



Collective Action in Response to an Environmental Disaster

– A Case Study of the 2016 Social Movement in Chiloé, Chile

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Abstract

In early 2016, a toxic algae bloom emerged along the coastline of Chiloé archipelago in southern Chile. Shortly thereafter, locals spotted dead animals – ranging from mussels, to penguins and whales – washed ashore along the beaches. The Chilean government, along with actors in the salmon industry, claimed the environmental disaster was a natural phenomenon brought on by the weather phenomenon El Niño. However, accounts from independent scientists confirm that the algae bloom erupted as a result of the government's decision to approve a request by the salmon industry to dump thousands of tons of dead fish filled with dissolving chemicals in the waters of Chiloé.

Chiloés inhabitants, who are highly dependent on the ocean to survive, were struck severely by the crisis. In response, they organized themselves in one of the largest social movements in the history of the archipelago of Chiloé to protest against the government and the salmon industry.

Through a qualitative approach based on interviews with artisanal fishermen, leaders of fishermen unions, and NGO representatives, this study aims to shed light on how the social movement emerged, unfolded, and eventually lost momentum. The findings suggest that the formation of the movement – which spanned across a multitude of social classes – was facilitated owing to the collective identity islanders share as inhabitants of this remote part of Chile, along with the decades of neglect they have sustained from the Chilean government. This reality, in combination with a successful dispersion of information on behalf of environmental NGOs active on the island, led to the emergence of the social movement. Even though the goals stipulated in the movement eventually proved unfruitful, it will be argued its occurrence led to an increased awareness of the dependent relationship between the environment and economic livelihoods of Chiloés inhabitants.

Keywords: Social Movements, Chiloé, Red Tide, Collective Action, Environmental Conflict, Salmon Industry, Artisanal Fishermen, Environmentalism, Environmental Crisis.

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1. Introduction

Chile, with its long and low coastline, native forests in the south, the snow and glaciers in the Andean region and the Patagonia, is a country vulnerable to climate change. During the last decades, Chile has witnessed a decrease in rainfall and significant temperature rises, threatening the country's natural resources and ecosystems, as well as the livelihoods of many people (INDC, 2015: 7-8). At the same time, Chile's economy is highly dependent on natural resources, with copper accounting for three fifths of total exports, and other key resources being the fishing industry, aquaculture, forestry, livestock and the farming sectors (OEC, 2016). However, so far, Chile has prioritized industry and a continuous economic growth rather than caring for human and ecological needs. In consequence, Chile's economy has increased significantly in the last decades, which has resulted in an increased demand of natural resources, more generation of emissions and waste and the degradation of ecosystems (Informe País, 1999-2015: 3). At the same time social inequalities have skyrocketed.

In response to pressure from the civil society, the government of Michelle Bachelet has implemented environmental policies and measures. However, these policies have been far from sufficient in order to counterbalance the macro-environment pressures (informe país, 2015: 3). An example that highlights the real consequences of extractivist activity in the absence of appropriate environmental regulations is the salmon industry based in the archipelago of Chiloé, southern Chile. Today the salmon industry is the third most important industry in the country, after the forestry and mining industries. The salmon industry has become characterized by its low environmental standards, and is guilty of overproduction, and a high use of antibiotics and pesticides. In the beginning of 2016, actors in the salmon industry dumped an estimated amount of 5000 tons of dead fish filled with dissolving chemicals and antibiotics in the waters of Chiloé, which wreaked havoc on the local ecosystem, and brought on a severe socio-environmental crisis (Greenpeace, 2016). In response, thousands of *Chilotes* – as the inhabitants of Chiloé are called – instigated a social movement which managed to seal off the island from the mainland during nineteen days, making for one of the largest social mobilizations in the history of the archipelago of Chiloé.

1.2 Purpose, Research Question and Justification

The study aims to investigate which role different social actors played during and after the environmental disaster that paralyzed Chiloé island in the spring of 2016. Following the dumping of salmon in the waters of the archipelago, a toxic algal bloom quickly spread along the coast of Chiloé, which brought on a health emergency after people and animals were poisoned by eating toxic seafood. Tons of dead fish and shellfish appeared at the beaches along the coastline, and locals spotted masses of dead sea lions, shellfish and birds along the shores.

The disaster triggered heavy protests among fishermen as they were deprived of their living. According to the government and the mainstream media, the toxic algal bloom was a natural occurrence – a consequence of higher water temperatures due to the weather phenomenon *El Niño*. However, according to independent media sources, researchers, and local fishermen, it is clear the disaster was brought on by waste from the salmon industry.

The general aim of this case study is to find out which role the different social actors (local environmental NGOs, leaders of artisanal fishermen's unions, and local artisanal fishermen) played during and after the disaster. With this aim in mind, the overarching research question chosen reads as follows: *How could collective action happen in this specific case?* Additionally, the following questions will be addressed: (1) *What brought people with different interests and values together into collective action?* (2) *How did they manage to mobilize?* (3) *Why did the movement eventually fold up?* (4) *What were the outcomes of the movement?*

At the current, the prevalence of socio-environmental conflicts all over Latin America is rising (Zibechi, 2012). It is my belief that this research – which will be carried out through a constructivist lens – has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the literature on social movements and environmental sociology by showing how a social environmental movement can arise in spite of unfavorable structural circumstances, and how environmental awareness can be spread among people who otherwise would not have been engaged due to their situation of poverty. It will be shown how not only the people affected most severely by the crisis – artisanal fishermen and those dependant on the ocean for their livelihood – stood behind demands for greater environmental regulations. As it turns out, territorial actors benefiting from the extractivist industry, whether through employment, subcontracting, or fiscal transfers, also joined in on the goals of the social movement.

The outline of the thesis is as follows. First, a background consisting of Chile's environmental political situation, globalisation in the Chilean context, and the specific context of Chiloé will be provided. Second, the theoretical foundations which the study rests upon will be detailed. Third, the methodology employed in the study will be accounted for. Fourth, a description

of how the environmental crisis in Chiloé unfolded will be given, followed by an analysis aided by interviews with artisanal fishermen, representatives of environmental NGO's, and leaders of fishermen's unions. Finally, the results of the study will be assessed and discussed in a concluding section.

1.3 Background – the Environmental Regime in Chile

The environmental regime in Chile is shaped and constrained by the legacies of many years of military dictatorship, and an economic model hostile to sustainability. During the time of Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1989), environmental concerns were essentially neglected (Carruthers, 2001: 343). Chile became the prime example of neo-liberal development strategies and launched the path of privatisation, deregulation and export-promotion. Following the neoliberal priorities of a small-state and free-market the country's economy flourished. Though, this occurred on the expense of the ecosystem and the people (Carruthers, 2001: 345). In the 1990s, Chile returned to democracy and its first environmental regime was established. However, the new regime took form during a time of democratic transition, characterized by elitist, centralist, and verticalist party politics. At the same time, the civil society was considerably weakened due to a decade of oppression. As a consequence, the regime came to be characterized by elitism and top-down policies, in which civil society organizations and social movements were excluded (Sepúlveda & Villarroel, 2012: 184).

In the last decade, Chile has been witnessing a hasty increase of environmental problems and socio-environmental unrest (Carruthers, 2001: 356). As a result, environmental awareness and activism is rapidly increasing throughout the country, and the pressure from social movements and NGOs can no longer easily be ignored by the Chilean government. During president Bachelet's regime in 2009, the government responded to this increased awareness by instigating a profound legal reform of the environmental institutions (Sepúlveda & Villarroel, 2012). In contrast to the first establishment of an environmental regime, though, this time pressure came mainly from domestic voices. Also, an important factor was an OECD report urging Chile to make fundamental improvements in their environmental framework to be able to become a full member of the organization (OECD, 2005). Bachelet's new environmental regime managed to increase the priority of environmental problems, strengthen the authority of the entity responsible for environmental policy, and unify the procedures for supervision, control, and sanction of violations of the law. However, the legislation failed to include grassroots actors and environmental NGOs in the legislative process. In sum, two urgent problems remain unsolved: (1) the lack of citizen participation in environmental decisions, and (2) the task of overcoming the lack of legitimacy in environmental decision making (Carruthers, 2001). Thus, it can be argued that the reform of the

environmental regime have reinforced the elitist and exclusionary democratic trend in Chile, and further deepened the gap between institutions and citizens rather than moving toward a participatory agenda. Citizens in Chile still do not have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that are inevitably shaping the future of their territories.

1.3.2 Globalisation in a Chilean Context

Chile is the prime example of economic liberalization. Since the time of Pinochet, Chile has opened up its doors for foreign investment and pursued a radical free market reform. Furthermore, Chile's responsibility for sustaining a just distribution of material and nonmaterial needs – “the social contract” has been replaced by private actors and global institutions (McMichael, 2012: 127). The individual governmental functions are recomposed as global governance functions and enforced through multilateral protocols (McMichael, 2012: 127). As a consequence the state's accountability to citizens has been compromised.

Since the Pinochet era, Chile's economy has grown significantly, although at the expense of social security, the natural environment and local production (McMichael, 2012: 131). Chiloé has in less than four decades gone from a traditional society isolated from the rest of the world to becoming one of Chile's most important export regions, and quickly been integrated into the world economy. Due to the increased economic activities connected to the salmon industry there have been investments in education, health and infrastructure. However, poverty remains widespread in the rural areas – especially among people living on the smaller islands which have less access to the largest island of Chiloé (Barton et al. 2015: 15).

This clearly shows that the economic liberalization that has facilitated the rapid expansion of salmon farming has limited the territorial capacities to capitalize on the benefits of production (Barton et al., 2015: 15). Chiloé is one of the most productive areas of salmon farming in the world. Though, the success is not reflected in the economies of Chiloé municipalities. Ironically, most of their income comes from the Common Municipal Fund (FCM) – Chile's centralized state redistribution mechanism – while profits from the salmon industry end-up elsewhere (Barton et al., 2015: 15).

