Creating space for fishermen’s livelihoods: Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen’s negotiations for livelihood space within multiple governance structures in Ghana

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Summary and conclusions

Reviewing the argument

This research has been performed amongst Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen in Ghana, one of the four main artisanal fisher groups active at sea. It feeds into the need for more knowledge and understanding of artisanal fisheries in the West African region, needed to improve fisheries governance.

The Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen who figure in this study, actively negotiate livelihood space in a situation of multiple governance structures and migration. The elements livelihood, multiple governance and migration are central to this study and form characteristics of Ghanaian artisanal fisheries. Fishing is a livelihood activity, providing fishermen with income and identity. Artisanal fishermen in Ghana are highly mobile, and I was eager to see how mobility affects their position as it develops within multiple governance settings. These governance settings are multiple as in Ghana it consists of traditional governing actors (such as chiefs in villages) and of those of the Government of Ghana.

It is important to realise that the Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen operate in a condition of declining catches in the West African region. As the Anlo-Ewe fishermen are specialised marine fishermen, declining catches affect them as regards their livelihood. The fact that they operate in a niche – a technical specialisation in beach seine fishing combined with a spatial concentration – also means that there is a narrow livelihood base limiting the number of possible alternatives.

As artisanal fishermen catch 75 percent of the marine catches in Ghana, and as fish plays an important role in the Ghanaian diet, artisanal catches strongly contribute to Ghana’s food security. With almost ten percent of the Ghanaian population directly or indirectly depending on fisheries for their livelihood, these factors together make declining catches a societal problem. The issue of declining catches has predominantly been addressed by biologists and economists. There has been insufficient input from the social sciences, yet their contribution is imperative because fisheries governance is a

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1 Ghanaian proverb; meaning that although change can be slow, it takes place nonetheless.
social activity which deals not only with fish but also with fishermen. It is also a political process in which multiple private and public actors take part.

This study is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the practice of fisheries governance. A new approach called interactive governance was introduced to fisheries during the past decade (Kooiman 1999, Kooiman et al. 2005). I have discussed this approach in relation to the situation of Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen in Ghana. Generally speaking I found the analytical schema of interactive governance theory to be useful for diagnosing my particular case. Some aspects, however, were troublesome. First, this study has shown the complex nature of the governance effort, such as the variety of public and private actors involved in beach seine fisheries. It has also demonstrated the range of values and principles motivating governing actors in Ghana. In such circumstances the connection between values and principles, institutions, and the daily management of beach seine fishing is difficult to discern and untangle. Moreover, the reality of beach seine fishing questions the functioning of institutions and governors in a context of pluralism, which Kooiman et al. link to underlying values and principles. It has been demonstrated that power differentials – a factor downplayed in the interactive governance approach – play a decisive role in explaining actual performance.

In a situation in which even the Ghanaian fisheries law is often more de jure than de facto, the principles guiding international governance of fisheries these days are even more so, and it is difficult to discern what is actually driving governance. Kooiman et al. (2005) take a further step by discussing the principles that should guide fisheries governance and, although many of us agree with their findings, they seem to be very removed from the reality on the ground: The reality of a declining yet valuable resource base, of fishermen seeking to fulfil their livelihood while managing their own businesses, and of a state government which, on the one hand, is seeking ways to earn some much-needed currency via their fish resources and, on the other, is trying to maintain what is left, hindered as it is by a lack of compliance and control power. Lastly, by discussing the livelihood space of the Anlo-Ewe fishermen this study has shown that interactions (central in the interactive governance approach) have spatial connotations, and are in fact place-bound. All in all it seems as if the interactive governance approach has paid more attention to the universals than to particulars. Jentoft (2006) correctly argues that both are important in a phronetic social science contribution to fisheries governance.

This study has also contributed to the livelihoods debate given that a lot of previous studies focused insufficiently on structural influences. By focusing on negotiation this study manages to connect a livelihoods approach with a governance approach. It thereby includes the structural level by paying attention to what happens in the interaction between actors within governance structures. This study also contributes to the livelihoods debate by introducing the concept of livelihood space. The concept of livelihood space adds weight to the elements of identity and place, countering the material bias of many livelihood studies. Thirdly, this study pays attention to collective action, which has been an important omission in many individual and household level biased livelihood studies.

The study has been undertaken in three fisher communities along the Ghanaian coast, in Woe (Volta Region), Akosua Village (Central Region) and Half Assini (Western Region). Woe lies in the home territory of the Anlo-Ewe, while the other two communities lie in different territories governed by other chieftaincies (Effutu and Nzema traditional...
areas) thereby making the governance structure more complex. The fishermen have migrated to these places to continue their main livelihood activity.

I have made use of a variety of both qualitative and quantitative social science methods which are derived from anthropology and geography. My research has been both localised and in-depth and linked to higher levels (national and international). I have thereby tried to understand local configurations of actors as well as linkages spanning larger distances. Herein lies the strength of the research. Firstly, I have emphasised the local embeddedness of identity, institutions and practices but I have also shown how local contexts are not isolated and linked in many ways to ideas, power and institutions derived from elsewhere. Secondly, multi-locational research is imperative in a context of mobility. By developing the concept of livelihood space I have also contributed to a better understanding of the special configuration that exists for people with mobile livelihoods. I have thereby not only addressed the spatial aspect but also that of identity. By combining methods and approaches to research derived from anthropology and geography research can be both more grounded as well as have a larger range.

For the purpose of this research a set of research questions has been developed, in which each separate question focuses on a different element of the central research question. The central research question is: How do Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen negotiate livelihood space, within multiple governance systems, both at home and in migrant settings in Ghana? By using the concept of negotiation the research question links livelihood with governance. The question is answered by using both a livelihoods approach and a governance perspective. This research thereby addresses the lack of attention for structural factors in livelihood research but also brings in more empirical input in the often academic and normative governance debate.

The key findings in relation to the research questions are presented in the following sections. In the last section the main central research question is answered followed by a discussion of challenges for governance and recommendations for further research.

Anlo-Ewe fishermen’s livelihood space and beach seine fishing
The sustainable livelihoods approach was used to answer the first question: how have Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen organised their livelihood? The livelihoods approach can be used to understand how people make a living, based on their assets, in the context of certain trends and/or shocks. The approach was developed in the 1990s as a reaction to previous poverty research with the aim being to alter the way poor people were seen: As people imbued with agency rather than ‘victims of structural constraints’. The strength of the livelihoods approach is that it has highlighted the dynamics and multidimensionality of poverty. The usefulness of the livelihoods approach for this research lies in the fact that it shows how all assets and capabilities, and the relationships between them, are potentially important. This is particularly necessary in fisheries research that has for a large part been performed under the so-called paradigms halieutique. This refers to a primary focus on access to the natural resource and related assets (such as the fishing gear) whilst disregarding other assets such as family labour, physical strength, skills, political influence, identity and infrastructure (to name a few) (see Chapter 3).

