

Power, politics and environmental change

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Class 6

The politics of environmental change II: post-structuralism

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Intro

- **Purpose:** explain how post-structuralism studies power through application on environmental issue
- Reason **why** you should know this:
 - Because it is another key approach to study how politics and power shape environmental change, which you can use for your research

Class outline

- Assignment answers
- The post-structural approach to power (how it operates) through central notions of:
 - Disciplining
 - Challenging discipline
- Basic elements of post-structural study of power and environmental change

Assumptions and starting points

- St. Martin: fisheries are privatised, i.e. their ownership is being given to individuals
 - This is what he calls a “capitalist dynamic”, “capitalist relations”, etc.
 - Because ‘capitalism’ is an economic system at whose basis is the idea and practice of private ownership of the means of production (e.g. land, and NR more generally – such as fisheries)
- St. Martin thinks this is problematic:
 - because an alternative ownership regime, common property (different from private and state property) can be better ecologically-speaking
 - Evidence of this around world where common property regimes have sustained both human and ecological populations in very fragile and ecologically important environments (e.g. peri-desert areas in Western Africa)

Assumptions and starting points

- So, he tries to find out how common property is being made to look irrelevant for NR management
- You may agree or disagree that common or private property are better for the environment, society, etc.
 - We can discuss this if you want later
 - But for the class: let's try to understand how he shows us that power (in this case the power to impose capitalist NR management relations) works!

CLASS ASSIGNMENT 2

St. Martin (2006) explains that “As with past enclosures of common property, the discursive enclosure clears communities and their associated social/cultural relations from the domain of economy and produces a resource open to discursive and literal appropriation” (p. 173).

How does that happen?

- According to St. Martin, there is a dominant discourse:
 - What it says?
 - What it does?
 - How it does it?

The situation (St. Martin's “diagnosis”)

- **What it says:** There is a dominant ‘bio-economics’ discourse that holds that economic dynamic of fisheries is the domain of fisheries bio-economics
- **What it does?**
 - *Displaces* community from economic dynamic of fisheries
 - *Encloses* fisheries in singular capitalist (private property) hegemonic dynamic
- **How it does it: ‘Disciplining’ of community: geographic dimension**
 - Fisheries: in sea vs. Community: inland (where fishers live)
 - Ports: place of community vs. Sea (resource): place essential economic dynamic unfolds
 - **“Community resides on land while processes of economy are at sea”** ⁷
(p. 178)

Dominant 'bio-economics' discourse

What does discourse say? The “ontological frame”

- Economic subject: “the fisherman” = utility-seeking economic man (individual)
- Economic space: fishing space = a container of resources available-for-appropriation
- Subject + space: individual, mobile, competitive utility-maximisers (fishermen) work in abstract space containing quantities of fish (the sea)
 - Where fishermen go, with whom, from where: irrelevant
 - Economic space: governed by single economic calculus

Importance of discourse: policy interventions

What it says?

- Loss of economic rent because there is a deficiency in property relations
 - Absence of **private property**
- Common property fisheries (i.e. where community is the owner of the resource)
 - Pre-capitalist or not-yet-fully capitalist
 - Less efficient and productive
- Commons: can only aspire to become capitalist via
 - Private property
 - Management schemes to stimulate such relations

Importance of discourse! Its function

What it does?

- Academic, governmental, and international organisations have all adopted this vision of fisheries
- ...and based on it have:
 - designed data collection initiatives
 - performed scientific analyses
 - developed management strategies