1.3.3 Global Recolonisation

The notion “global Recolonisation” refers to a systematic privileging of urban interests at the expense of people living in rural areas (Lipton, 1977). Chile is one of the most centralized countries in the world in which the state works as instrument of wealth extraction and the political, economic and institutional power is centralized to the capital city Santiago, which is hindering any form of

real regionalisation to take place (Valenzuela, 2014). In contrast to other OECD countries, regional governments and municipalities only account for 15 percent of the autonomous subnational expenditure in Chile. This stands in sharp contrast to the average of OECD countries, where the number is 50 percent. As a consequence, subnational governments possess little power and autonomy in Chile (Valenzuela, 2014). The situation in Chile is affected by a strong urban bias. As a case in point, an ongoing project for the government has been to eliminate all informal settlements in the capital Santiago, whereas little efforts have been made to better the situation in rural areas which are lacking basic necessities such as portable water, electricity, and proximity to hospitals and schools (Valenzuela, 2016). A quote from Juan Carlos Cardenas, the director of the Chilean, environmental NGO Ecoceanos illustrates the situation: “Santiago is the colonizer, and the rest of the regions are its colonies” (Cárdenas, 2017). This structure of power has facilitated the exploitation of rural areas by urban elites, enriched by foreign investment in resource extraction. McMichael (2012: 174) labels this phenomenon *Global Recolonization*. Chile's most important natural resources such as copper, salmon and the forest are all privately owned, meaning that very little of the wealth generated from these industries benefits the wider society.

As a consequence of globalization, Chiloé is today made up of a variety of actors with very different visions on how to interpret the ongoing environmental and cultural changes. These actors come from the inhabitants who maintain their traditional practices, the newcomers, and the professionals linked to industrial activities (Barton et al., 2015: 209). All these diverse interest and realities show the complexity of the environmental policy landscape in Chiloé.

1.4 The Context of Chiloé

The Chiloé archipelago is comprised of more than twenty permanently inhabited islands. Chiloé island is by far the largest one, measuring 190 kilometres from north to south, and averages 60 kilometres wide. The capital is Castro, which is situated on the east side of the island. Ancud, which lies in the northwest corner, is the second largest city. Chiloé island is divided into ten communes, and has a total population of 154.766 inhabitants (Barton et al., 2015: 18).

The islands have traditionally been isolated from the rest of the world, which has contributed to the formation of a strong culture and community in order to alleviate the lack of products and raw materials, and to face the adversities of an unpredictable, rainy and cold climate for much of the year. The Chiloé culture has historically been associated with a subsistence way of life based on small-scale fishing and farming activities. The geographical isolation, scarce supply of secondary educational alternatives and higher education has characterized the area. Due to these conditions, Chiloé has historically witnessed a strong exodus of people in search for labour and

educational opportunities (Barton et al., 2015: 153). Furthermore, another key aspect of the *Chilote* culture is the proximity to nature, and the weakness of money as a medium of exchange. Instead, communal work and voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit have permitted a noncommercial relationship between community members and nature. However, during the last four decades globalization has brought about several important transformations on economic, environmental, social, cultural and institutional levels (Barton et al., 2015: 12, 125). In 1974, the salmon industry was for the first time installed in Chiloé, and has since then rapidly been expanding. The high demand of labor connected to the salmon industry generated a factor of attraction for people all over Chile, as well as an incentive for the local population to stay in the area. In just one decade, Chiloé went from being characterized by a considerable demographic loss to becoming one of the fastest growing regions in Chile.

Since then, many artisanal fishermen and small scale farmers have left their traditional activities and moved to industrial-type jobs within the salmon industry. As a consequence, there has been a significant migratory flow of people from rural areas to the urban centers that concentrate the supply of employment (Barton et al., 2015: 152). Other indirect activities have also developed, such as commerce, services and construction. All in all, Chiloé has experienced a significant territorial transformation.

The archipelago of the Chiloé islands has now become fully incorporated into the world economy, owing to investments in salmon farming, which today represents one of Chile's most important national export activities, along with exports derived from mining and forestry (Bustos et al., 2015: 11). Yet, there has been a downside to this enormous transformation. Migration, investments, and changes in land and marine ecological systems have all had a strong impact on land ownership, culture, identity, and economic activities in Chiloé. Overall, there has been a loss and commodification of the traditional ways of life for the archipelago's inhabitants, and new environmental risks have emerged due to over exploitation of the sea (Barton et al., 2015: 13, 18). Since the 1980s, Chiloé has increasingly become dependent on economic activities connected to the salmon industry. The strong social and economic dependence became very clear in 2007 when the salmon industry was struck by a virus called ISA, which killed off a great portion of the salmon stock. It became evident that Chiloé lacked capacity both in private and public sectors to handle the downturn, and the region entered into a social crisis when people were forced to leave their jobs (Bustos et al., 2015: 12).

Chile's political and economic system is characterized by a centralized state in combination with neo-liberal and extractivist policies which has led to tensions between regions as well as between local communities. This is clearly manifested in Chiloé, where the extraction of natural resources (in this case the salmon industry) has led to a strong dependency on only one industry –

rather than the generation of a prosperous and diversified economy. Chiloé has during the last four decades quickly become included into the global economy and transformed into a territory favored by the location of both national and foreign investments linked to exports. However, this has not translated into economic success in Chiloé. The rural population has benefited little from the development, and large portions of the group are still lacking in basic services such as education and healthcare (Barton et al. 2015: 15).

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research will address the research questions and guide the analysis of this thesis. In order to gain a deeper understanding about how different social actors with different demands managed to get together for a common sake, this study will use an inductive approach. First and foremost, the research will take on the view of social constructivism, meaning the study will be based on the theoretical understanding that the environment is socially constructed (Hannigan, 2006: 29). This point of view is fundamental in order to understand how environmental problems are represented, acknowledged, and defined and why some environmental conditions are perceived as unacceptably risky whereas others are not (Hannigan, 2006: 29-39). Social constructivism emerged in the 1970s and in contrast to realism, it denies that our knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world (Burr, 1995: 4). Social constructivism acknowledge climate change, however, it argues that it is open to human construction the magnitude of it and whether it is identified as an issue or not. Hence, the issues that receive most public attention might not be the ones where the real impacts are the greatest or where most research has been conducted, rather it reflects the political nature of agenda setting (Hannigan, 2006: 31-33). Social movement theory will be used as an analytical tool when analyzing the empirical findings from the interviews. The theory will be detailed below.

2.1 Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory will be used as an analytical tool in order to find out why the socio-environmental movement emerged in Chiloé last spring, how the different social actors with different demands managed to get together and form alliances, and why the movement eventually folded up.

Traditionally, the study of social movements focused mainly on class conflicts, such as worker's movements during the industrial time (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 8). However, in the 1960s the quantity and quality of social movements changed due to several factors including a

widening of access to higher education and the mass of women entering the labour market. The social change that took place led to new structural possibilities for conflict. Consequently, new social movements emerged, which increased the relevance of other criteria of social stratification such as gender relations and environmental protection (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 6). With the emergence of social movements in the 60s and 70s, the social sciences approach to questions concerning social movements also changed (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 6). Critical voices started to argue that the interpretation of class conflict as the central role to social collective action was denying the further multiplication of concerns and conflicts within real movements, as well as the creation of generalized images of movements as homogenous actors make strategic decisions (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 6-7). In consequence, since the 60s, several new perspectives have evolved within social movement literature such as the: political process perspective, resource mobilization perspective, collective behavior school perspective and new social movement perspective.

These different approaches disagree on where to put the emphasis and on other relatively marginal issues. Yet there are some general factors that are present to some extent or another in all of these approaches - factors such as mobilization of supporters, political opportunities creating openings for social movements to develop, frames which allow social movement claims “to make sense” to movement members and supporters, and alliance formation among different factions.

As it stands, the political process perspective that can be found within the theory of social movements, can be said to best complement the study being done. This is based on the fact that it sheds light on the ongoing transformations characterizing social movement development: the framing process, the mobilization of support and the process of demobilization (Bracey, 2015: 14).

Furthermore, it is paying attention to the interaction between new and traditional actors, and between less conventional forms of action and institutionalized systems of interest representation (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 17).

Two of the most prominent scholars within the political process perspective, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2015: 11), define social movements as “a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organisations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities”.

Political process perspective describes the rise of a social movements as follows: people perceived and seized opportunities, identified and framed claims, mobilized consensus, formed coalitions, and adopted new and innovative forms of collective action (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015:141). The perspective identifies three factors as the primary determinants of movements’ emergence and trajectories. These concepts are political opportunity structures, framing processes and mobilizing of support (Bracey, 2015: 14). The two latter are especially relevant for my study, thus they will be described below. The framing processes, allows us to capture the process of the attribution of

meaning which lies behind the explosion of any conflict. Framing processes are firmly rooted in a social constructivist ontology and enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world as large” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 74). Consequently, framing provides a key of how to make sense of the world (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 79). The process of framing contains of three different phases which Snow and Benford define “diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational” dimensions of framing (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 74).

The diagnostic dimension is the phase of the recognition of certain occurrences as social problems – for a phenomenon to become an issue people need to interpret it as an issue (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 66). Diagnosing a problem always entails identifying the actors who are entitled to have opinion on it (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 75), which is a highly contentious process. Another crucial step in the social construction of a problem consists of the identification of those responsible for the situation in which the oppressed population finds itself (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 75). Phenomena which might initially have been of diverse kind have been incorporated into the same interpretative frame – bad working conditions, environmental degradation, material issues, lack of good education and healthcare etc these have all been framed to one dominant theme (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 76). Through social movements concepts and perspectives, which earlier were marginal, are dispersed in society (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 77).