The livelihoods debate has incorporated ideas from other scientific traditions. The entitlements approach contributed to the argument by showing how a livelihood is not only a matter of ‘having’ enough assets but rather, that being able to build up a sustainable livelihood is a matter of having access to assets and, even more so, that having
access to certain resources (for instance having a net) is not necessarily enough. Due to the lack of access to other assets (for instance finding enough workers) people still might not be able to actually use them. Moreover, assets should not only be seen as resources people use to make a living since they also give meaning to a person’s world and give people the power to act. The latter two arguments underscore the fact that access to assets, mediated by institutions, social relations and organisations, is a political (and therefore not neutral) process. Entitlements (or successful access to resources) are the outcome of negotiations among social actors in which power is involved and in which, in a situation of legal pluralism, it can be unclear which institutions prevail. I have therefore chosen to make the concept of negotiation central to this study and to connect the livelihoods approach to the governance debate. I thereby hope to do counteract one of the weaknesses of the livelihoods approach, namely that structural influences do not receive enough attention or are downplayed.

The livelihoods approach has also been criticised for its material bias, whereby researchers focused on livelihood outcomes (often implicitly understood as income). By contrast, this study shows that, in reality, a livelihood is more than just any activity by which people earn their living. Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen are fishermen by choice. Fishing is their profession in which they have specialised as the generations before them. Being a fisherman is part of one’s identity, as expressed in the songs sung during fishing, the decoration of the canoes, the identification via common clothing with the company when returning from a successful migration fishing season but also by the fact that many fishermen speak of their profession in a positive way.

Finally, livelihood studies have focused too much on the individual and household levels and have failed to understand enough of the political aspects related to livelihood creation. Having an excessive local focus has resulted in insufficient attention to interactions with powerful others (such as the state) and collective action. This study links a livelihoods approach with a governance approach by using the concept of negotiation. The Anlo-Ewe fishermen have organised themselves collectively by forming companies and we have seen how the institution of chief fisherman plays an important role in their negotiations, given that the chief fishermen acts as broker between governance structures and fishermen (Chapter 7).

Livelihood space

By introducing the concept of livelihood space this research has combined an anthropological and social geographical approach and has connected a spatial element to that of identity. This is an important contribution to livelihood studies as the spatial dimension of livelihoods is often overlooked. The concept of *livelihood space* reinforces the need to look beyond livelihood activities and outcomes and to take a certain place-boundedness in account. A livelihood is embedded in specific geographical places, and in economical and social/cultural space. It is the livelihood space that fishermen negotiate, at home and on migration. The concept of *livelihood space* connects the different places where fishermen live and work and the places between which the fishermen have set up linkages leading to flows of people, goods and ideas. Livelihood space refers to three elements:

1. A spatial element:
   - space to work:
     - to fish (the sea)
     - to sell the catch (the market)
- space to live safely
- space where one can make use of facilities and services

2. An economic / sectoral element: Space within the fishing sector, by creating a certain niche;

3. A social / cultural element: A space where one is accepted, where one finds or has one’s place in society, positioning oneself within social relations.

Place boundedness should not be understood as a limitation to migration between places. Instead it highlights the fact that each place, with its cultural, social, economic and spatial characteristics, produces its unique pattern of re-alignment between actors, processes and consequences. The concept livelihood space thereby addresses the need to pay more attention to livelihood networks along which remittances, information, ideas, goods and people flow as well as show how people operating in those networks are located in places. The concept of livelihood space is also useful when understanding the migration of the Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen (see the next section) as their livelihood space may bypass national and ethnic boundaries. What I argue is that they have thereby created a livelihood space within which they are able to maintain their livelihood activity thereby being able to maintain their identity as a whole. The concept of livelihood space is related to the concept of transnational social space, however – as I will elaborate on in the next section on migration – it differs in two important ways. Livelihood space does not refer to the nation, it is not necessarily transnational, and it emphasises the link with the livelihood activity (in my case fishing) which is useful for this kind of ‘professional migrants’.

In discussing the boundedness of places within the Anlo-Ewe livelihood space we took time to discuss the Anlo-Ewe homeland in historical and social perspective. We saw how the Anlo-Ewe developed a maritime tradition as a previously non-maritime people and became known and respected as sea fishermen. We saw how their story of origin is a story of migration and how it has been used both as a way to link the Anlo-Ewe to other Ewe groups (by the European missionaries at first and later by the Ewe nationalist organisations) but more recently rather as a way to set themselves apart from the other Ewe. From other research we learnt that the details of the arrival of the leader of the migration in what later became the traditional capital Anloga in the story is expressed by nlo (which means coiling up) and that this is central to what it means to be Anlo-Ewe. This process of (re-)creation of a common history and shifting group boundaries is what has been referred to as an ‘imagined community’.

The organisation of Anlo society through clans and lineages is related to their political organisation, land ownership, settlement organisation, to the environment and to their so-called ‘traditional religion’. Although nowadays the majority of the Anlo-Ewe are Christian, 40 percent are adherents of the traditional religion and many of the Christians still adhere to elements of their traditional cosmoc views. The traditional religion should not be seen narrowly as a belief system. This is important partly because in Anlo society religion is not separated from culture, nature, politics and social relations. The Anlo-Ewe perceive their livelihood space as an ecological, social and cosmological whole. Environmental imbalance signals social and cosmological imbalance and otherwise. This understanding has not changed when Anlo Ewe converted to Christianity.

The clan system underscores their common history, defines the relation to the land and waters and shows how legal and ritual powers came together in their (traditional) leaders. The system still plays a role in Anlo as a system on which the traditional
governance structure is built, but its importance and impact is changing. Under influence of Christianity, formal education, the money economy and the establishment of formal courts the Anlo traditional authority eroded and this has changed Anlo society in a number of different ways. These days people are associated in ways other than only clan membership, for example via friendships, the church and professional associations. Moreover, the nuclear family is slowly gaining importance over the extended family. All these changes might affect the traditional governance structure eventually.

In terms of their place in the economical space we saw that the Anlo managed to create a niche for themselves as the beach seine fishermen in the Ghanaian fishing sector. Creating that niche was not self evident since their way of fishing was opposed by the other fishermen when the Ewe started to migrate and use the yevudor (which means white man’s net) outside their home area. The yevudor was said to be a destructive fishing gear (catching too small fish) and the other gear users feared that the yevudor would be detrimental to their livelihoods (see Chapter 3). The fierce resistance to the yevudor by other gear users has been explained by the idea that persisted under the protesters that it undermined existing relations of production, with fishermen becoming wage earners and the sector being opened up to technically less-skilled fishermen. The fact that the beach seine was an expensive net led to the creation of fishing companies of workers (wage earners) working for the owner of the net (the sole investor). The yevudor owners became a new class of accumulators and they acquired a reputation for their wealth in Anlo. Although the net is still controversial today from a biological perspective, the Anlo-Ewe have successfully negotiated space for their activity. The net mesh sizes are often smaller than the law allows. The reason fishermen do not easily comply with state law is that they target anchovy and they claim to lose too much of their catch when they use larger mesh sizes. Although too many small fish are caught, at least beach seine fishermen do not discard any fish, so all fish caught – no matter how small – is used.

