured way, it was possible, with some follow up questions with appropriate probes to generate qualitative discussions and conversations.



## 5. Findings and analysis

### 5.1 Presentation of interviewees

Fisherman 1 (Anders "Spigget") - 47 years of age. Born and raised in Råå, worked as a professional fisherman for 14 years, now holds other profession, still within the industry of fishing.

Fisherman 2 (Lars) - 56 years of age. Born and raised in Ålabodarna, Landskrona, worked as a professional fisherman for 11 years, now holds other profession.

Fisherman 3 (Janne) - 89 years of age. Born and raised in Glumslöv, worked as a professional fisherman for 32 years, now retired.

Fisherman 4 (Staffan) - 63 years of age. Born and raised in Råå, worked as a professional fisherman for 8 years, now holds other profession.

Fisherman 5 (Kurt "Kurre") - 73 years of age. Born and raised in Råå, actively works as professional fisherman as of 34 years.

Although I tried to keep the different interviews circling around the same topic, due to the nature of a semi structured interview, each interview came out different which also effected the frequency of different themes. Out of my five interviewees, only three had been directly involved in the selling/leasing/buying procedure of quotas, and can not be considered a representational group that holds any 'truth' regarding the implementation of ITQs. All interviewees had nevertheless similar experiences and relationship regarding their work as fishermen and to the surrounding village of Råå. I am not going to provide an analysis of gender in this thesis, it is thus important to note that in Råå, fishing produce a specific kind of masculinity and masculine subjects, even if there are, of course, many women working in the fishing industry. But due to the fact that all my informants were in fact men, and for the sense of language consistency, I have decided to throughout this thesis, both in the previous sections as well as the analysis, use the word 'fishermen/man' rather than 'fisher'.

## Part I: Culture

### 5.2. Once a fisherman, always a fisherman

Although my interviewees told me different stories, they were fundamentally the same for all. Many times the pattern of the interview followed the same track. They would tell me about the hard work, the bad pay, and unfairness of the new regulations. The cultural value of landscape and labour is reflected in the following section. The interviewees would often respond with comments like "*It's part of me, I have been doing this my whole life.*" By stating it is part of them, they are telling me the act of fishing is embedded in their identity although sometimes irrational and beyond logic. The act of fishing has become part of their well-being and it reflects the tradition of the work. All of them come from families with uncles, fathers, and grandfathers who were fishermen, and in most

cases, the passion for the ocean and fishing has been inherited. Being part of this community and tradition seemed to be what kept them from stopping fishing and thus breaking that line. I could almost touch the sense of pride as they spoke about their knowledge and the art of fishing. This theme was consistent throughout all of my interviews as they seemed to share values and attitudes.

Lars:

*"Truckers, farmers and us fishermen. And maybe miners too... Well, for all of us hardworking 'real' workers..you know...we will never be anything else."*

What sticks out in the quote above, is in a Gramscian perspective, the notion of 'hard work' as the hegemonic norm, developed by a collective sense of consent and necessity. It was as if the fishermen were one collective body. The hard work was something often mentioned as something they all seemed to characterize each other with, and how those hard work ethics are soon to be long gone. Nightingale argues that everyday, embodied contact with a resource seems to form a relation and attachment, yet the boundaries between the landscape and people are not fixed (Nightingale 2011b). and how we define and understand land or landscape is not politically neutral but implies who we are and which values and practices we apply to that land (Barry & Smith 2008:565). We are not outside our landscape, or capsuled inside it, it is part of us, a mass in which we live.

The geographical location of Råå seemed to be of great importance to all of my interviewees. All five referred to Råå as something connected to the ocean, but they spoke of it in a poetic and philosophical way. One interviewee pointed out that *"Råå simply means fishing!"* which implies that what is labour and what is landscape, can sometimes be fluent and are usually intertwined and does not have to be separated in different categories. The harbor was specifically mentioned as a very meaningful place, not only for its importance for fishing, but as a meaning-making spot for people to interact. Emotions sit at the heart of the human capacity to perceive landscapes and make meaning of. The fishermen all show a connection to Råå and fishing that goes beyond its economic function and points towards what Polanyi define a *good society* where land, or ocean in this case, as only economic potential is disconnected from the wider cultural value. Traditionally, land and labour form part out of the same existence. As Polanyi puts it "What we call land is an element of nature inextricably interwoven with man's institutions. To isolate it and form a market out of it was perhaps the weirdest of all undertakings of our ancestors" (Polanyi 2001:187).