The prognostic dimension of the framing process includes finding strategies which would resolve the social problem. In this phase there is often a strong utopian dimension present. However, various prognostic elements might be present within the same movement as actors within a social movement may have diverse aims and objectives, nonetheless the core ideas may be relatively similar (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 77-78). Some has a “rejectionist” approach to it, that is expressing a general refusal of the actors responsible (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 77). Others might seek “alternatives” to the dominant culture and system set in place. Finally there are those with a “reformist” approach - stressing improved regulations and other types of modifications of the system set in place (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 78).

The third step in the framing process is the motivational element. Movement emergence and persistence depend on activists motivating people to act. Unknowable outcomes and the costs associated with collective action can only be overcome if the actors are convinced of the opportunity for mobilizing people and of the probability and legitimacy of the action. To make people motivated it is therefore important that the frames not only address the level of social groups and collective action but also link the individual sphere with the collective experience (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 79) - showing the relevance of a given problem to individual life experiences. Motivational framing strongly connects with identity-building (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 79)

della). In the absence of references to one's own history and to the particular nature of one's roots, an appeal to something new risks seeming inconsistent and, in the end, lacking in legitimacy (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 85). Emerging movements draw on their own traditional heritage and on that of the broader oppositional movements in a given country (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 83).

The second concept – mobilization of support – is defined by Tilly and Tarrow (2015: 38) as the process of “how people who at a given point in time are not making contentious claims start to do so” (Tilly 38). Mobilization creates a coalition of participants, supporters, and sympathizers, and therefore increases the resources available for collective claim making (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 38). According to Tilly and Tarrow there are three key interactive mechanisms identified with mobilization, which create new boundaries or crystallization of existing ones between challenging groups and their targets (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 36): Diffusion, Brokerage and Coordinated action. When these three mechanisms are set together new alliances are being formed between formerly unknown actors, which is crucial in the mobilization of a social movement (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 229). Diffusion refers to the spread of a form of contention, an issue, or a way of framing it by movement activists to the population which they intend to mobilize (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 87). Brokerage is the production of a new connection between previously unconnected actors, and is deemed a key mechanism in coalition-building/alliances formations. Movement organizers - called *brokers* - play a fundamental role in the diffusion of frames through the establishment of new ties among actors as well as they play an important role in intra-movement communication (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 31). Finally, coordinated action is when two or more actors engage in mutual signaling and parallel making of claims on the same object (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 31). When adding coordination to brokerage and diffusion we get coordinated action - a process called new coordination (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 25). The combination of mechanisms compound into processes (mobilization and demobilization) that interactively produce certain outcomes. By studying mechanisms and processes one can see what difference the presence or absence of a particular mechanism makes on mobilization process of a movement (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 30), thus we can see how the process is triggered, and assess how important a particular mechanism is to a movement's accomplishment (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 36).

3. Methodology

This paper is based on a case study concerning the socio-environmental crisis at Chiloé in the beginning of 2016. The study aims to explore what role different social actors (local environmental NGOs, local leaders of artisanal fishermen's unions, and local artisanal fishermen) played during

and after the disaster. More specifically, how did these different social actors with diverse interests manage to unite for a common cause during the socio-environmental crisis in Chiloé last spring. Consequently, in order to find this out, a qualitative research method was deemed suitable as qualitative methods are useful in order to get a deep and rich understanding of people's motivations, behaviours, attitudes and concerns. The interest lies in the subjective viewpoints of informants (Scheyvens, 2014: 66). The aim with qualitative research should not be to generalise to other settings as qualitative research is context specific, historical and socially constructed (Scheyvens, 2014: 78).

In total, ten semi-structured interviews have been conducted, and two of them have been placed in the form of focus groups. The subjects of the interviews are local artisanal fishermen who were directly affected by the crises, leaders of artisanal fishermen's unions and with personnel from local environmental NGOs.

3.1 The Qualitative Approach

In order to obtain the information required to answer the research questions, both primary and secondary data sources have been used. The secondary sources have been in the form of official documents derived from the government, and official documents produced by environmental NGOs and international governmental organizations (Bryman, 2012: 549-50). The secondary sources have provided the research with the necessary context, and the data has been used to justify the assumptions and theoretical framework. In contrast, the primary sources have been in the form of semi-structured, open-ended interviews, and the data collected from the interviews has been directly used to answer the research questions. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were considered suitable in order to keep an open mind, and to allow for adjustments in case of new data emerging. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews leave more space for the interviewee to bring up things they feel are important (Bryman, 2012: 471).

The data collected from the interviews has been analysed through a Discourse Analysis. Potter describes Discourse Analysis as follows: "Discourse analysis emphasizes the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse" (Bryman, 2012: 528). In other words, our realities depend on the social context and are in a constant state of change. It has been recognized that the researcher's worldview is also a construction in constant motion (Bryman, 2012: 33). The aim of using this type of analysis has been to shed light on underlying structures and power relations within society, in relation to the construction of environmental problems. The emphasis has been on the realities proposed by the members of the NGOs, the artisanal fishermen, and the leaders of the fishermen unions with whom the interviews

have been conducted. Additionally, attention has been paid to the strategies they employ in order to create different effects and accomplish their goals

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling Method

The sampling method of choice has been a mixed purposeful sampling, which has the advantage of allowing for flexibility and taking advantage of unforeseen opportunities (Patton, 1990: 183). However, the common denominator for all sampling choices being made has been to select information-rich cases. The sampling started with a generic purposive sample of key stakeholders among environmental NGOs in Santiago de Chile. The organisations were selected on the basis that all occupied a position relevant to the investigation, the individuals interviewed also had key roles in the organizations, as well as an in depth knowledge of socio-environmental conflicts in Chile. Through a process of snowballing as well as opportunistic sampling, directors of local environmental NGOs, fishermen's unions, and local artisanal fishermen were then identified. These local candidates were consequently included in the research as information rich key informants (Patton, 1990: 183; Bryman, 2012: 418-422).

Since the study at hand is an interpretative study, focus lies on processes, processual changes and people's understanding of the world (Mikkelsen, 2005: 134). The objective is to comprehend the subjective meaning of social action, that is, how social life is constructed by those who participate in it (Mikkelsen, 2005: 135). Thus, the emphasis during the interviews has been on the realities proposed by the personnel of the environmental NGOs, leaders of fishermen unions and the local fishermen. Moreover, attention has been paid to the strategies they employ in order to create different kinds of effects and accomplish goals.

In total ten semi-structured, open-ended interviews have been conducted, out of which two have been in the form of group interviews(with five participants in each). The interviews lasted between one and a half to two and a half hours.

The focus groups that were carried out are examples of opportunistic sampling (Patton, 1990: 176). Through snowballing, I got in contact with an artisan fisherman from a small fishing village. When I arrived, there were other fishermen around that wanted to participate in the interview, and I readily took advantage of the opportunity by having them participate in a focus group. As a consequence, natural groupings were used for the focus groups (Bryman, 2012: 510). The fishermen shared a certain experience (the effects of the toxic algae bloom in Chiloé), and during the focus group they were interviewed in a semi-structured way pertaining to that experience.

3.3 Research units

Interviews have been conducted with personnel from three local, environmental NGOs: Defendemos Chiloé, Secpan and Eco Chiloé. From Eco Chiloé, interviews were conducted with the founders of the organization: Pedro and Ricardo. From Defendemos Chiloé an interview was conducted with one of its founders and spokesmen: Juan Carlos and from Secpan an interview was conducted with Alvaro. These local NGOs, have all been involved in responding to the specific crises in Chiloé by creating an opinion around it and contributing with technical assistance.

Secpan was established 2006 and is perhaps the most established environmental NGO in Chiloé and is primarily working on the preservation of biodiversity and nature in Chiloé as well as the environmental and social impacts of industrial mega projects. Defendemos Chiloé was formed in 2015 and is also working on the preservation of biodiversity in Chile, and defending the archipelago from the intrusion of industrial mega projects.

In contrast to Secpan and Defendemos Chiloé, EcoChiloé was formed as a reaction to the environmental crisis in 2016. This organisation is more focused on increasing environmental awareness through measures such as workshops.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with four leaders of fishermen unions all based in the city of Ancud, Chiloé. The people interviewed were Luis, Richard, Pablo and Teresa.

Finally, group interviews were conducted with artisanal fishermen from two different fishing communities: Quetalmahue, and Puñihuil. Puñihuil is a protected wildlife area that is located 28 kilometers southwest of Ancud on Chiloé Island, and is especially famous for its substantial penguin colony. Erwin, Oscar, Raúl, Luis, and Eduardo participated in the group interview. They are all members of the fishermen union “Viento fuerte Puñihuil”. Apart from being artisanal fishermen, they do also work within the tourism sector throughout the summer season as they take tourists out in boats to see the penguins - the area is famous for being the only known place where Humboldt and Magellan penguins share the same space for breeding purposes. The area is also famous for other species, such as the gray cormorant, whales, sea lions, dolphins, and the Dominican gull. Raúl and Erwin are brothers and aside from working at sea and with tourism, they are the owners of the restaurante el Rincón de Puñihuil.

The fishing village of Quetalmahue, is composed of approximately 38 families. Whereas the whole sector of Quetalmahue, is home for about 60 families. The artisanal fishermen participating in the group interview were, Juan Antonio, Juan, Alejandro, Leonel, and Marcelo. For generations they have been working at sea as independent fishermen. In addition, an interview was done with Patricia – a restaurant owner of a seafood restaurant “Rincon del mar”.

In order to preserve the integrity of the research subjects their surnames have been concealed.