In order to account for the migration of the Anlo-Ewe fishermen, this research was carried out in three fisher communities along the Ghanaian coast where Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen are active. The first is Woe (8,545 inhabitants), in the Anlo home area, and the second and third are respectively Akosua Village (630 inhabitants) and Half Assini (11,000 inhabitants). All three communities are situated in a water-rich environment of ocean and lagoons, with Keta lagoon near Woe and Muni lagoon next to Akosua Village being RAMSAR sites and hence near areas with international protection. The fishermen in Woe live alongside their fellow Anlo-Ewe (fishermen and farmers alike). Akosua Village is an all-Anlo-Ewe fishermen village (except for about ten to twenty Effutu), yet it is in the vicinity of Winneba which is quite a large Effutu coastal town. Half Assini is a Nzema town, with the fisher migrants neighbourhoods along the coast in the town of Half Assini, Fanti in the East and Anlo-Ewe in the West. The fishermen live in fishing communities with limited facilities. However those in Akosua Village and Half Assini have access to more facilities than the fishermen in Woe as both are, or are nearby, district headquarters.

- Assets
In this research, assets have been defined as stocks of capital that can be utilised directly, or indirectly, to generate the means of survival of the household or to sustain its material well-being at differing levels above survival. We have distinguished five asset types: natural, physical, financial, human and social. We have not included cul-
cultural or political capital because cultural practices are inherently social and are therefore included in social capabilities and are related to structure and culture and consequently part of the context. Including political capital suggests that one does not always need to deal with power whereas access is inherently political, hence the decision in this research to focus on negotiating. Creating a livelihood is a process and is not something one has or does not have.

Comparing the three research populations (see Chapter 3) confirms general hypotheses about migration. First, the young and able men and women migrate and the elderly return home. This results in a higher percentage of elderly at home (Woe) although school-age children are often sent home as well (giving a higher percentage for the eleven to twenty age group). Households on migration are more mixed (including more non-kin and extended family members) than households at home. This confirms the fact that migrants make use of networks, migrating to places where they already know people. Thirdly, the people who have migrated are fisher migrants, they are active as fishermen (more than ninety percent). For Half Assini the percentage of fish processors (89 percent) is also higher than in Woe (84 percent). Akosua Village has a remarkably low percentage, which can be explained by the fact that fishing is practised less seriously (also reflected in ‘only’ 82 percent of the working population being active in fishing). The Akosua Village women are at the same time more actively involved in other trades. Akosua Village also had the lowest number of ovens for processing purposes (33 percent of the households compared to eighty percent in Half Assini). In Half Assini 93 percent of the working population is active in fishing; this is lower in Woe (85 percent). However, Woe has a much higher percentage of non fishermen, such as farmers (nineteen percent). The reason that we found hardly any farmers in Akosua Village and Half Assini is that migrants often have no access to land.

In terms of access to facilities such as electricity and water we concluded that the more rural the communities are, the better the access to water (see Woe) and the more urban they are the better the access to electricity (see Half Assini). On the other hand, arranging your own facilities is more difficult when on migration than ‘at home’.

The figures on fishing gear (Chapter 4) showed that twenty percent of the households (of the total research population) owned a yeveudor, of which between 56 and seventy percent were used at the moment of the research. The reason why there are not many owned nets and even less in actual use, is that the nets and its exploitation, are expensive. Woe had the highest percentage of dormant nets. This can be explained by the fact that it is a hometown where families keep the family nets that are not in use. In Woe all net owners who used their net also owned a canoe. In Akosua Village this was 81 percent, in Half Assini 33 percent. Canoes are made from the Wawa tree that can be found in Ghana’s tropical forest. However, the trees are becoming scarce due to extensive deforestation and they are therefore becoming ever more expensive. The motorisation of the Ghanaian canoe sector started in the 1950s, yet the beach seine canoes are the least motorised compared to the other fishing gear types. An outboard motor costs at least 25 million cedis (2,000 euros), and although this is subsidised by the Ghanaian government (see Chapter 7), net owners complain about not being able to pay the amount at once. Akosua Village had the highest percentage of motorised canoes (59 percent) compared to 53 percent in Woe. In Half Assini none of the canoes of our research population were motorised.

A yeveudor owner needs an initial capital of about 20,000 euros for a large net, a canoe and outboard motor. This is a considerable amount in Ghana. This explains why
new net owners often do not start out in this way, but slowly work on building a net, piece by piece. At a certain point they can start using their net in a lagoon or in the surf to start recouping some of their investment. Soon they need more people to perform the fishing activities. Finding enough loyal and skilled people is not an easy job and the same holds true for crew members. The more ‘hands’ a net owner has the better because the sooner the net comes in, the fewer the fish that can escape. Getting people to work for and with you requires social capabilities and financial assets. Net owners often have crew members working for them who are related to them. Once they have really started, they have to continue investing in people, their net, in fuel and in buying a new motor every couple of years. Beach seine fishing is a costly enterprise. One needs financial, social and human assets before one can start. At the same time a net owner also needs to gain access to fishing grounds and to the market.

For workers (without their own fishing equipment), finding a trustworthy net owner is also important. The assets needed to become a crewmember depend on the role one wants to play, yet most of the special skills can be learnt on the job except that of clerk.

- Beach seine fishing

Beach seines, operated from the shore, can differ in size (between 150-1,800 metres in length and between six and 22 metres deep). Generally speaking the nets in Woe and Half Assini were larger than in Akosua Village. A beach seine net needs a lot of maintenance and these nets are continuously being repaired, in fact after every day’s fishing. Beach seine fishing is done by crews of between twenty to ninety people (the company). Going out to sea with the canoe and casting the net is a truly skillful job whereas pulling in the net, which on average takes between three to seven hours, mainly requires strength. The last part of the pulling, when the net is almost ashore again is more crucial and entails skilled crew members making the right decisions and doing the right thing in the water and on land (Chapter 4). Another crucial aspect of the fishing is the fact that there are other nets around. A net’s movement can be hindered by another company’s net. This is a frequent problem and results in conflicts between companies (Chapter 7). Often more people than only the crew (including for instance students, elderly, mentally challenged) assist in the pulling, and these helpers are always given some fish. That is an important social side to beach seine fisheries. When the net has almost been landed, more skilful work needs to be done such as diving, carrying the net in the water and deciding when the net should close and how fast it should be pulled. The community function and the fact that women and children show up and help, the singing whilst setting the net and pulling all shows how deeply embedded beach seine fishing is in village life.

Beach seine fishing is business and seldom done for subsistence only or because of a lack of alternatives. Net owners do intensive bookkeeping (recording catches, loans, sales, fines and expenses). Those working with a contract system need to maintain these records because the money is shared at the end of the contract period. In all three villages we were able to analyse some of these records and found that catches were indeed seasonal and the prices fishermen get for their catches vary depending on the season and on the catches of other companies. It also showed how the catches are shared between net owner and crew (Chapter 4).