Staffan:

*"If you live in Råå, you will always smell and see the ocean. It will be a part of you whether you like it or not. And Råå should smell like fish!"*

The sentimental and emotional connection to Råå was highlighted by all interviewees as important for their perception of themselves and their identity. A lot of them connected to kinship, childhood, and a place where they grew up, created memories, and have personal bonds to.

Janne:

*"The new restrictions have killed it all. It's destroyed. But it's not only the new rules, I remember when the new nets came. People talk about bigger boats. But after the war everything changed. It was like turning a hand in five seconds. But if those damn nylon-nets never would have come, things would be different, the fishing here would bloom again. That's how fast things can change."*

Some places, the harbor being one of them, have been dismantled because of the changes in fisheries management together with technological advancement as illustrated with Janne's statement above. When asked what Råå means to him, Anders spoke of an ambivalent relation which instantly changed as he had to "give up" fishing.

*"It feels like that girl you never got in high school, you know. The one who didn't want to dance with you, but who you still dream about. But that dream is just an illusion now. I feel sad and angry. But maybe I'm just a hopeless romantic."*

Although Anders feels that he is not in a bad financial situation, he still expressed a feeling of rootlessness as he talked about fishing. I found the links between labour and collective identity well capsuled when my interviewees spoke about Råå but I could not help but think how a collective group's experiences of hardship and, in a way, suffering, might cause them to feel alienated to the land they speak so dearly about. I use the quote below to represent this.

Staffan:

*"No one should ever romanticize fishermen, we play a huge part in why there are so many regulations too, with all the selling on the black market. The eel is a perfect example. The worst pirate of all, are us humans! Now, the inshore fishing is being destroyed too because of the black market. And well..yes, I guess I'm guilty too, but not so much...my crime is having a couple of meters extra net. We put out nets where the coastguard cant get us. If there are a lot of waves and currents in one spot, at a specific time, then we know the men in suit might tip over their fancy coffeecup when trying to control us. So we're quite safe there...They don't want to dirty their suits so to speak. But to be honest, I don't really care anymore."*

I allow myself to draw the conclusion that situations as described above can indeed be important when fishermen, formerly active or active, build and reproduce representations and narratives of Råå. The main question in this thesis, on how ITQs as political policy translates into new meanings and practices becomes very obvious with this statement. The co-existence of fishermen in a context full of different contradictions, also uncover their internal relations. Anders and Staffan sometimes fish together and help each other out. Now they both have other jobs but go out fishing, for pleasure, as often as they can.

Anders:

*"Out there, we are free men...I mean, once you get out on that boat...I had my first boat when I was eight. You can only imagine how I feel. It's still hard work, but it's so much fun."*

The quote above represents what I understand is the very core of some fishermen's identity. Freedom, independence, the consistency of tradition that they proudly carry on, and the sense of community. "We are free men" is directly connected to their self-image, something they seem to believe that anyone not belonging to the fishing community would envy. This leads onto another common thread regarding identity, namely that of the collective. As in the quote above, interviewees almost constantly replied to my questions about themselves by answering "we" rather than "I". This indicates a strong sense of a collective identity.

Kurt:

*"Soon there will be none of us left."*

Understanding the role of fishing in shaping identity is not straightforward and differs from contexts and individuals. Nevertheless, I found all my interviewees had strong emotional attachments to being a fisherman, although all but one had left the professional part of fishing, yet the quote above indicates how they portray themselves as both threatened individuals as well as a threatened collective.

Anders:

*"I feel like I sold my self...now I can't even get a license to sell, even if I catch more fish than the other guy in the harbor. And he lies in his logbooks, I know he does. He even told me. And he catches eel! It's forbidden. But I'm not gonna tell anyone, we don't do that. He's old now, he'll quit soon anyway. But it's such a crazy system, absolutely, utterly crazy."*

As observed by Palsson & Helgason, (1996) the number of large integrated companies and vessels has grown and increased the proportional share of ITQs, while, as in Anders situation, smaller, usually family run operations, tend to sell their quota and leave the industry. While quota holders seem to have taken on an entrepreneur-like role in the ITQ system, other boat owners, or formerly active fishermen tend to now perceive the ITQ system as an obstacle to traditional ways of fishing and thus widen the gap between people who initially belonged to the same community.