3.4 Limitations

Seeing that the researcher is not a native Spanish speaker, some information may have gotten lost in the translation of the interviews from Spanish to English. Yet, a translator was never considered necessary due to the researcher's advanced level in Spanish, both when it comes to reading, listening, speaking and writing.

The focus groups brought both pros and cons. On a positive note, it is believed that the reliability of the information gathered in the focus groups was heightened, based on the fact that the fishermen corrected and filled in each others' answers. To use natural groupings was beneficial in the way that the discussion became more natural, and the participants were perceived as more comfortable (Bryman, 2012: 503-504). However, given the fact that the decision to conduct focus group interviews was a spontaneous one, I did not have time to practice and prepare myself on how to moderate the groups. As a consequence, some people in the interview tended to take more space than others, and the scope of opinions was in the end derived from mainly two or three people in each group. Another drawback is that it was more difficult to transcribe the data collected from the focus groups, since the participants spoke very quickly and over the top of each other. I also realised that it is extremely important as a moderator to be active during the whole session, so that the interviewees do not lose interest. At the same time, it is crucial to be flexible and let the participants lead the conversation in order for them to bring up what they think is important (Bryman, 2012: 504).

5. Empirical Findings

The disposition of this section is as follows. First, a description of the two main actors at Chiloé will be provided: The salmon industry and the people benefitting from it, as well as the artisanal fishermen. Given that the Chiloé archipelago is host to a complex and heterogeneous mix of different social actors – who all hold different and at times opposing interests – it is vital to describe them in order to consequently analyse the social movement. Second, an overview of how the environmental disaster led to the emergence of the social movement will be provided. Thereafter, findings from the interviews will be presented and analysed in relation to the research questions.

5.1. The salmon industry and the people benefitting from it

Nearly 80% of Chile's salmon production originates from Chiloé. In the archipelago, salmon production exist in eleven different communes: Castro, Chonchi, Puqueldón, Curaco de Velez, Dalcahue, Queilen, Quellón, Quemchi, Quinchao, and Hualaihué. Out of the eleven, Chonchi and Quellón contains the most important centres of production (Gillet & Olate, 2010: 41). According to Peralta et al., (2015: 36), the central state institutions in Chile which are designated to regulate the activities of extractivist companies are also acting as close allies of those they are supposed to monitor. Together, they form part of a dominant coalition endorsing extractivism as a development path (Peralta et al., 2015: 36). In the case of Chiloé, collaboration between the government and industry actors is clearly demonstrated in the fishing law which was first established in 1991, and subsequently modified in 2012. The law left the majority of the country's fishing quotas in the hands of the Chile's seven most powerful business families that currently control industrial fishing. Among the artisanal fishermen, only the owners of fishing vessels received parts of the quotas, leaving the fishermen that only uses manual capacity and the use of nets for the collection of seaweed and shellfish without any rights (Cordero, 2012; OLCA, 2012). There are plenty of suspicion about corrupcion - that these companies paid the politicians so that the politicians would write the law in accordance to their benefits (OLCA, 2012; Peralta et al., 2015).

In the 1980s, economic advancement brought on by the establishing of the salmon industry enabled Chiloé to increase employment. Consequently, the poverty level was reduced, and the overall life quality of the islanders' was improved (Gillet & Olate, 2010: 6). The archipelago has an economic cluster structure in the sense that more than 500 local service companies are linked to the fifteen salmon farming companies, and thousands of workers depend directly or indirectly on the industry. According to Peralta et al., (2015) this implies that when territorial actors are included in the benefits of territorial economic growth (whether through employment, subcontracting, fiscal transfers or corporate responsibility), they are less likely to act collectively to demand greater environmental regulation (Peralta et al. 40-42). In 2005, 53 000 people in the region of Los Lagos to which Chiloé belongs were employed directly or indirectly by the salmon industry (Gillet & Olate: 39). The numbers from 2005 represent the latest update concerning the salmon industry's contribution to employment in the region. However, Gillet & Olate (2010: 39) state the statistics remain controversial, since no official numbers exist.

5.2 Artesanal Fishermen

Artisanal fisheries are defined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) as follows:

“Traditional fisheries involving fishing households (as opposed to commercial companies), using relatively small amounts of capital and energy, relatively small fishing vessels (if any), making short fishing trips, close to shore, mainly for local consumption.” (MedPAN, 2014: 4).

Among Chiloés 155.000 inhabitants more than 5.500 people are artisanal fishermen who have been dependent on the incomes from the sea for generations. For these people the socio-environmental crisis in 2016 was devastating, since many completely lost their main source of income for up to three months (Cárdenas, 2017). Since the installation of the salmon industry in Chiloé there have been a conflict between the artisanal fishermen and the big industry which has still not been resolved. The salmon companies have been perceived by artisanal fishermen as predatory actors who endanger their source of work and livelihood (Oliva & Caviedes, 2007: 27). Chiloés artisanal fishermen have been in firm protest of the first fishing law since its enactment in 1989, and therefore possess decades of experiences of organizing and opposing themselves contra the authorities and the big extractive industries (Oliva & Caviedes, 2007; Peralta et al., 2015: 39).

Artisanal fishermen tend to live in rural areas far away from the regions receiving economic benefits from the salmon industry. Furthermore, they are the recipients of a majority of the negative impacts brought on by industry's activities, which have led to dead sea bed and the disappearance of several fish species. Furthermore, the fishing law is in favor of the salmon companies, and leaves artisanal fishermen with exceedingly little working space (Oliva & Caviedes, 2007). Therefore, it is no surprise they are one of the main opponents of the salmon industry (Peralta et al., 2015). However, in spite of their shared interests, there is a heterogeneity and conflictual nature within the group of artisanal fishermen in Chiloé. Hierarchies and power relations among the different artisanal fishermen unions are prevalent, often related to their production activities (Oliva & Caviedes, 2007). As a case in point, the shore harvesters, collecting seaweed and shellfish at the beaches when the tide is low, belong to the group of the most marginalized and vulnerable artisanal fishermen, and the life as a shore harvester has long been associated with poverty and low living standards (Silber, 2013: 37). The shore harvesters were arguably the most severely affected groups in the crisis due to the fact that they were not able to relocate to other areas to gather shellfish, since most do not have access to fishing boats. In the region there are 322 artisanal fishermen unions in total, out of which 232 contain both women and men. Four of the unions are only for women, and

86 are only for men. In total, the organizations have 11040 members – 2027 women and 9013 men (Sernpesca, 2013). Every artisanal fishermen organization have their specific interests, which are influencing the character of their mobilizations as they were struggling with obtaining some form of consensus between the different unions. This is important to take into consideration while analysing the mobilizations that took place as a consequence of the socio-environmental disaster in the spring of 2016.

5.3 Narrative of the events that unfolded at Chiloé between January and May, 2016

As mentioned earlier in the context description of Chiloé, the settlement of the salmon industry carried with it many changes both environmentally, economically and socially (Oliva & Caviedes, 2007). The salmon industry has brought on an enormous accumulation of waste, such as food leftovers and feces that fall through the salmon tanks down to the seabed, and is spread in the waters surrounding the aquaculture installations (Cárdenas, 2017; Greenpeace, 2016). Furthermore, the salmon is closely packed in the tanks in order to increase production, making diseases endemic. As a consequence, in order to treat and control the spread of diseases, the salmon companies use very high volumes of antibiotics and antiparasitics in their productive processes without informing the public. As argued by Cárdenas (2017), this threatens not only the rights of consumers and their families, but also the stability of the environment and marine-coastal biodiversity (Cárdenas, 2017).

In early 2016, millions of salmon started dying due to a spread of a poisoned algal bloom (*Pseudochatenella verruculosa*) within the tanks where they were kept. As a consequence around 30.000 employees were forced to leave their jobs (Cárdenas, 2017). It was the second time in less than a decade that a disease had spread within the tanks and killed of thousands of tons of salmon causing enormous rates of unemployment in the region. In 2007-2009, the salmon industry suffered from the biggest sanitary crisis in its history when the virus ISA spread within the salmon tanks and killed two thirds of the salmon stock (Bustos et al., 2015).

In the beginning of January 2016 one could read in the biggest national newspapers *La Tercera* and *El Mercurio* about the economic losses the salmon companies were facing (*La Tercera*, 2016). In order to solve the problem, the salmon industry was authorized by the Chilean government in the beginning of March 2016 to throw 4.659 tons (official number) of rotten salmon filled with dissolving chemicals and antibiotics into the Pacific Ocean 120 kilometres outside the coast of Chiloé (Cárdenas, 2017). However, the official numbers concerning the distance and amount of fish have been questioned. According to independent media sources the actual amount of

dead fish thrown into the sea reached 9000 tons, and according to locals boats have been spotted significantly closer to the island than 129 kilometers (Cárdenas, 2017). The dumping was realized through 11 ship launchings carried out by around 125 fishing vessels between the 14th-23th of March, 2016 (Cardenas, 2017).

This action was backed up by the National Fisheries Service and the Chilean Navy – the very same actors assigned to have the constitutional responsibility to watch over the health and stability of the ecosystems and marine biodiversity, common goods, and the interests of Chilean society. Around the same time from the beginning of March coastal communities around the archipelago of Chiloé started to detect a bloom of red tide in the water (the microalgae *Alexandrium catenella*). The Red Tide was first detected in Quellón in the south of the island, but it took until late April that the phenomenon spread all around Chiloé archipelago. Ancud, which is situated at northwest corner of the island fronting the Pacific Ocean, was the last city to detect red tide outside its coast (Cardenas,2017; Segovia, 2016). Algal blooms are very unusual outside the coast of Ancud due to the water conditions which brings much movements and cold temperatures, and while conducting the interviews locals said they have never before spotted red tide in their waters (Cardenas, 2017). . The Red Tide subsequently contaminated the waters and the *benthos*, which are the species living at the very bottom of the sea, such as clams, algae, oysters, cockles, mussels, scallops and sea snails (Cardenas, 2017; El Mostrador, 2016). Consequently, the authorities prohibited the extraction of benthos due to sanitary reasons, since people risked being poisoned from eating the products.