We looked into the books of three companies. Two of them work with a contract (Woe and Half Assini) and one on the basis of daily sharing (Akosua Village). In all cases expenses are deducted first including the part for the crew members with special
roles who earn extra. The remainder is shared between net owner and crew. This is shared either in three parts or in five parts. The difference between them is that when the catch is shared in five parts, the crews get a relatively larger part (two-fifths is more than one-third). From all sharing systems it can be deduced that the net owners receive a fairly large amount, often with a separate part earmarked for investments in the canoe and net, and always with the cost of the expedition already deducted.

Due to declining catches, fishing on the basis of a contract is becoming less common in Ghana. As far as crews are concerned, the daily sharing of the catch increases their short-term control over their income but they are at the same time less able to make savings and they lose their long-term certainties. Crew members of the two companies fishing under contract, whose books we were able to examine (differing in time between nine months – Woe – and seven months of a one year contract – Half Assini) were able to earn between 700,000 and 1,800,000 cedis in a season. Between these two figures lie a range of possible ‘salaries’, depending on the role of the crew member. Next to that they have been paid in kind (with fish and food) during the fishing days and have received advance payments and loans both of which are then subtracted from the final amount at the end of the fishing contract period (Chapter 4). It is more difficult to determine what a net owner exactly earns, as his costs are not all clear. It has become evident from the examples that the net owner owns considerably more than his crew members as each catch is divided in half after accounting for the direct costs, between him and crew. For net owners, contracts have the advantage of enhancing the reliability of labour. For a net owner it is crucial to have enough men (fitting the size of the net) since fishing with less men than needed means less catch. Crew members with special skills can enhance their earnings. Income from fishing is important for Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen as they are quite specialised and do not have many other income-generating activities. Declining catches can impact strongly on the income of the fishermen (depending on how market prices react), whereby the crew members, due to the catches dividing system, are more affected than the net owners. Net owners have the possibility of placing a large part of the risk on the crew. This is also reflected in the job satisfaction of crew members, which is much lower than that of the net owners. Access to credit (for net owners and thus also for crew) is not easy and if that becomes worse, it will also impact on the organisation of beach seine fishing. If all these developments will continue beach seine fishing might slowly become less business and more subsistence fishing (as is going on now in Akosua Village).

It must be understood that many fisher households derive income from both men (fishing) and women (processing and trading fish), and have in fact diversified their income base. Ten to twenty percent of fishing households have diversified their incomes with other jobs. Access to other income-generating activities is limited due to the generally low level of education and the lack of access to land whilst on migration. From the crew and net owner questionnaire we learnt that all net owners on migration (except one) were only involved in fishing, whereas half of the net owners in the home setting (Woe) were also involved in farming. As regards the crew we saw that fourteen percent of the Woe crew were involved in farming compared to four and five percent in Half Assini and Akosua Village respectively. However, the fisher crews on migration (Half Assini fourteen percent, Akosua Village seventeen percent) appeared to be more involved in other occupations, such as in trade or construction work than the crews in Woe (two percent). This might be explained by the fact that both migrant locations were urban or nearby an urban centre, enlarging other job-opportunities. Only eleven percent
of the fishermen responded that members of their households earned incomes from non-fishery related activities. Overall, fishermen are mainly active as specialised fishermen. In general, fishing households do have highly nutritional diets due to the access to fish every day. Fishermen are generally not the poorest of the poor. It should also be kept in mind that income is not only what crew members get in return for their labour or what net owners receive as direct income from their fish business, or what both groups get out of other income-generating activities. Other sources of income are returns from savings or from lending money or equipment to others. The latter is a strategy of female traders in Ghana. By lending money or equipment to companies, the women are able to claim a certain part of the fish. Moreover, income can also consist of ‘gifts’ (remittances received from family or friends on migration), pensions, social security payments, ‘begging’ or ‘presents’. Although I have not studied these sources of income in detail, I did meet fishermen who benefited from these alternative sources of income. It is, however, important to realise that fishermen and women on migration hardly ever send remittances. Migration is often partly a strategy to escape from these requests. An interview with women in Woe did show how migration of fishermen was good for the economy of the town in the sense that there were less resources to share with others. Finally it is normal to comply with the request of someone asking for fish when the fish are landed.

- **Vulnerability**
  People’s livelihoods are affected by external trends and shocks and as such vulnerability is an element of the livelihoods framework. As a reaction to trends such as population growth, the seasonality of fish catches and also negative trends and shocks like coastal erosion, the Anlo-Ewe fishermen have developed strategies to deal with these, including migration. We saw, however, that the fact that the Anlo-Ewe fishermen have specialised in one technique makes them additionally vulnerable to adverse trends and shocks. The case of algal bloom in the coastal waters of Half Assini revealed this vulnerability. The algae meant that their way of fishing was not possible in the affected areas, impacting negatively on their access to the fish, and thus on their livelihood. The fact that they are specialised migrant fishermen is a combination that limits their alternatives to deal with the problem. These fishermen have fewer alternative job opportunities due to a lack of skills, funds and access to land and to having another mindset. Farming, for instance, means a longer process time than fishing and does not have an immediate result.

  Although the Anlo-Ewe fishermen were most directly affected by the phenomenon, they did not seem to appear to be affected. This is because of their limited political capital as migrants. The algae bloom is a cross-border event affecting multiple stakeholders and with a plethora of natural and anthropogenic causes. It is widely (locally and at the national policy level) perceived to be a health threat with socio-economic consequences for the coastal communities affected. Yet the fact that it is a trans-border problem coming from Ivory Coast makes it really difficult to address for Ghanaian governors.

  This study has shown how Anlo-Ewe fishermen overall are vulnerable to declining catches. The lagoon case (Chapter 8) shows how worsening ecological conditions combined with a collapse of institutions put pressure on the livelihood space. This is worsened by the increasingly hostile social environment. When comparing Akosua Village with Half Assini we see that in Half Assini the institutions of the Anlo-Ewe fishermen are still in place and the leadership is still effective. In addition, the type of environment is determined by a different alignment of actors, less hostile than in Akosua Village. Future developments may be linked to the characteristics of these
places. As Half Assini lies in Nzema area, where there are hardly any local fishers, we can expect a longer remaining niche for migrant fishermen. In the Central Region, where there is a very active local fishing population, we can expect that increased ecological pressure will impact on the niche for migrant fishermen. This shows how different collective vulnerabilities are the outcome of political and ecological conditions of their livelihood space.