## **Part II: Power**

### **5.3. Fishermen vs fishing industry**

What is "nature" to these fishermen? It is obvious that individuals might experience the natural environment around them in many different ways. For a farmer or a fisherman e.g, the agricultural landscape, or the ocean, might symbolize "nature", while for others within that same group it could mean the opposite of "nature". The contradictions show how different cultural perceptions of nature are generated through a variety of contexts. But, could there be a similarity in how people relate to nature connected to how they relate to each other through exchange? Ideals can and do transform over time, and human-environment relations will continue to have moral and existential consequences depending on what political, cultural, economic, or social arena they are embedded

in. Helgasson and Pálsson illustrate this well as they have studied the Icelandic fishing who's government introduced ITQs already in 1983. The motivation behind it does not differ from the Swedish context and ITQs. The government wanted to tackle over-fishing with a market-based system. They write about how for most of the 20th century, fishermen, both skippers and their crew have been seen as heroic, highly knowledgeable actors contributing to ideals of nationhood (Hornborg & Pálsson 2000:166).

Anders:

*"They have all the power, but we were the ones that got them the money to begin with."*

A lot of time I heard the word "they" and "them," and as I tried not to interrupt the flow of the conversation, I later tried to put the word in context when listening through my material, and came to the realization that "they" usually meant the Swedish Board of Fisheries, HaV. In other words, the ones who decide and manage the ITQs under the regulations provided by EU.

Kurt:

*"It's not only the actual ITQ system. It's everything that came with it. I'll give you an example. Because it's so controlled and carefully done, every time a fisher catches fish and is to take it back to port, you need to call a guy to come check you. He gives you a specific time, let's say 12 o'clock, and I go, yeah yeah that's fine. Then one day I had a problem with my engine after calling the fishery board...it was playing up, so I had to stop and go back. I came back 11.45 and had to pay a fine for coming back 15 minutes too early! Can you imagine the idiots! A fine? They are so suspicious against us. I even showed him my smoking engine, yet he fined me, can you believe it?"*

It is not hard to understand why some fishermen find it difficult to relate to others working in the same industry when they, the fishermen, are blamed to be a problem, rather than the complex set of economic relations that create particular kinds of markets. According to Polanyi, the economic system that is now organized in separate institutions, requires society to reshape in a manner to allow the system to function according to its own laws (Polanyi 2001:57). Although very furious and possibly a bit biased, the situation Kurt was in shows a clear example of what Polanyi tried to criticize. Up until the industrial revolution, markets were considered as a kind of accessory to the economy, that was to a great extent still embedded in social relations and institutions (Ibid: 71). What also fascinates me is the sudden shift in identity, applied by others, that has happened in what seems to be only a few years' time. Their emotional experience for some of my interviewees shifted immensely as they went from being valued as providers for their families and the community of Råå, to being moved "away" from the boat into rooms together with policy-makers and instead being blamed as the "bad guy" who overfish and getting criticized to destroy the environment.

Anders:

*"Those environmentalists just hate us, they really hate us, yet we are the ones who want to see the ocean survive."*

Why is Polanyi's valid in this context? In a time of both neoliberal crisis and excitement, the role of fishermen dissolve, get redefined and change together with new rules and regulations. But it does not happened without some sort of resistance as the quote above shows. "The social history of our time is the result of a double movement: The one is the principle of economic liberalism, aiming at the establishment of a self-regulating market; the other is the principle of social protection aiming at the conservation of man and nature as well as productive organization." (Polanyi 2001:139).

Andrea Nightingale claims that, to be fisherman, one has to engage in different networks, express a certain set of value and separate yourself from contexts different to from the ones "environmentalists" are engaged in. Yet, both parts share the same goals, to keep the oceans healthy and at sustainable levels. The separation from one group might strengthen the identity and group belonging in another which became obvious when some of my interviewees referred to "those environmentalists", or "those greenies". The general public outside of Råå sees them as "environmental exploiters" and "old drunks," according to Kurt. So, in a way, their self-image and narrative also comes from within the group, but probably also as a counter reaction to the negative way they are portrayed from the outside.

#### **5.4. Business as usual**

The fisheries managers write the regulations, the fisheries scientists research the fishing stocks and recommend TAC, the fisheries economists deal with the markets supply, demand, and efficiency, brokers try to facilitate the trading, environment movements engage with representing fish, but where does it leave the fishermen?

It is interesting to think that both fishermen and today's green movements can be regarded, and to some point regards themselves, as a modern expression of what Polanyi called a self-protective "counter movement" (Polanyi 2001:79) which arose from a reaction to the negative consequences of the emerge of the self-regulated market system. The fishermen and representations of green movements and politics, thus with good intentions, must still contend and work within the neoliberal economic patterns and structures which has further contributed to the disembedding of nature, land and human interactions (Barry & Smith 2008:571).