By the same time, in April, thousands of mussels, clams and other molluscs stranded at the beaches of Chiloé along the side of the Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, Chilean hake, sardins, and corvinas were stranded. In the south at the beaches along the Gulf of Corcovado dead whales, penguins and dolphins were then found. Soon, beaches around the whole island were contaminated by cadavers from sea lions, together with dead seagulls and other species of birds who had been eating from the dead animals (El Mostrador, 2016; Segovia, 2016).

According to Greenpeace scientists and Doctor in Oceanography Tercico Artezano, it has been affirmed that the rapid spread of the red tide was a consequence of climate change and corresponding changes in the oceanography which were accompanied by organic contamination from monocultures of salmon and trout. Thus, as a consequence of high water temperatures, together with an increase of the luminosity and a decrease of oxygen in the sea, nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) were joined from the thousands of tons of nutrients not consumed by the fish in their crowded ponds, creating excellent conditions for the Red Tide to emerge and spread (Greenpeace, 2016). However, according to the salmon industry and the authorities the Red Tide was a natural phenomenon brought on by El Niño (Cárdenas, 2017). As a reaction to the acute

socio-environmental crisis, the ignorance shown by the authorities and the long history of extractivist neoliberal policies in the island, one of the biggest social mobilizations in the history of the archipelago of Chiloé took form in the beginning of May, 2016. During eighteen days the communities at Chiloé blocked the island during peaceful conditions. The protests also garnered support on the national level with fishermen demonstrating in solidarity port towns around the country, as seen in Valparaíso, Puerto Montt and Aysén. At Chiloé island, barricades were set up blocking the main roads, hindering all forms of transport – except for ambulances – to pass from the mainland (Cárdenas, 2017).

Furthermore, deliberative assemblies were organized in cities such as Ancud, Castro, Chonchi and Quellón, in which they made their claims for their demands. Except from demanding monetary compensation for the enormous economic and ecological losses, they also presented demands for quality education and health care, internal connectivity, productive diversification and autonomy (El Mostrador, 2016). Unfortunately, as will be detailed in the antecedent analysis section, the movement eventually lost momentum when the Chilean government started to pay out solidarity bonds to people who had not been affected by the crisis.

6. Analysis

The section have been divided in three parts, and will be analysed in relation to the three processes stipulated in the social movements theory: the framing process, mobilization, and demobilization. As have been detailed in the methodological section, a discourse analysis of data gathered from in-depth interviews will be used for assessing the development of the social movement.

6.1 The Framing Process

NGO personnel, artisanal fishermen and leaders of fishermen all detailed how their common identity as Chilotes aided the motivational part of the framing process. A common theme detailed by several of interviewees was a feeling of abandonment throughout the years. The real effects of this abandonment become clear when considering that Chiloé is lagging behind most other regions in Chile in terms of healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. Furthermore, they expressed feeling of having been run over, over and over again - not have the opportunity to play an active

role in decisions that are inevitably shaping the future of their territories. I argue the hardship brought on by this reality – combined with a shared understanding of how Chiloé has been abandoned by the rest of the country – strengthened their collective identity, and facilitated the framing of the social movement.

6.1.1 Motivational aspects of framing and identity building

“Chile has a historical debt with our island. Chiloé has not been given the same opportunity as other areas of Chile. The health services provided by the government are not adapted for the realities of an archipelago - Chiloé is geographically fundamentally different from the rest of the country, but is still given the same services.”

The quote above is derived from one of the founders of *Defendemos Chiloé*, Juan Carlos . In the interview, he further detailed how Chiloé is 60% rural, but “still without an education system for children living in rural areas”. The Chilean government's neglect of the people inhabiting the archipelago, he argues, has led to a situation in which “this discontent and frustration shows up when an opportunity is created, and the opportunity came for all of us last year during the crisis”. He describes the framing of the movement as follows:

“So what happened is that we all got together. First, it was in support of the artisanal fishermen who had been deprived of their living. Later, it was for a variety of demands. We took advantage of the chance to tell the authorities to remember the historical debts they have with us. Soon, other groups also joined the movement, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and construction workers. Everyone joined and participated in the demonstrations and the barricades. By now the protesters were not only in support of the fishermen, but were also propagating for healthcare and education, apart from protesting against the contamination from the salmon industry. All this discontent ended up in the formation of a rebellion”.

This view is supported by Patricia, who is the owner of a seafood restaurant at Chiloé, where the interview took place: “It became a social problem at the provincial level as every single person was

persecuted because the island is so dependent on the sea. In Chiloé, 70-80% of the inhabitants work at sea, and those who do not work at sea are indirectly depending on its resources. If there was no work for one there was no work for anyone - a domino effect. We were all struck by the crisis to some extent or another.” Hence, they started to organize in order to demand compensation for the economic and ecological losses the disaster had brought about. According to the artisanal fishermen interviewed, they could extract absolutely nothing during a period of two months, or, as detailed by an artisanal fisherman named Leonel:

”First they say fishermen in district one are no longer allowed to extract seafood. Okay, then you take your things and you move to district two. Later they say that district two is also closed down, area three as well, then area four, and then you realize now there is no place where you can extract your products. Thus, it is then the social revolution really took off.”

Marcelo, another fisherman, supports the view that they could not accept the fact that the ”authorities closed our port for sanitary reasons so that we could not extract any products for more than two months”. Moreover, in order to explain why not only fishermen joined in on the protests, one must consider that virtually all Chilotés rely on the sea in one aspect or the other for their daily living, which a quote from Alvaro – representative of *Secpan* – illustrates:

”The life of a Chilote implies you have a deep cultural connection to the sea ... At the television, they interviewed a man - a mechanic – who had a barricade just outside his workshop, and the reporter asked him why he was protesting even though he does not work at sea. He answered his job is to help the fishermen with repairing the motors on their fishing vessels, and in that way he was also affected.”

6.1.2 The Demands of the Social Movement

When the question was posed about the protesters’ demands, the artisanal fishermen expressed the monetary issue as their primary one. However, they did also mention the importance of improved work contingencies, and diversification of the local economy - including increased tourism - to improve their resilience to environmental disasters and other crises: “The principal demand among

us was of monetary kind, but it was not only a matter of demanding compensation for the economic losses. Rather, it had to do with demands such as improving work contingencies, and diversifying the local economy - so that if it would happen again one would have other sources of income and not depending solely on the sea” (Juan, artisanal fisherman from Quetalmahue).

In contrast to the fishermen, the primary preoccupations of the NGOs were not of monetary kinds, but related to environmental concerns. More specifically, they expressed concerns regarding the impact of the salmon industry on the marine on the ecosystem of the archipelago. The NGOs mention that by the time the public heard about the dumping of rotten salmons in the Pacific there were very little organization at the citizen level, in the sense there was not enough general environmental awareness among Chilotes to make claims against the salmon industry. Pedro – a spokesperson for the NGO *Eco Chiloé* - details the adverse environmental impact of the salmon industry, saying it:

“... contaminates everything, and the communities of Chiloé have to pay for it. The salmon companies do not care about cleaning the seabeds. The companies occupy columns of seawater of 50-60 cubic meters for free as they do only pay for the surface area - only the square meter is considered, and not the cubic meter. So then, who pay for the rest? The rest is paid by the communities, the artisanal fishermen and shore harvesters, and the money generated from the industry is just for the few who own the companies.”

Alvaro regurgitates Pedro’s thought, and then stresses how it has previously has been difficult gathering support in opposition of the salmon industry, since it has also provided people on the islands with a living. Hence, they have ”never been able to publicly tell the salmon companies to move out of Chiloé. For instance, I have two cousins who work as managers at salmon farms, my neighbour is a cleaner at a salmon farm, and another neighbor is filleting salmon” (Alvaro, representative of *Secpan*). Though, the disastrous event of the salmon dumping and its corresponding detrimental environmental and socio-economic effects removed any such concerns, and the NGO's, fishermen, and other groups at Chiloé could for the first time stand firmly together in opposition – even though their motivations differed.

Before the artisanal fishermens livelihood was threatened they did not express much in terms of preoccupations concerning the natural environment. The action to join the movement was mainly a direct result of being prohibited from working at sea and generating an income. This clearly shows that for an occurrence to become a problem it has to be recognized as such. The NGOs mention there was little organization at the citizen level before the crisis. Thus, they could not gather support to publicly oppose the government and the salmon companies, and formulate collective claims. Following the disaster, the combined issues of environmental degradation, lack of quality healthcare and education, monetary issues, and labour opportunities, were incorporated into the same interpretative frame, and thus framed into a dominant theme (Porta Della & Diani, 2006: 76). Yet, even though the collective action of opposing the government and salmon industries was mutual among all actors involved in the social movement, they had diverse aims and objectives. While the NGO's held a rejectionist approach to the salmon companies - that is, they expressed a general refusal of the companies (Porta Della & Diani, 2006: 77) – the fishermen pursued monetary compensation for their losses. However, all actors in the movement shared a reformational approach, in the sense that they stressed improved regulations in terms of fishing opportunities and environmental laws (Porta Della & Diani, 2006: 78).