- Alternative livelihood programmes
  Alternative livelihood programmes have been suggested as a way of reducing the fishing effort in an attempt to reduce the pressure on fish stocks and slowly reverse the trend of declining catches. However, research has proved that alternative livelihood programmes often are based on false assumptions. These factors should be included in discussions about alternative livelihood programmes. Chapter 4 showed that these projects have rarely been a success either internationally or in Ghana. The whole idea of alternative livelihood strategies seems to come from the way the livelihoods approach is used. Combined with the idea that livelihood ‘outcomes’ should be solely understood as income, the idea of alternative livelihood activities as a solution to loss of income is easily adopted. As we already saw from the discussion on how fishing takes place, fishing is more than just an income-generating activity. Fishing is a way of life, part of the people’s culture and identity. It also has functions and value for the community as a whole, as an easy source of work because it offers disadvantaged groups in society the possibility of becoming involved and earning some fish and because of the regular community fishing days.

  It would be much more instructive to think in terms of developing supplementary income options in the fishing villages, since this would also tackle the problem of seasonality of catches. However, such thinking requires a governance perspective that is elevated above the current mono-sectoral approach which focuses on day-to-day management. This research shows how the identification of fishing as a profession is very important when considering alternative livelihoods.

  Combined with the answers on job satisfaction we might conclude that fishermen value education highly and that improving the educational level of their children might have a positive impact on their children’s alternatives.

  The impact of declining catches is most likely to be an important factor when explaining the dissatisfaction amongst crew as they also bear most of the effects as the cost for fishing (the net owner’s responsibility) is always deducted first. It is important to understand that the dissatisfaction of the crew in an historical perspective as many accounts I listened to during my research were coloured by reflections on how good fishing was in the past, and the difficulties the fishermen (net owners and crew alike) now face.

Migration
Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen have been able to expand their livelihood space by migrating within Ghana and abroad. The research question discussed in Chapter 5 was ‘How can we understand the migration of Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen?’ Previous research has clarified the direction of the movement by distinguishing between push and pull factors. It has been recognised that fishermen left their homes due to coastal erosion, population pressure or overfishing as well as being positively triggered to move to new places. Explanations for this include marine biological ones such as the mobility
of fish species and upwelling or have a socio-economic basis, for example that the stronger FCFA could be earned in neighbouring countries (in a context of economic hardship in Ghana) and that it was possible to save money away from family. Other explanatory factors have been that migration is seen as an adventure whereby the experience adds to one’s social status.

By reviewing the literature I have distinguished between push and pull factors in the early period of fisher migrations and other factors that explain the continuation of migration later. The availability of existing migration networks has been one of these factors which explains early fisher migration and this has underscored the finding that mobility is not a recent nor an exceptional phenomenon and that it should be understood in conjunction with wider social economic and political developments.

In this thesis I have argued that previous research explaining migration of fishermen has failed to account for the composition and type of movement and has therefore failed to generate an understanding of this dynamic and complex reality. This research has moved beyond the unidirectional push and pull factors by using a translocal approach which emphasises the continuous flow of people, goods, money and ideas between the different places within the livelihood space of the fishermen.

Migration is understood to be a livelihood strategy linked to the fishing activity. The concept of livelihood space is particularly useful as it is able to include translocal mobility, connecting the different places Anlo-Ewe fishermen live and work in and it helps us understand the migration dynamics. Livelihood space refers to three elements of space: 1) space to work (fish and market the fish), live safely and make use of facilities and services, 2) space within the fishing sector (niche creation) and 3) space where one is accepted – where one has a place in society. Understanding fisher migration on the basis of the logic of the activity, including fisher spatial logic, rather than on the basis of the logic of the state helps us to come to a better understanding of fisher migration. As I have argued, state logic (including its boundaries) continues to play an important role in much migration research. The preference of the state for sedentary citizens and the importance of state boundaries for policy (including fisheries policy!) has coloured research questions whereas this research (together with other research) has shown how mobility (especially in the African context) is part of fishermen’s life and of making a livelihood.

The transnational approach has improved migration research and has downplayed the role of the state, including in identity creation (and maintenance), as group boundaries can transcend the local. Previous fisher migration research explained how fishermen manage to find and maintain the first (space to work and live) and third (space where one is accepted) element of livelihood space. This research has particularly shown how the second element of livelihood space – niche creation and maintenance – contributes to an understanding of fisher migration. The ethnic-technological divide in the Ghanaian fishing sector corresponds to a spatial divide at sea which allows for internal migration. As the different ethnic groups have specialised in different techniques and thereby use different spaces, they create room for other ethnic groups to come and fish in their territory. The niche differences also explain the differences in type and duration of their migrations.

As we have seen, Ghanaian fisher migrants, both within Ghana and abroad, have in general been welcomed at their migration destinations as their migrant fishermen added considerably to local and national economies. On some occasions, however, there have also been hostilities affecting or directed at Ghanaian fishermen. These negative con-
frontations underscore the insecurity of a migrant’s position. Niche creation and main- 
tenance is a continuous activity whereby migrant fishermen negotiate for livelihood 
space. The observed decline of catches increases the pressure on these negotiations. We 
can therefore conclude that livelihood space is not automatic but is negotiated conti- 
nuously.

Multiple governance structures and fisheries governance

Chapter 6 answered the research question: ‘What are the relevant multiple governance 
structures in Ghana for Anlo-Ewe fishermen?’ We emphasised that the Ghanaian 
government has a dual structure and as such also consists of governing bodies stemming 
from the pre-colonial indigenous states (Chapter 6). The various steering and policy 
oriented organisations important in coastal villages and related to fisheries, linked to 
both governing structures were set out and described from the sub-village level to the 
national level.

We began with the organisations of the Government of Ghana, first the steering orga-
nisations as the Regional Coordinating Councils at the regional level and the District 
Assembly at district level. Subsequently we described the executive organisations at all 
levels under the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, the Wildlife Department as well 
as the Ministries of Justice and Interior under which the police and courts function. We 
then discussed the structure under the traditional governance structure with paramount, 
village and lesser chiefs and explained the chieftaincy institution. Finally the chief 
fisherman was described as relevant in the executive organisation of the traditional 
governance structure. The chief fisherman is the most important traditional executive 
institution in relation to fisheries in coastal villages, the most important liaison between 
fishermen and women processors, and between fisherfolk and the government and 
therefore potentially plays a key role in the negotiation interface. The chief fisherman 
institution was initially an age-old and traditional institution, spread by the Fante and 
Effutu via migration to other coastal fishing communities. In the 1980s the chief 
fisherman institution was also actively stimulated by the Ghanaian government and this 
added a hybrid element to the institution.

This is done to understand the interface at which Anlo-Ewe fishermen negotiate 
livelihood space. It has shown how both governance structures are ordered in their own 
right and how they are linked and interdependent and this has also led to the develop-
ment of hybrid organisations. The Community Based Fisheries Management Commit-
tees are a good example of such a hybrid organisation. However, they have not always 
functioned successfully due to all sorts of problems such as the position of the chief 
fisherman, local power struggles and a lack of legal backing (related to the difficulty of 
getting byelaws gazetted).

The governance perspective is applied to fishing in this thesis, and used in contrast to 
the more limited management perspective. It is more inclusive, broader and longer term 
than the management approach and is more capable of addressing the diversity, com-
plexity and dynamics in the fishing sector that has been confronted with a global 
fisheries crisis.