#### **Staffan:**

*"We never get listened to at municipal meetings. We get invited, but that's just for show so they can write it down on the paper. It's always us against those greenies. And the minister for development? No-one has ever been as wrong as her. It's all lies. You know, the one who wrote that book about oceans (...) Most people see us as stupid."*

This statement shows how fishermen experience that their knowledge and experience have taken a shift and are no longer considered to be of value or use to the political administrators. The commoditization of fishing rights in the form of ITQs has in a way shifted the perception of value from knowledge and experience to a fixed set of legally defined fishing rights. This emphasizes

how a market-based system marginalizes Råå as a place for these fishermen, which results in a displacement not only of traditions but of knowledge and a lifestyle attached to the landscape, a cultural loss for Råå and its land-bound attributes. It needs to be said that, fish has been a commodity long before the implementation of the ITQs, but a real, touchable one. The shift made by quota management was that the *idea* of fish was commodified, and it is this idea that have resulted in a shift of focus for fishermen. With real fish, skills, experience and knowledge, fishermen grew and emerged. Now, through the engagement of fictitious fish, other professions and roles emerge.

### 5.5. Deskillling

An important issue to the discussion of the system changes and knowledge is to what extent the development of technique and economic changes has influenced the practical skills and lifeworlds of the interviewees. At the same time as fishing technology has revolutionized, it has also contributed to something called deskillling. This process of the fishermen's role in the enterprise has been redefined and they are no longer considered to have an active part in the creation of value. According my interviewees, some skills are inevitable lost as they point put that their knowledge has been replaced with artificial knowledge. 'Natural signs' such as watching the skies, following birds etc, are less important, as they have been replaced. Both in terms of people with no connection to the ocean as well as electronic equipment. By that I mean computers to help locate fish, new, more advanced nets and bigger and better vessels with more fishing capacity. However, one still need to have a sense of attention and equipment is not always to be seen as an external thing but as an 'body-extension', as one of my interview called it.

Looking down at his stomach, Anders said;

*"I might have had a few too many beers lately, but it was a joke to see the skinny businessmen/-women, coming to tell us how much we could fish, or taking our log book readings. They would never be able to even haul a net with those skinny arms (...) We are like those indigenous...native American Indians, no rights, and nobody talk to us! They even proposed to the parliament to pay us old fishermen to hang around in the harbor, but without fishing! Like a walking museum. How crazy is that?"*

The interviewees all give the impression that autonomy is something highly valued, but even if the claim their own individuality and portray themselves as independent, rough and with a sometimes harsh tone when speaking about each other, they are all involved in a net of social relations between each other. They exchange experiences, information and rely on one another. The individuality of these fishermen are embedded in a community that is built on reciprocal cooperation, responsibility, morality and trust. The ITQ management is changing the self-identification of these fishermen from being a relational, although rough and harsh individual to a utilitarian individualism.

## **Part III: Sustainability**

### **5.6. ITQs: Sunshine story or death of a society?**

Although not commonly used in fisheries and sustainability discussions, the concept of privatization is perceived and considered as a necessary tool to 'solve' the world's problems regarding over-fishing. Apart from promoting market-based initiatives for economic reasons, it is also assumed to promote different forms of distribution and ownership and therefore address environmental threats. It is debated if market-based solutions to over-fishing actually improves ecological decline in the reducing fishing stocks. While some argue that fisheries managed by an ITQ system is necessary, others claim the opposite.

The ITQ system might have positive effect on some species, but the ocean is not divided into predictable sections. Fish swim, they swim together with other fish and the swim where they want to swim. Without strong oversight and enforcement, the ITQ management could result in similar problems as before the implementation, e.g. over exploitation of target and/or non target fish. As fishermen usually only have quota for one species of fish, the ITQ-managed Alaskan pollock fishery has suffered consequences with by catch (Longo et al., 2015: 52).