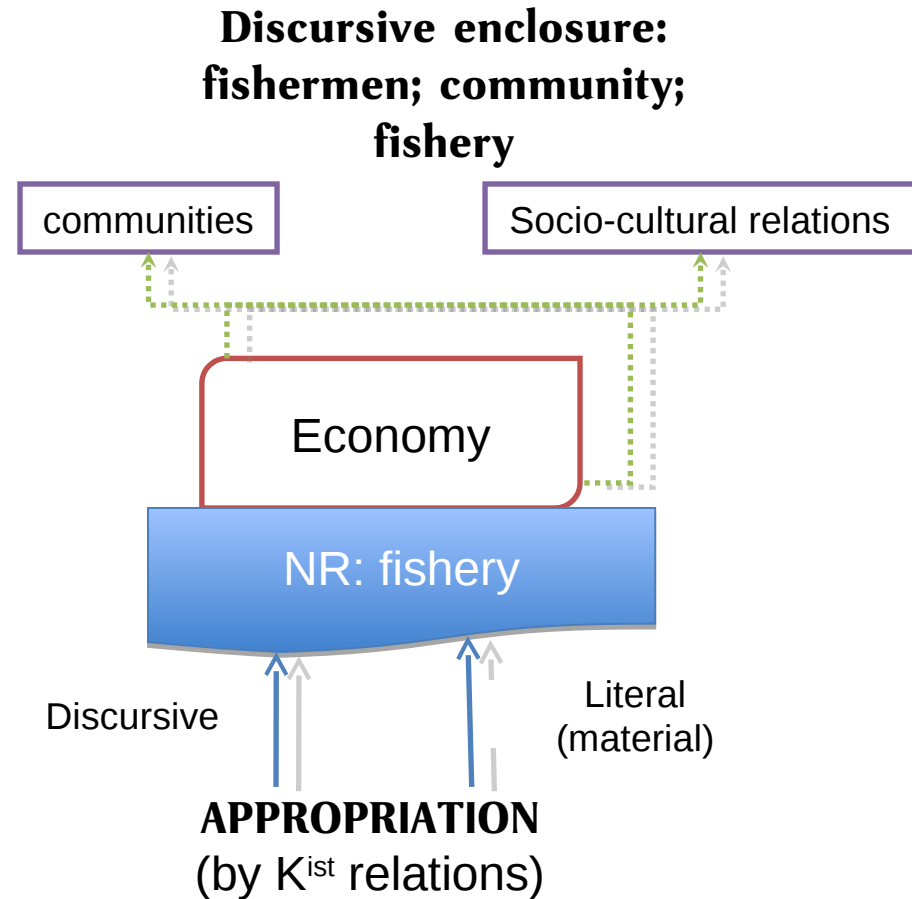
Dominant 'bio-economics' discourse

How it does it? Mechanisms of power

- Economic impact analysis
 - Assess Econ + Soc impact of FMPs
 - Impacts on fishing communities: look recent econ changes
 - Measure: gross revenue by region (i.e. in terms of \$\$) = community health
 - “Location of community groups” map: in land
 - But what relation with resource?
- Social impact analysis
 - No connection ports (community residence) – sea (resource site)
 - Community: site of impact of decisions taken re: sea (e.g. enclose or not?)
 - Community: studied by anthropologists (domain: culture) no implications for NR mngm
- Public participation meetings:
 - all community issues = struggle over allocation of catch
 - community = desires of individuals to increase harvest
 - The economic domain (i.e. resource in the sea) remains strongly bounded (enclosed)

The material result

- “As with past enclosures of common property, the **discursive enclosure** clears communities and their associated social/cultural relations from the domain of **economy** and produces a resource open to **discursive** and **literal** appropriation” (p. 170)



Block 2

STUDYING POWER THE POST- STRUCTURALIST WAY

Disciplining

- “This article is, therefore, an interrogation into the emergence and subsequent disciplining of community in fisheries resource management” (p.171)
- What does that mean?
 - Communities are made obedient (disciplined): not to move into thinking that they may have property rights in the sea
 - Based on ideas of Foucault

Foucault: exercising power

- Power can be exercised in more **subtle** ways (than outright oppression)
- i.e. by establishing **normalised** and '**deviant**': behaviours (homosexuality), processes (democracy is inefficient), actions (stealing = crime), persons (lepers=unhealthy), places (Africa is dangerous, e.g. disease, crime), etc.
- People integrate these as **personal principles** that guide their behaviour -> you no more need to punish or compensate
- In this way governments (or those 'in power') **discipline** behaviour, processes, actions, people, places, etc.

Foucault: disciplining subjects

- Central problem of modern govt.: “the ***conduct of conduct*** or else the power to act on the actions of others”
 - Modern governments develop **technologies of power** to achieve
- **Panopticon**: what is it?
 - Prisoner feels he’s been watched and has to behave at all times in case guard is watching (Sharpe, 2009)
 - By feeling he’s been watched all the time he internalises the rule of discipline (behave as he is required)
 - Guard doesn’t even need be there!



Presidio Modelo prison, Cuba (Source: Friman, 2005)



Question: What’s this??

Foucault: a geographical approach

- Structure of panopticon building = i.e. the shape of the prisoner's **space**: allows/ produces prisoner disciplining
- Produces a more or less 'voluntary' disciplined behaviour or subject
 - Trains him to be disciplined
- Shaping the space of **fisheries** as
 - Container of resources available for appropriation
 - Space where utility-seeking economic men operate
- Disciplines communities
 - not to think of the sea/NR as anything else but above
 - No other policies

What's the importance of this?