6.2 Mobilization

Interviews with NGO representatives revealed that social media channels – such as Facebook and Twitter – were crucial mechanisms in spreading their message across the region, country and even internationally. These accounts were managed primarily by NGO personnel. It can be argued that the people running the accounts served as “brokers” during the mobilization, in the sense that they activated a mechanism of diffusion of the movements’ ideas, and aided the process of mobilizing support from the public, environmental activists, and organizations, as well as from sympathizers from areas around the country (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 229). Alvaro from *Secpan* details how the NGO “worked as technical advisors - we provided and shared information, and knowledge to the public concerning the issue.” To inform the public, they created a short documentary which demonstrated the link between contamination from the salmon industry and the emergence of the Red Tide:

This video had a million and a half views on Facebook. Consequently we manage to position in Chiloé and in the country that there was an environmental conflict and that our demands were not only about a bonus, but that there was an environmental crime going on. We were successful in taking advantage of moment and telling the world what the fishermen unions did not say, which was the environmental part of the conflict” (Alvaro, Representative of *Secpan*).

Juan Carlos, a representative of NGO *Defendemos Chiloé*, details they first started to “investigate what was happening and contact independent sources”. Then, he says:

We started to tell people about the information we were receiving - that what was happening was much more serious and much more complex than the press and the government wanted it to appear. Because they wanted the crisis to appear as a simple problem of a natural phenomenon the “red tide” and that was not the case. So I think we played an important role here in getting hold of technical information, investigating, contacting people, contacting a lawyer to help us with judicial issues and the most important thing, we managed to to expose/ reveal the scandal to the public.”

Furthermore, the blockade of the island worked as an important mechanism in attracting the attention of national media in the form of television, radio and newspapers. Due to the fact that *Defendemos Chiloé* and *Secpan* were two of few established environmental organization at the island they were contacted by most journalists and reporters. During these interviews they took advantage of the opportunity to spread their messages. *Secpan* and *Defendemos Chiloé* continuously acted as brokers through the conflict, since they contacted other environmental NGOs at the national and international level, as well as independent scientists and media sources. Through these connections new allies were formed which further strengthened the movement and its credibility. The diffusion of the movements ideas among the islanders also took place in a spontaneous way. By word of mouth, plans of participating in the assemblies and barricades quickly spread.

Many of the independent fishermen were already organized prior to the crisis as members of unions. However, far from all independent fishermen belonged to a union. For instance, the fishermen from Quetalmahue did not belong to any union before the disaster and were not registers in Sernapesca. Therefore, in order to be able to receive an economic compensation they created a union and went to the municipality to get registered: “After the outbreak of the red tide, the

government was supposed to support the unions with money for their losses. The people who did not belong to any union created unions so that they could receive help” (Leonel, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue). Marcelo continues:

“We started organizing ourselves. We decided to meet at the main square at six o'clock, just the day before the blockade of the island started. We met in the square to talk among us, what should we do - shall we participate in the blockade or shall we not? Finally we all agreed that we were to participate.

We participated in the barricades as brothers, blocking the bridge *Podeto*, and closing the connection to mainland. We were there every day and night for around ten nights doing shifts. As a response, the authorities threatened us by saying that if we did not withdraw they would send the Police Special Operations Group - *el GOPE* - on us, but the people were so indignant and devoted, saying that they would give their life for their island and their interests. We stood there waiting for the GOPE ready to fight with weapons such as knives, wooden clubs and stones. To be honest it could have ended in a bloodbath between civilians and the uniformed. In the end, the authorities realized the people would not give up. They were to fight. As a consequence, they never sent the GOPE to turn down the mobilizations” (Marcelo, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue).

According to Pedro, a representative of the NGO *Eco Chiloé*, the strength of the social movement increased when the authorities did not show up, saying “the politicians were absent during the whole process which demonstrated a huge lack of respect for all the Chilotes.” Alvaro, representative of *Secpan*, continues:

“The mobilizations were strongest in in Ancud since it is the commune where there are most fishermen unions - there are more than a hundred. Mobilizations were very strong because Ancud depends on the benthos [animal or plants that live on the seabed, such as oysters, clams and mussels], which were the products most affected by the Red Tide. In contrast, Quellón and Dalcahue are more dependent of fish. Also, in Ancud there is no salmon production, and people there became strong critics of the salmon companies, which I believe was crucial for the strength of the mobilizations.”

6.3 Demobilization and Outcomes of the Movement

After negotiations with the government had been conducted, the movement soon lost support in society. Several of the interviewees detail a shared opinion that the government intentionally handed out money in a selective way to split people apart. As a consequence, momentum was lost and the social movement eventually fold up. People that received money did not keep on to fight for the right of their fellow fishermen to receive the same compensation:

“The same leaders who were to represent us aligned themselves with the interests of the government, and not with the interests of the fishermen. In Chile it has always been like this, many fishermen suffered because they were left without any help, the help and money went to the municipality - the people in the municipality brought boxes of food home to their families instead of helping the people in real need of help.” (Marcelo, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue).

Or, as argued by Alvaro, “the government did everything they could to demobilize the Chilotes and cover the demands with some miserable bonds” (Alvaro, representative of *Secpan*). Erwin details a feeling of powerlessness: “Our union did nothing, absolutely nothing to fight for the members who were left without a bonus. In our union there were 11 members who did not receive the money and 30 members who received it” (Erwin, Artisanal Fisherman from Puñihuil).

Neither Patrica - nor more than half of the fishermen being interviewed - received an economic compensation: “No one in my family received the bonus, but we should have received it. My husband did not receive it because he had a business besides working at sea: the restaurant. Yet, during the crisis the restaurant did not generate any money at all.” (Patricia, restaurant owner).

“Almost no one in our union received the bonus. We wanted the government to see us, to see how we are suffering and come here and help us, but they never did instead they offered us a bonus of 100 000 pesos chilenos a month per family - what did they think, how could we survive on that?” (Teresa, leader of a Fishermen Union)

Leonel narrates the event:

“What happened was that people who were not even artisanal fishermen received the bonus. For example, there was a diver interviewed on television who received the bonus but chose to hand it back as he had since several years been employed by a salmon company, and did not feel he needed the money. He witnessed the real need of many people and chose to return the bonus so that it could benefit the real artisanal fishermen. The man appeared at the news on the television! Doctors, policemen, youngsters, and others received the bonus... in the end it was just a lottery, a complete lottery - it did not seem to matter if you were a fisherman or not, and that made us feel very humiliated” (Leonel, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue)

When asked about their thoughts on the future, all artisanal fishermen agreed on that for a fishermen it makes no sense to think about the future. Alejandro - a fisherman from Quetalmahue - expressed it as follows: “We do not think about the future, we live day by day, we live in the present. It is the life of a fisherman, and for a Chilote in general. Most interviewees express negative view of the future, saying they felt little hope their situations would turn for the better:

“What we think about is to save money so that our children can study and get a University degree, so that they have better opportunities than we have had, the future is for our children, our time has already passed ” (Juan Soto, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue).

“In our village we say people do not put their hand on their heart, they put it in the pocket. The political system is the problem, the Chilean politicians are extremely corrupt. According to me, the Chilean politicians are the most dangerous one’s that exist on this planet. With a system like this it is impossible to do business”. (Marcelo, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue).

However, they are also mentioning the factor of Chiloé being a place with a lot of diverse actors with conflicting interests as a reason why it in the end folded up:

“We say that here in Chiloé there are 170 thousand different voices and 170 thousand different visions. The different cities and communities have all their special personality and individuality and there interest are distinct. So although being a relatively small place there are a lot of diversity and with all this different voices and views we are divided” (Richard, Leader of Fishermen Union).

Furthermore, NGO representatives argue the disappointing outcome of the negotiations was a consequence of the difficulties cooperating with the fishermen unions. The negotiation took place between the leader of fishermen unions and the authorities, and left no space for the representation of the citizens. This, in turn, led to a situation in which the social movement lost a great deal of support:

“Unfortunately, we have never had any close relationship to the fishermen unions, because we conflicting opinions, because many of the fishermen unions also work for the salmon industry and therefore of course it is hard to work with them. There are a percentage of the fishermen that are dependent of the industry, and others who are victims, who have a close relationship to the natural environment. There was citizen participation throughout the whole blockade of the island, but in the end the citizens demands never became represented in the negotiations with the authorities which made the movement lost a lot of social support. The citizens were not organized prior to the crisis - we did not have organization at a managerial level. The leadership that existed was the leadership of the fishermen unions, the mobilization of the citizen was of a very spontaneous kind”. (Ricardo, Representative of NGO *Eco Chiloé*).

Alvaro from *Secpan* say they “tried to collaborate with some fishermen's unions by offering technical assistance for the negotiation process with the authorities, but it was not received”

6.3.1 Outcomes of the Social Movement

“They abandoned us, slammed the door in our face – we had the door slammed in our faces by every single politician, they did not help us with anything, not even did they listen to our demands” (Luis, Artisanal Fishermen from Punihuil).

When the question was asked about the results of the mobilization, Patricia and the artisanal fishermen all expressed strong feelings of disappointment with the results obtained after eighteen days blocking the island. They felt they had been deceived by the government, politicians and the leaders of fishermen unions participating in the negotiations:

“Of all the 17 petitions presented by the independent fishermen - ranging from a request of improved work contingencies to increased tourism - the government only complied with one,

which was the economic compensation for the losses (Leonel, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue).”

“The government responded by promising to hand out 2000 bonuses - only 2000 bonuses! We are around 8000 artisanal fishermen in total.” (Marcelo, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue).

Ricardo and Alvaro narrates the disappointing outcome as follows:

“Sadly, the citizens did not gain anything, this whole process ended in a very disappointing way because after generating such a great resistance it all ended with the government bought their way out of the situation. The salmon companies continue to work as before, if not even worse. And any regulatory policies were never set in because everything was blamed on the red tide. Unfortunately no measure was taken regarding an industry that has been working on our island for more than 40 years.” (Ricardo, representative of *Eco Chiloé*).