Governance is a key concept in many academic debates resulting in a variety of 
definitions in many disciplines such as international development studies, political geo-
graphy and legal anthropology. The definitions differ in their view on the state, civil 
society, power and the role of policymakers, yet all share a focus on the interaction 
between state, civil society and the market. Governance perspectives recognise that
governing is a matter of public and private actors and a matter of societal concern. The popularity of the concept, sparked by the World Bank’s introduction of the concept good governance in the 1990s, has been explained by the same lack of clarity as regards its usefulness as a way of dealing with difficult power issues. In this thesis I use the governance perspective by defining governance as ‘the whole of public as well as private interactions taken to solve societal problems and create societal opportunities. This includes the formulation and application of principles guiding those interactions and care for institutions that enable them’ (Kooiman & Bavinck 2005).

Governance is, in fact, about: Who sets what rules, when, how, why and based on what knowledge? Discussions about the management of natural resources have long been dominated by discussions on ownership based on property rights. This debate was influenced by the Tragedy of the Commons debate in which only state property or private property was seen as a way out of counteracting the depletion of open access resources. The debate has been complicated for a number of reasons but particularly in the African context where ownership has crucially had a meaning which is different to that in Western society (where the debates were dominantly held). The colonial history of Africa has resulted in a confusing array of mechanisms and rationales. The legal pluralism debate is therefore necessary in the governance debate on natural resources in Africa as it recognises that more actors are involved in governing and these actors relate to plural normative orders. Combined with the fact that many people have multiple identities, this results in a situation of institutional bricolage. Institutional crafting, creating institutions in a top-down way to improve natural resource management, is doomed to fail if these institutions are not embedded in local dynamics with plural normative orders. They also fail if they ignore heterogeneous local needs as has, for example, been recognised in the case of the CBFMCs. It has also been accepted that power plays a role given that management and governance are about rule making and enforcement. Actors in governance of natural resources differ from each other, for example as regards their level of power. The case of not getting the byelaws of Keta district gazetted (Chapter 6) is an example of how local power holders successfully manage to slow down and potentially block the decision to change fisheries rules.

The institutions of fisheries management
The research question dealt with in Chapter 7 is: How is Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishing managed at local level, both by the fishermen themselves within the traditional governing structure and by the Ghanaian government? is based on the assumption that fishermen will try to manage their fishing well if they depend on it for their livelihood. As fishing is a risky business with many uncertainties but which also offers many opportunities, it is obvious that fishermen try to organise their business collectively in such a way that risks are reduced and opportunities can be pursued. Ghanaian beach seine fisheries are indeed managed quite extensively. Fishermen have regulated the access to the fishing grounds, the interaction (including conflicts) between the fishermen both within fishing companies and between different groups (and gears), and the extraction of fish and access to the market. The regulations fishermen and governors make are based on their world view and knowledge and are the result of the wish to solve or prevent certain problems. Making rules is one thing, making sure that the rules are complied with is another. Only with compliance and/or control can management be effective. As compliance is the preferred situation, management is much more about managing people than it is about managing fish (stocks). However, fisheries management
literature has often focused mainly on either managing fish stocks (which elsewhere has been called the paradigm halieutique) or on understanding the market. This focus is based on the assumption that the human activity is the main cause of resource decline, a vision which has been questioned in the New Ecology thinking. Moreover, the state has often been ascribed a central role which has obscured the fact that fishermen themselves are largely active in managing activities.

I have defined management as: All kinds of activities people purposely undertake on a collective level to regulate fisheries (by making rules or developing norms based on existing – or new – values). We discovered in Chapter 7 that Anlo-Ewe fishermen have regulated access to the fishing grounds. All fishermen need to ask permission to fish from the chief fisherman in a village. They have regulated access to credit, women play herein an important role as official organisations such as banks have lost trust in lending money to fishermen. The government of Ghana provides the fishermen with access to fishing inputs, such as outboard motors and premix fuel. The fishermen have regulated their internal social interaction by setting up rules and regulations, some of which are laid down in a company contract. Conflicts between fishermen are almost always solved by the chief fishermen, or at his council of elders. Only in case of assault or damage do the police need to become involved. However, even then most cases are referred back to the chief fisherman. The government of Ghana is almost only involved in cases of conflict when it is between artisanal fishermen and (semi-)industrial boats.

Such arbitration procedures are rarely held, however, and the artisanal fishermen seldom gain anything out of them. Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen have their own ideas and belief in the sea they fish in. Many relate to the idea of sea gods and the balancing of nature, religion and the social order. In order to ensure a good catch, society, nature and cosmology have to be in balance and rituals need to be held. Any difficulties will be reflected in the catches. Although many fishermen believe in the importance of this balance and consider the rituals to be important, many also refer to different causes of declining catches, such as too many people fishing or the industrial sector causing harm to the stocks. The Ghanaian government is active in this area of fisheries management based on biological scientific knowledge and they aim to prevent overexploitation and have developed regulations about the gear, catch quotas, seasonal bans and zonation. The last moment in the fishing activity that is regulated is access to the market. The market is largely run by the women and any conflicts between the traders and the fishermen are also solved by the chief fisherman.

When analysing the collective institutions that fishermen have developed in their fisheries management it is important to keep in mind that ‘the fishermen’ consist of different groups (different leaders, net owners and crew, fishermen and women processors), with different expectations and levels of power. The rules set by the fishermen are embedded in social practices and religious worldviews and are all in all mainly directed to maintain peace and order at the beaches. This is done by solving and preventing conflicts in the highly mobile, heterogeneous social environment amongst themselves and vis-à-vis the gods. The chief fisherman herein plays a key role.

The government of Ghana’s regulating activities with regard to the artisanal sector is oriented much more around modernising the sector and conserving fish stocks. However, the artisanal sector is for a large part a self-regulated system in which the government of Ghana does not play a major role.

It has also been recognised that the fishermen are primarily concerned with managing their livelihoods. This is becoming more difficult as catches are declining. The topic
of declining catches can be one on which government and fishermen may share views. Although views on the decline may differ as regards the causes, both the government and fishermen are concerned by the occurrence. It is, however, important that the government learns from its own experiences with the fairly unsuccessful realisation of CBFMC by realising how important it is to connect to the worldview and knowledge of fishermen and connect to their interest in social and economic outcomes of regulations.

As the migration of fishermen is so much part of artisanal fisheries in Ghana, and as artisanal fisheries are mainly regulated internally it can be expected that migration has influenced fisheries management. Migration has led to a spread of knowledge and this is maintained as the places are connected in the Anlo-Ewe livelihood space with continuous flows of people and their ideas. This has resulted in the same institutions in the research locations. Half Assini was a bit of an exception as the Nzema local population was not actively involved in fishing and therefore did not have its own chief fisherman. Despite the fact that migrants are incorporated in their host-communities, the relationship between migrants and hosts remain fragile and behavioural rules of fishermen are therefore more important whilst on migration. Government officials do not involve themselves with migration as it does not pose any problems. Officials also told me instead that international migration (which we saw in Chapter 5 is also quite widespread) relieves fishing pressure in Ghanaian waters.