Lars:

*"Of course they had to change it, otherwise there would be no fish at all! One has to accept, but it can be hard for old men like us you know. Nothing is more important than the health of the oceans, but they don't think we care, I get so happy when I see the little tiny fish in my nets nowadays. Because then I know they are reproducing! (...) I overlook the rules...I mean it doesn't make sense to take the little ones back to land, they need to grow. Even If i'm not allowed to, I throw them back."*

### **5.7. Quotas as fictitious commodity**

Another example of similar character, is one that Kurt told me. Once, he was out fishing and hauling his nets, that contained more than one type of fish that day. For one of the species, he held a quota, but for the other species, he did not. Throwing fish overboard is illegal, as the policy regarding sustainability says all fish needs to be take back to port. As he returned to the harbor, he tried to call people who he knew held quota for the other types of fish he had caught that day. Another fisherman offered to lease his quota, but the price he set was too high for Kurt. As the regulations require fishermen to be back at a specific time for landing (fish control and count by HaV), he tried to get a hold of someone who could lease him the quota for the surplus, non-target fish before coming back to land. The quota was not available for a satisfactory price and he ended up paying a penalty for landing fish without holding the legal quota. The cost of leasing quota could add to the operational cost and due, then, to high leasing prices, fishermen "forced" to act against the sustainability policies.



Anders:

*"When I sold my quota, they even gave me money to dismantle the boat. Then the quota I sold, was transferred to the buyer's boat. Almost like magic!"*

This brings me back to the fictitious commodities described by Polanyi and how the growth of fishing rights as property can be understood related to market society. As stated earlier, fictitious commodities were not produced as such, for market exchange, but since access to fishing is not a genuine commodity it can thus be termed fictitious (Longo et al., 2015:146). The transformation from a natural resource to a fictitious commodity can not happen without resulting in social dislocation and causing disorder (Polanyi 2001:36). I would argue that this is the ultimate example of a fictitious commodity where the value, exchange rate and pure acknowledgment of the fish is not applied to it until it has been validated and translated by the market system.

The tradable carbon quotas have also received a lot of critique when run as a market-based system, thus it has shown not to be very efficient in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. By opening new markets, such as the ITQ system, and it being implemented already, makes it a blueprint for further marketization of ecosystems. As Longo et al. puts it "Policy solutions that rely on the market mechanism - intensifying commodification - to address tragedies are bound to exacerbate already existing power differentials" (Longo et al., 2015:61).

Janne:

*"Back in the day...before any kind of regulation took place from above, so to speak. We all knew where the best fishing grounds were. We knew because we had seen and lived it for so long, or our fathers had. So we organized a kind of lottery depending on the season. If you had the good spot once, then you had to give that spot to the next in line. And so it went on. We usually finished the 'lottery night' with a beer or two."*

Society has always found a way to organize itself, whether it be around money or other calculative behavior. When I asked Janne more about this 'lottery' phenomenon, he told me there were no regulations, government or any other agency interfering in this system. It was the way it had been since he grew up, the system was very embedded within the line of fishermen operating the waters around Råå and describe an example of how 'economy' was embedded in society, and not the other way around. The significance of the non-market gift economy based on sharing and reciprocity, is, I think, illustrated in the situation of the fishermen in Råå.

In the Råå case, my interviewees repeatedly complained that ITQs are not created through any form of visible physical labour - they are, to their minds, truly fictitious commodities. Like one interviewee said "The quotas are like pure gold!" During all the conducted interviews, the fishermen repeatedly referred to the ITQs as gold or a "treasure," something very valuable and desired, but something that can, at the same time, increase or decrease in value over night, depending on the market price. What happens to an identity when the landscape changes?

Staffan:

*"We had quotas, and I come from a small fishing family, originally from up the coast closer to Gothenbourg. But we sold them and left the industry. There was no money in fishing anymore, because of market prices. But the quota had some money...you see it's like stocks on Wall Street kind of... but I would have gotten double if I had waited (...) You see...the quotas, they are like gold on the market. You never know when to sell or buy them."*

The story of Anders help illustrate another example of how quotas can be described as fictitious commodities as the quotas define not only what the fishermen are allowed to catch, but could also define what they may catch, before they even head out to sea. This separate the actual fish and the simulated fish where the latter is represented in quotas. One interviewee told me how individual quota first was presented to fishermen as similar to property and owning land, hence it gave some a feeling of financial security for the future, but as time went on, it became obvious that the realistic value of quota had more to do with the confusing fishing stock management than the actual demand of the market. With this in mind when presenting the quota as property in the first place becomes misleading as the fish "magically" thus first become property when its legally landed in the harbor. ITQ management provides a different understanding of commodities and property and could support the changing perspectives of the fishermen in Råå.