Alvaro shares this sentiment, saying “... when the last barricade was receded the first vehicles that passed through were the salmon trucks on their way to the north. And that was very sad and heavy to see because that meant that the salmon companies had neither been punished nor judged.” (Alvaro, representative of *Secpan*)

However, they are all mentioning mainly two aspects that were positive and perceived as important outcome. First, as Chilotes, they manage to show the rest of Chile that they are capable of doing resistance:

“This capitalist system is a coalition between big capital and politicians, a system that work very well based on the ignorance of the people, and if you are prepared and conscious they will not be able to fool you anymore. In this remote place, they did not expect to find skilled people - a united Chilote work team consisting not only of people with warmth, energy and passion, but also with significant knowledge and technical abilities (Alvaro, Representative of *Secpan*).

Juan Carlos expresses the same view:

“To some extent it can be said that the outcome of the crisis was successful. We did not manage to hold the salmon companies responsible for what they did, and nor did we manage to solve the issues of education, health and internal connectivity. However, we manage to receive respect from the rest of Chile. We manage to show them that we are capable to investigate and bring their wrongdoings to light. This is a great achievement - to make the people here feel capable of believing in ourselves. We Chilotes have good people here, people born here, and that is very important. Perhaps the most beautiful rewarding thing we achieved was the fact that the traditional press - El Mercurio, La Estrella, La Tercer, and national television - are who are those that generally hide these matters. They finally let our opinions be heard, and that is something very new and spectacular.”(Juan Carlos , representative of *Defendemos Chiloé*).

Also, Ricardo from *EcoChiloé* details how the crisis has led to a new level of environmental awareness on “. the island, detailing how “many new environmental movements are starting to take form ... During the crisis a feeling of inquietude was born among the people, people who are today working with in the thematic of environmental protection and awareness.” Alvaro sums up the positive aspects of the outcome as follows:

“A change very important to me is that many people before the crisis thought that we - the environmentalists - who are not working at sea, only care about protecting the ecological system, and did not care about the economic-labour situation of the people depending on the sea. Yet, in doing so, one easily forgets the the strong relationship between society and nature. During the crisis this relationship between the natural environment and the people became a reality in a brutal manner - the unsustainable human activity and the degradation of the environment eventually lead to a natural disaster affecting the livelihood of the local people. As a consequence, many Chilotes change their perception of the ecosystem as being separated from the local fishing economy to the view of the society and nature being part of the same system, and realised that ecological damage also affects the people.” (Alvaro, Representative of *Secpan*).

In summarising terms, it can be argued that the prevalence of actors with different interest eventually teared the movement apart. This development was facilitated by the government’s choice to distribute money selectively, which diminished the solidarity between the participants Furthermore, a sense of disappointment among those who did not feel represented in the negotiation diminished the momentum of the movement. Even though most perceived the direct outcome of the

movement as negative, a positive aspect can be found in the sense it increased the public's awareness, leading to a situation in which the unsustainable activity of the salmon industry will be increasingly scrutinized.

7. Conclusion

During less than four decades Chiloé has gone from a traditional society isolated from the rest of the world to one of Chile's most important export regions. Since the arrival of the salmon industry in the 1980s, Chiloé has quickly become fully intertwined with the world economy, which has brought about several important transformations on economic, environmental, social, cultural and institutional levels. As a consequence, Chiloé is today made up of a variety of actors ranging from the artisanal fishermen who maintain their traditional practices, to the professionals linked to industrial activities – all with different visions on how to react to these ongoing changes. The diverse interests these actors are pursuing add to the complexity of the political landscape in Chiloé.

Due to the increased economic activities connected to the salmon industry there have been investments in education, health and infrastructure. However, most of the population has benefited little from the development. As a case in point, rural areas are still lacking in basic services such as infrastructure, education and healthcare. Instead of generating a prosperous and diversified economy the salmon industry has led to a strong economic dependence among the islanders.

Due to the Chilean government's neglect over the years, the adverse life conditions many Chilotes have faced during the last decades, a growing distrust towards the central authorities has been build up. Then, when the environmental catastrophe brought on by companies in the salmon industry emerged, the Chilotes finally saw their chance to react, and the largest social mobilizations in the history of the archipelago took form.

The shared feeling of being ignored and abandoned by the authorities – in combination with a shared cultural identity of being dependent on the sea – facilitated support for the movement across the entire social web. Through the environmental disaster, the dependent relationship between people and nature became evident. In turn, owing to the the dispersal of information on behalf of environmental NGOs, the link between the salmon industry's unsustainable activity and the emergence of Red Tide, people that had previously not expressed environmental concerns became proponents of environmental activism. In the end, the movement did not lead to a significant bettering of the situation. As have been detailed in the analysis section, the Chilean government's decision to disperse economic compensation unevenly to the archipelago's inhabitants contributed to the social movement eventually losing its momentum. However, even though the output of the social movement did not lead to the results most of its participants propositioned for,

positive effects can needless be observed. As was expressed by NGO representatives, a new feeling of hope has been ignited in the sense that Chilotes no longer see the environment and economic generation as two separate systems. In the wake of the movement, many have been convinced there is a mutually dependent relationship between the two. In the end then, it can be argued that even though the social movement did not solve the direct goals it was formed around, it has created a conducive environment for putting further pressure on the salmon industry and the Chilean government.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Quotes in Full

Juan Carlos , representative of the NGO *Defendemos Chiloé*.

“Our rural roads are the worst in the country. The education service is of lower quality, too. Only recently have they started building rural schools. Chiloé is 60-70 % rural, but still without an education system for children living in rural areas! Not to mention the health of children living on the small islands – when they get sick they cannot go to the hospital in Castro at the big island of Chiloé, because there are no boats to take them. Instead, they have to spend 15-20 days sick in their houses without any medical care. So, when this is the reality for 40 small islands, and the rural population living at the big island of Chiloé, it is obvious that there is a growing discontent among the Chilotes. This discontent and frustration shows up when an opportunity is created, and the opportunity came for all of us last year during the crisis. So what happened is that we all got together. First, it was in support of the artisanal fishermen who had been deprived of their living. Later, it was for a variety of demands. We took advantage of the chance to tell the authorities to remember the historical debts they have with us. Soon, other groups also joined the movement, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and construction workers. Everyone joined and participated in the demonstrations and the barricades. By now the protesters were not only in support of the fishermen, but were also propagating for healthcare and education, apart from protesting against the contamination from the salmon industry. All this discontent ended up in the formation of a rebellion.”

“Chile has a historical debt with our island. Chiloé has not been given the same opportunity as other areas of Chile. The health services provided by the government are not adapted for the realities of an archipelago – Chiloé is geographically fundamentally different from the rest of the country, but is still given the same services.”

“We started to tell people about the information we were receiving - that what was happening was much more serious and much more complex than the press and the government wanted it to appear. Because they wanted the crisis to appear as a simple problem of a natural phenomenon the “red tide” and that was not the case. So I think we

played an important role here in getting hold of technical information, investigating, contacting people, contacting a lawyer to help us with judicial issues and the most important thing, we managed to to expose and reveal the scandal to the public.”

“To some extent it can be said that the outcome of the crisis was successful. We did not manage to hold the salmon companies responsible for what they did, and nor did we manage to solve the issues of education, health and internal connectivity. However, we manage to receive respect from the rest of Chile. We manage to show them that we are capable to investigate and bring their wrong doings to light. This is a great achievement - to make the people here feel capable of believing in ourselves.” We Chilotes have good people here, people born here, and that is very important. Perhaps the most beautiful rewarding thing we achieved was the fact that the traditional press - El Mercurio, La Estralla, La Tercer, and national television - are who are those that generally hide these matters. They finally let our opinions be heard, and that is something very new and spectacular

“The reaction of Defendemos Chiloé was at the first instance to investigate what was happening and contact independent sources that could explain to us what was happening in more technical terms. Through the independent sources we started to catch a bit of what was going on and what had been going on during the last 30 years here in Chiloé since the arrival of the salmon industry, things we had not been informed about. Consequently, we started to tell people about the information we were receiving - that what was happening was much more serious and much more complex than the press and the government wanted it to appear. Because they wanted the crisis to appear as a simple problem of a natural phenomenon the “red tide” and that was not the case. So I think we played an important role here in getting hold of technical information, investigating, contacting people, contacting a lawyer to help us with judicial issues and the most important thing, we managed to to expose/ reveal the scandal to the public.”

“I believe that the role of communication and social networks was crucial for the social movement to develop. If it was not for these tools we would probably never have been able to communicate to the rest of Chile and the world what was going on here in Chiloé. No one would have heard about it because the national press and the national television use the

same perverse system as the politicians. The national media is controlled by two private companies: *El Mercurio S.A.P.* and *Copesa*. These companies are owned by two of Chile's most powerful business families – the Eduardo family, and the Pico-Cañas family – which are both members of the Chilean right-wing political and the business sector. Therefore, for us the common press was never an alternative. Instead we contacted independent media sources such as the newspapers *El Desconcierto* and *El Ciudadano*. The latter was especially important as they have a fan page on facebook with over two million likes. Furthermore, the independent radio also played an important role in spreading our ideas as everyone in Chile is listening to the radio! Last but not least, the social media such as Facebook and Twitter played a crucial role during the whole period of mobilization. Through these sources we managed to communicate our opinions and findings not only at the regional level, but also at the national and international level.”

“Defendemos Chiloé has a fan page on facebook. By the time the conflict broke out we had 12.000 likes, after 5 days of conflict we had 50.000 likes, in just some few days we got almost 40.000 more likes, which is incredible! During the crisis we constantly published things at the fan page spreading the message that there was an environmental crime going on, I like to call it environmental terrorism. During the crisis my fingers were constantly writing and chatting at the phone.”