Negotiating livelihood space

Now that we have discussed all the elements of the central research question, in which we have an understanding of how Anlo-Ewe fishermen have organised their livelihood, go fishing, process and sell their fish, manage their activities and live their lives together with their families in their communities at home or elsewhere as part of the larger livelihood space that is structured and governed in a certain way, we can answer the main research question of this study: How do Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen negotiate livelihood space, within multiple governance systems, both at home and in migrant settings in Ghana?

Negotiation occurs in the interface between the leaders of the fishermen and representatives of the various governance structures. How the negotiation of livelihood space takes place has been illustrated in more detail using two cases. One case was situated in Akosua Village, a migrant settlement nearby Winneba, and involved the villagers of Akosua Village and the Chief of Winneba. The setting for the other was Keta district, in the home area of the Anlo Ewe, and involved the Anlo-Ewe inhabitants and the colonial and post-colonial governors and politicians. The cases have illustrated how negotiation can take different forms and can take place at different levels, the very local (Akosua Village) to the national (Keta). Negotiation can be direct, institutionalised, but can also take the form of indirect manoeuvring or even take the form of an apparent lack of negotiation. The Keta case has been an example of direct negotiations but also indirect manoeuvring, whereas the Akosua Village case was more characterised by an apparent lack of negotiation. The Keta case also shows how long negotiations can continue since it has taken over a hundred years for a solution was found. The other case was more recent, and is in fact an example of failed negotiation leading to direct confrontations such as the ‘shooting incident’ which was the core of the lagoon case in Chapter 8. The issue of time is important in the sense that situations can change: that is why one should realise that negotiation is a process. The case studies were performed at a certain
moment in time, thereby influencing the analysis. If the case study in Keta would have been done in the 1990s, one might have concluded that the negotiation practices of the Anlo were ineffective. Now we can see it as a major success.

The cases also showed the linkage between effective negotiation and leadership. The lack of leadership in which de facto leaders do not take the lead in Akosua Village contributes strongly to the situation of failed negotiations. One might argue that the apparent lack of negotiation at the side of the Akosua villagers, which seems to be ignoring the incidents that take place, is the best possible strategy considering their situation.

One of the main conclusions of this research is that, although in all three locations the same governance structures are in place, (with an extra and differing layer when in a migration context), with grosso modo the same organisations / institutions in place, there are still considerable differences in the spaces for negotiation to be seen between the research locations. This has resulted in the idea that research should not only focus on structures and institutions but should also critically study the actions of relevant actors; which people are active in which roles?

From the literature we know that the position of migrant fishermen is vulnerable. External conflicts can have serious repercussions for them (Liberia, Sierra Leone) or they can be involved in crises that develop over time (Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Congo and Ghana). However, it would be too simplistic to conclude from these studies that migrant fishermen are necessarily more vulnerable in the migration settings than at home. Studies have shown that migrant fishermen in West Africa take their own institutions along on their migrations. Yet that does not automatically mean that these institutions are resilient and the migrants always effective in their negotiations. One of the conclusions of this research is that there are differences in how the fishermen deal with situations in the different settings. It is not only important to look at the institutions that fishermen have developed, and at how they have organised themselves vis-à-vis their hosts and the government, but also to understand how power plays a role and to assess the leaders in place. As a consequence, resilience not only depends on having the right institutions in place (structure) but also on having the right leaders (actors). Effective leadership at such times is crucial. From the literature we know that in Ivory Coast and Congo the consequences of external threat to which migrants had to respond were limited because the right institutions and the right leaders were in place (Odotei 2002b, Jul-Larsen 1994). Sometimes the crisis is too big for the leaders as was the case in the little Anlo-Ewe settlement Abakam near Cape Coast, where they were unable to make a difference (Wyllie 1969b). Akosua Village has the right local-level institutions in place, but the leaders are ineffective as they no longer have any legitimacy. That means that they play no role and that the villagers are left to their own devices.

The fishermen in both the Lagoon case and the Keta case are confronted by external threats to their livelihood. The way such threats are interpreted (what is the problem and what is the solution) depends on the actors’ mind frame. In the Keta case we see how different understandings of the problem lead to different strategies for solving it. The way people frame a problem or conflict is based on their knowledge, beliefs, norms and values. One should remember how people are able to relate to a multiplicity of value systems, can combine beliefs with bodies of knowledge, mix institutions and make eclectic use of different paths to solve a problem. We saw that in the case handled by the traditional arbitration in Half Assini when the net owner tried to solve his net-related problem in a number of different ways (going to the police, to the elders of the com-
munity and to a priest in his home area). We also saw that in the Keta case where Anlo-Ewe representatives aligned with traditional, colonial and post-colonial governments and tried to solve the conflict spiritually with the Yewe cult who tried to align with the other Ewe and convince the governors to solve it technically. All strategies have been used in changing configurations of Anlo-Ewe groups and some were more successful than others. The Anlo-Ewe in the Keta case were much more proactive than the Anlo-Ewe in Akosua Village. In the Keta case they most likely had an identical understanding of the problem, namely coastal erosion. In the case of Akosua Village the Anlo-Ewe did not agree on what the problem actually was. It may have been declining catches at sea which created the need to fish more in the lagoon, declining catches in the lagoon, possible confrontations with the Effutu about their illegal use of the lagoon, the non-performance of the rituals, lack of leadership ... and all these seem to be linked together without there being any apparent solutions given the lack of leadership and coherence in the village.

In both cases some actors framed their actions in terms of an environmental discourse. The Anlo-Ewe in Keta referred to the detrimental environmental effects of huge construction works such as Tema harbour and the Volta dam on erosion, fish populations and waterborne diseases. In the Akosua Village case the Chief of Winneba explained his actions against the Anlo-Ewe as being based on a concern for the fish stocks in the lagoon and general lagoon environment. In both cases one can be critical about this usage of environmental arguments. The construction of the Keta Sea Defence Project will have negative effects on coastal erosion just next to the site. Newspaper articles have already confirmed the fear that the project only transports the erosion problem to the east. In the case of the lagoon one might wonder why the environment of the lagoon needs so much surveillance and control while other environmental problems in Winneba are less seriously monitored and whether the proposed new use of the lagoon such as waterskiing and a five star hotel with its heavy water use will fit the ideal environmental picture outlined by the chief. The lagoon case has also shown how ineffective environmental policy is when people have few alternatives.