Initially when the system of ITQs were implemented, these rules did not occur but as of 2015, Kurt, and others, must now navigate in a system and between two worlds, where one contains real, tangible fish, swimming in the water, and another where invented fish are numbers on a piece of paper. The new tools of trade have shifted from a handshake and mutual agreements to phone calls and computers and fish have been separated from being an obvious resource to a unit of quota. Now, negotiations must be done before hand to ensure fishermen hold quota to cover their catches, which require them to prejudge in an environment that, logically, does not follow any rules. Before the new rules of landing, a fisherman's return to harbor was with a sense of achievement (or maybe not) but with each fisherman's own skills and efforts in the centre. That same productive process comes with a sense of deprivation of control and a loss of true skills. In this specific situation, the quota system leaves the fishermen in a vulnerable situation where their agency and autonomy has dissolved.

One of Polanyi's concerns was how the impact of machines would affect the political and economic relations of society. He argued that the notion of the 'good society' was threatened when both nature, its resources and humans are treated as commodities and how fictitious commodities will eventually be the lens with which we look and understand at the world. To describe this phenomenon, the process by which economic institutions have their own agency and autonomy,

Staffan:

*"Unless you have the money to invest, you might as well quit straight away, that's what happened to me."*

The market that manage the access to the right to fish is very different from the logic that what everyday fishing is really about. As these to fields have been modified, it has profoundly changed what it means to be a fisherman today. The knowledge, capacity and skill to fish is gained through the performance and in the catches of real fish but the introduction of ITQs, as Polanyi shows, has divided the capacity to catch fish from the right to catch fish and it is now possible that someone might have one and not the other. And more importantly, the social context where the quotas are discussed and negotiated, is separated from the life-world of actual fishing. The right to fish was once embedded in society and has now been distributed to a different field.

## 6. Discussion

As I tried to stay as close to the material as possible, the initial stage in my fieldwork research made me go back and change the research questions many times. Yet, the very long semi-structured interviews were of great use in finding the narratives I wanted to look at. They gave me access to the different life-worlds of a group of fishermen in Råå. The significance of labour in the shaping of local identities gave me some overall narratives based on a sense of the relation to the ocean as a home, a strong emotional attachment to living places and specifically the landscape as part of social norms and collective spirit.

The implementation of fishing rights is partly no longer the responsibility of the government, but regulated through market mechanisms. ITQs as a way of preventing overfishing might have been inevitable, but it certainly bring up some interesting questions. Was the transformation similar to the industrialization process described by Polanyi? Can ITQs be understood as part of a transformation similar to the one where money, land and labour were formed as commodities on the market? If that is the case, what in the society was then redefined as adjuncts to the market economy? The fishermen, the fish, or the fisheries?

The conclusion of this thesis is that the relationship between the fishermen and their experience of ITQs and a rights-based market, is somewhat complex, where my interviewees seem to be stuck in an "in between" state of mind. The process of the implementation of ITQs has created not only a new market for commodities to which they have been forced to relate in one way or another, but from their perspective the new management system also changed the relationship between them and other people working in the industry. The implementation of ITQs needs to be seen in a larger perspective, as not "just" a management tool but something that profoundly changes people, their perspective on themselves, and relations between them and the land they inhabit.

The memories of certain events in the interviewees' lives are maintained through telling stories again and again. Each time someone listens to the story, the narrative grows and their identity as fishermen is nurtured once again, even if, for some of them, it is not their main occupation anymore. Since the profession is as threatened as the fish they have caught over the years, they hold

on even stronger to the different fragments on which their identity as fishermen rest. To what extent has the development of technique and economic changes influenced the fishermen and their practical skills? And what narrative emerge as we hear their stories and experiences? Another argument run throughout this paper, is the state interference in neoliberal initiatives and regulations. Government and markets do not act independently but the latter relies on the state to implement and maintain, in this case, ITQs. States have been central to the neoliberal shift in marine planning and markets are not spontaneous or natural as Polanyi try to show. It seems as if accumulation is an unquestioned reality, when it is done in the name of sustainability.

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## **8. Appendix: Research questions**

1. How long have you worked/did you work as a fisherman?
2. How old were you when you started?
3. Why did you choose fishing as a profession?
4. Does anyone in your family fish?
5. Is fishing important to Råå?
6. Is Råå important to you?
7. What does fishing mean to you?
8. Is fishing important to Sweden?
9. What do you think about the ITQ system?
10. What do you think of when I say the word "sustainability?"
11. What are the main differences between then (before ITQ) and now?
12. What is your view on why the ITQ system was implemented?
13. Were you or anyone you know affected by it? Negative/positive?