Alvaro, Representative of the NGO *Secpan*

“The mobilizations were strongest in in Ancud since it is the commune where there are most fishermen unions – there are more than a hundred. Mobilizations were very strong because Ancud depends on the benthos [animal or plants that live on the seabed, such as oysters, clams and mussels], which were the products most affected by the Red Tide. In contrast, Quellón and Dalcahue are more dependent of fish. Also, in Ancud there is no salmon production, and people there became strong critics of the salmon companies, which I believe was crucial for the strength of the mobilizations.”

“The salmon companies here in Chile should at least have the same environmental standard as they have in Norway, Canada and Scotland. A Chilean salmon contains 75 times more antibiotics than the same salmon in Norway, If they knew about this in Europe and the USA, they would not sell the fish, people like you have to make sure they know about this.”

“This capitalist system is a coalition between big capital and politicians, a system that work very well based on the ignorance of the people, and if you are prepared and conscious they will not be able to fool you anymore. In this remote place, they did not expect to find skilled people - a united Chilote work team consisting not only of people with warmth, energy and passion, but also with significant knowledge and technical abilities.”

"The life of a Chilote implies you have a deep cultural connection to the sea. Fifty percent of the local economy is generated by the sea. Furthermore, every single person have family, neighbors or friends that are directly dependent on the sea as the only generation of income. At the television, they interviewed a man - a mechanic – who had a barricade just outside his workshop, and the reporter asked him why he was protesting even though he does not work at sea. He answered his job is to help the fishermen with repairing the motors on their fishing vessels, and in that way he was also affected”

“A great triumph of the great battle of 2016 was to have broken a taboo. Like saying, today we can in public question the salmon industry, a year ago we could not because. And that was a triumph of having created social, environmental, territorial awareness! today I would say that there exist two different discourses among the chilotes - there are those who say that the salmon companies needs to improve their environmental standards, that they should have the same standard as in Norway, Canada and Scotland - I would say most of the people on the island share this view. Then there is the other group of people that want the salmon companies to leave our island for good

“During the crises we the team at Secpan worked as technical advisors - we provided and shared information, and knowledge to the public concerning the issue. For example we did a short documentary called “fuera salmonera”, demonstrating the link between contamination from the salmon industry and the emergence of the red tide. This video had a million and a half views on Facebook. Consequently we manage to position in Chiloé and in the country that there was an environmental conflict and that our demands were not only about a bonus, but that there was an environmental crime going on. We were successful in taking advantage of moment and telling the world what the fishermen unions did not say, which was the environmental part of the conflict”

Ricardo, representative of *EcoChiloé*

“Before the crisis there were only some few environmental organization, but working at a more investigative level. However, today many new environmental movements are starting to take form. I could mention at least 10 organization all over chiloé; Dalcahue, Ancud, Chonci and Castro, that are today working with the thematic of practicing environmental consciences, being respectful of the environment and having a good relationship with it.”

“During the crisis a feeling of inquietude was born among the people, people who are today working with in the thematic of environmental protection and awareness. We have our organization which is Eco chiloé, but there are several more organizations that took form due to the same reason. Because of this, I look at the future with good expectations with great possibilities to spread environmental awareness among the islander, which might be the beginning of something bigger”

“Around the mid of april tons of shellfish, fish and algae stranded at the beaches in Ancud, Cacao and, Mar Brava. Not only clams as the government and media display, but all types of shellfish, seaweed and fish. Even Goose barnacles stranded, I saw it with my own eyes- The *Pico Roco* is very typical for Chile, they are filter-feeding species that live attached to hard surfaces in the sea such as rocks, they are extremely hard to remove from the rocks, how on earth did they strand, why did they strand?”

Marcelo, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue

We accepted the fact that some ships were going to dump all this salmon in the sea, but what we did not accept was that the authorities closed our port for sanitary reasons so that we could not extract any products for more than two months.”

“We all know that the second or third most important industry in Chile is the salmon industry. For the government to make a law favorable for the salmon companies it takes them less than 24 hours. For example, it took them 24 hours to sign a document, and approve the salmon companies to dump millions of dead fish into our waters. When it comes to us they delay months or even years before approving a law beneficial to us. We have been fighting for changes in the fishing law for more than 25 years!”.

“Unfortunately it all became politicized which is what happens when there are heterogeneous actors with a multitude of sometimes conflicting interest and ideals trying to agree on something. And, there will always be people taking advantage of this, which is what happened here. The conflict was politicized - the authorities monopolized the people. The same leaders who were to represent us aligned themselves with the interests of the

government and not with the interests of the fishermen. In Chile it has always been like this, many fishermen suffered because they were left without any help, the help and money went to the municipality - the people in the municipality brought boxes of food home to their families instead of helping the people in real need of help.

“We started organizing ourselves. We decided to meet at the main square at six o'clock, just the day before the blockade of the island started. We met in the square to talk among us, what should we do - shall we participate in the blockade or shall we not? Finally we all agreed that we were to participate. We participated in the barricades as brothers, blocking the bridge *Podeto*, and closing the connection to mainland. We were there every day and night for around ten nights doing shifts. As a response, the authorities threatened us by saying that if we did not withdraw they would send the Police Special Operations Group - *el GOPE* - on us, but the people were so indignant and devoted, saying that they would give their life for their island and their interests. We stood there waiting for the GOPE ready to fight with weapons such as knives, wooden clubs and stones. To be honest it could have ended in a bloodbath between civilians and the uniformed. In the end, the authorities realized the people would not give up. They were to fight. As a consequence, they never sent the GOPE to turn down the mobilizations”.

Leonel, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue

“The moment when you realise you will not be able to work and generate an income is very hard. We live day by day. We get the money in our hands after a day's work and with this money we buy bread to feed our family. To lose your work from one day to another put you in a very hard situation. I felt a lot of preoccupation for my family, behind us are women and children, and if they do not have bread in the morning they do not eat. In our village the men are the only ones generating money, you earn for the day and if you cannot go to work you do not eat, and that is what happened last year.”

“I did the military service. Therefore, I know how much wealth Chile has, instead of investing money in the military they should allocate money in order to increase the resilience for environmental disasters like this one, to come here and listening to us and helping us – a contingency plan that is more efficient and better organized than the one they used this time.”

“In spite of the fact that artisanal fishermen started to make a lot of noise and were worried about the issue, the government at first pretended as if nothing was happening. At the same time, reports from the Ministry of Health began to appear telling us that the phenomenon of red tide was not diminishing, and on the contrary it was increasing and would be covering more areas. First they say fishermen in district one are no longer allowed to extract seafood. Okay, then you take your things and you move to district two. Later they say that district two is also closed down, area three as well, then area four, and then you realize now there is no place where you can extract your products. Thus, it is then the social revolution really took off.”

“The government has for decades overlooked the vulnerabilities artisanal fishermen are facing. A small group of people, owners of big companies, own around 80% of the sea, leaving the artisanal fishermen with only 20% of working space. And at the moment they want to do a law to completely eradicate the areas left for artisanal fishermen so that 100% of the coast is owned by the big companies”.

“The principal demand among us was of monetary kind, but it was not only a matter of demanding compensation for the economic losses. Rather, it had to do with demands such as improving work contingencies, and diversifying the local economy – so that if it would happen again one would have other sources of income and not depending solely on the sea.”

“Of all the 17 petitions presented by the independent fishermen - ranging from a request of improved work contingencies to increased tourism - the government only complied with one, which was the economic compensation for the losses. But not even the monetary compensation was satisfactory as the amount of money was ridiculous and the hand out very poorly organized.”

José, Artisanal Fisherman from Quetalmahue

“There are no jobs available for us, even if one would like to leave the work at sea there are no options for us. We were born on the sea, we spent all our childhood by the sea, moving away from the sea would be like cutting off the arms of a person, it is our life – it is the only thing we know.”

“We felt very humiliated, and even more humiliated by the fact that the authorities never came to our island to talk to us, they only bothered themselves to go to Puerto Montt.”

Teresa, Leader of Fishermen Union
<p>“During the crisis my pantry was empty and I know it was the same for most of the people who worked at sea, which is almost 90% in Ancud, I would dare to say”</p>
<p>“According to me one of the most important demands is to have good access to rural roads. Nowadays you go to a rural road and you will not be able to pass because there is too much mud. Other important demands are to have good hospitals and good universities so that our children do not emigrate instead of becoming good professionals here, serving the development of our island. Actually these demands are just basic things.”</p>
<p>“For me as a woman the crisis brought about a positive change, which was that the voices of us - the women working at sea especially as shore harvesters - became heard. Because it exists a lot of machismo among people working at sea and an image that only men work at sea. But that is not true, actually there are plenty of women working as shore harvesters and divers. During the crisis, in all this chaos, us women found a platform, we organized and managed to receive respect and got listened to, that was an enormous accomplishment for us.”</p>
Richard, Leader of Fishermen Union
<p>“What I most want is that the salmon companies leave the island for good, but if that's not possible they must improve their environmental and employment standards so that they stop contaminating our sea and exploiting our people.”</p>
<p>“The solidarity we felt during the blockade quickly disappeared after the government had handed out the money. People were so desperate to receive a bonus, a job or something, and when people did not get the bonus, they got frustrated and angry. I believe the government handed out the bonus in order to divide the people. No one in my union did receive the bonus, me and my family did not receive the bonus.”</p>
<p>“The authorities did not come to the island because the authorities were aligned with the salmon companies, unfortunately that's the reality. That's the way they have always handled these sort of things, and sadly the leaders of the fishermen unions participating in the meeting in Puerto Montt did not have the capacity to negotiate with the authorities.”</p>