The observed trend that spiritual control of the sea is becoming less important for the Anlo-Ewe, combined with the decline of economic importance of the sea due to declining catches, makes us wonder what the future is of beach seine fishing and the way it is organised. The breakdown of the company institution as observed in Akosua Village, and the fact that the institution has also become less used in Woe, might be a first indication of institutional change of beach seine fisheries in Ghana due to declining catches. As artisanal fisheries are largely managed by the fishermen themselves, the question is which effects these and possible other institutional changes will have for the management of artisanal fisheries in Ghana. The increasing scarcity of fish will also increase the competition between fishermen and will –with possibly more conflicts- put more pressure on the institution of the chief fisherman. The mobility of the artisanal fishermen might also become less common in case of increased decline of catches as competition will become greater. The fact that conflicts between different artisanal gear users until so far have been an exception might change once fishermen feel they are fishing in the same limited resource pool.

In the light of declining catches it is important to bear in mind the fishermen’s supplementary income sources. The government has indicated the wish to restrict access to persons currently fishing as a first step to downscale the artisanal fishing sector. Until this time the question is what supplementary income sources fishermen can make use
of. Subsequently, in the event that access to the fishing grounds becomes restricted for artisanal fishermen, the question is which alternative income sources are available in Ghana’s coastal areas. Alternative job projects carried out so far in Ghana and elsewhere have generally been unsuccessful. In Ghana this is a matter of access to knowledge and finances, but more importantly of a different mind frame that the fishermen have compared to farmers and their strong fisherman identity. This research has shown however that many crew members of beach seines envision another future for their children, for which schooling is a prerequisite. Government should therefore invest in the schooling options (which goes further than the availability of free primary education) of fisher children as a way to tackle resource scarcity in the future.

The dynamic of the sector is both its strength and its weakness. It means that it is still a thriving sector but also difficult to govern by state organisations (for instance due to the extreme mobility). Fishermen on migration have weaker links with the government. The importance of local level traditional governance institutions in decentralised governance means migrants are rarely scrutinised. Migrant fishermen are less visible and this can have a positive effect as well as a negative effect on them, in terms of being visible for policy (for instance resulting in less access to inputs and to alternative livelihood programmes).

As we have seen how people’s mind frame explains their actions, it is crucial to connect to this mind frame in fisheries governance. From the lagoon case in Chapter 8 we can learn that addressing the overuse of the lagoon cannot become a success as long as the social problems in the village are left unattended. A lack of social cohesion and lack of effective leadership will most likely need to be solved first before another use of the lagoon can be established. The non-effectiveness of the CBFMC (Chapter 6) is another indication of the necessity of proper structures in society before the use of natural resources can improve. We have also seen that one can question institutional fixes such as the setting up of committees if underlying power struggles remain unattended. This research underlines the importance of input of the social sciences in fisheries governance as has been pleaded for by Jentoft (1998) and developed by Kooiman et al. (2005).

Challenges for governance

This study has demonstrated the importance of fisheries for Ghana both in terms of local food security and employment. The artisanal sector has been shown to be of prime importance, contributing a large proportion of total catches as well as being a source of local employment in Ghana.

The fact that the artisanal fishing sector is largely managed by fishermen themselves does question the priorities of Ghana’s government. How can it be that such an important sub-sector receives so little attention? This research has shown that fishermen are generally successful in managing their fisheries, regulating access to the sea and making sure that peace and order prevail on the beaches. These are major accomplishments. Yet, the problem of declining catches cannot be solved by the fishermen alone. The increasing scarcity of fish is also putting more pressure on the institutions fishermen have developed to manage their fisheries. The following is a selection of issues which deserve more attention from the Ghanaian Ministry of Fisheries.

1. The government of Ghana should reconsider its approach to the fisheries sector. Most fishermen these days have rarely heard of the Fisheries Department and
there seems to be little guidance at beach level. It is so important to be in the
villages and on the beaches and to work alongside the fishermen. Only by talk-
ing and listening to government workers can the fishermen learn more about the
reasons why, for instance, the Ministry wants to increase the mesh size. Fisher-
men’s ideas are based on their world view and if the government’s perspective is
not part it, it will be unable to affect their actions.

2. Declining catches and a growing fishing sector have clearly revealed the prob-
lems of overcapacity. Having noted the importance of the artisanal sector for
livelihoods, it is imperative to begin downsizing the (semi-)industrial sector.
Decommissioning (semi-)industrial vessels has a greater impact on fishing effort
and affects the least number of jobs. In addition, the government should recon-
sider partnerships with foreign parties, as long-term stock benefits are more
valuable than short-term financial benefits. However, above all, the government
should seek ways to invest in control units, as the national fishing grounds need
protection against unwanted intruders (illegal, unreported and unregulated fish-
ing).

3. Conflicts between artisanal gear and (semi-)industrial gear users need to be
acted upon by the government directly. The weaker party should be able to count
on the government at all times. Showing force here will improve the image of
the government among the coastal communities. The idea of having the govern-
ment pay fishermen to patrol fishing grounds might be introduced as a supple-
mentary income activity linked to their livelihood space.

4. The next step is to down-scale and limit access to the artisanal sub-sector. It is
important to realise that this cannot be done overnight and that it should be done
in collaboration with the fishermen themselves. Perhaps artisanal fishermen can
be bought out, or induced to reduce the fishing effort collectively. Refusing ac-
cess to the fishing grounds should go hand in hand with the active development
of supplementary livelihood opportunities.

5. Limiting fishing effort means that the artisanal fishermen who continue fishing
need protection against outsiders. As Ghana’s artisanal sector is organised along
ethnic (technical) lines, the government and local leaders should, however, be-
ware of fuelling inter-ethnic tensions. This can only be done in close cooperation
with the chief fishermen and other fishermen leaders and requires investment in
explaining the limits of the resource.

6. Mesh size regulations need to become more effective. This can only be the case
if fishermen and local leaders understand the importance of the regulations (see
point 1 above). As far as the beach seine is concerned it has been suggested that
smaller mesh sizes be allowed during the anchovy season and larger mesh sizes
at other times.

7. The Ghanaian government should not only increase its regulatory effort at beach
level, but also (continue to) seek alliances with the neighbouring countries (via
CECAF). After all, if measures (such as on mesh sizes) are only taken in Ghana,
this may result in migration to other locations and countries.

8. It should be borne in mind that institutional crafting is doomed to fail if institu-
tions are not embedded in the reality of plural normative orders and if they ig-
nore heterogeneous local needs. Consequently, instead of creating a CBFMC, it
might be more instructive to improve and strengthen institutions, like those of
the chief fisherman and his council of elders which are already in place. As we
have seen in this study, local leaders are crucial for local governance. Reinforcing local leadership therefore needs to be a priority in improving fisheries governance. Local leaders are the link between the villagers, fishermen and outside organisations. They are the brokers in the multiple governance setting. Legitimate leadership is key to local compliance with national rules and regulations.

9. Reinforcing local leadership means investing in education. Education is important in order to expand people’s capabilities, provide children in fishing communities with more job opportunities and transfer scientific knowledge on fisheries to fisher communities. All this will help to improve local knowledge.

Fisheries governance is ultimately about making hard choices and the government as one of the governing actors should be prepared to make these choices in concurrence with the fishermen in order to simplify the process of policy implementation.