- Power imposed through discourse/ knowledge
- Through the 'construction' of (what it means to be) a resource (e.g. the fisheries), a human group (e.g. fishermen), a space (periphery of New England), an identity (student)
- Through internalisation of rules which then guide behaviour, so that you voluntarily do and don't do certain things

Questions, discussion

- Do you understand the approach?
- Does it sound familiar?
 - Do you have any personal or known examples of this happening?
 - Related or unrelated to environmental management

St. Martin, 2006

Challenging power

- “To accept communities everywhere, to see them as co-extensive with [= having the same scope as] the urban and mixed industrial environments of the Northeast (as opposed to only in isolated rural villages), threatens the dominant discourse” (p.177)
- How does that happen?

Back to fisheries in New England

- Dominant discourse: where can you find “fishing communities”?
 - ‘Fishing communities’ exist only in developing, pre-capitalist places
 - In a developed country such as the USA, they may only exist in peripheral places such as rural Alaska



Fishing community at Kazinga, Uganda
James Brown (Source: <http://www.new-ag.info>)



Akutan in the Aleutian islands (source: <http://jacobimages.photoshelter.com>)

Back to fisheries in New England

- Fishing communities don't exist in **mixed industrial environments** of New England
 - These are not “traditional”, pre-capitalist environments
 - To be heavily dependent upon fisheries
- There:
 - More (and industrial) economic activities take place: mixed industrial & fisheries
 - You only have some individuals fishing
 - Communities are in land
 - Commons rights to sea: unthinkable of



Source: photographersdirect.com



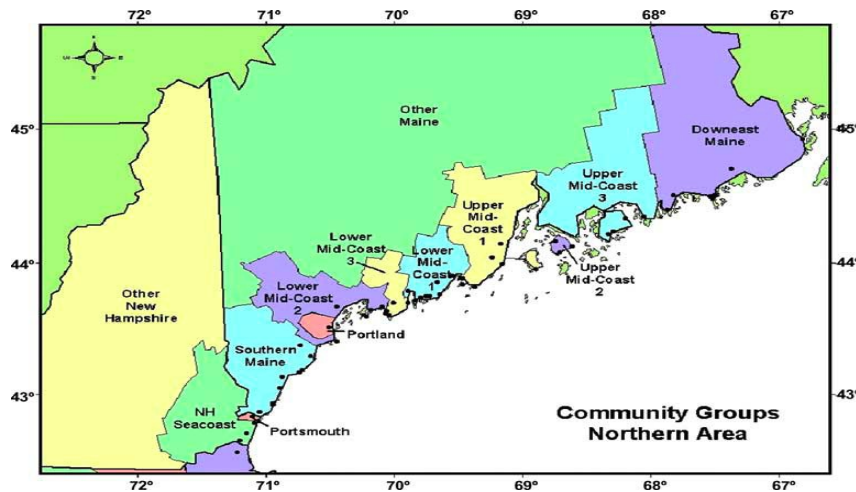
Source: <http://estevaporfolio.blogspot.com>

But,

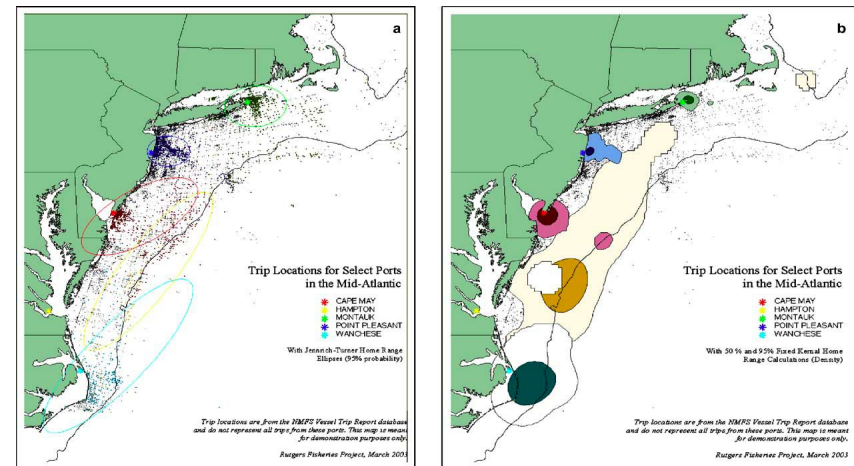
- St. Martin tells us:
 - Wait a minute
 - If you look closely, you will realise that fishing communities **also exist** in mixed, industrialised spaces such as New England!
- How does he find out this?
 - Mapping of communities in the sea

Shaping of community space: **where** is community constituted (St. Martin, 2006)?

In land: New England Fishery Management Council, 2001



In the sea: GIS map of community presence in sea by port of origin

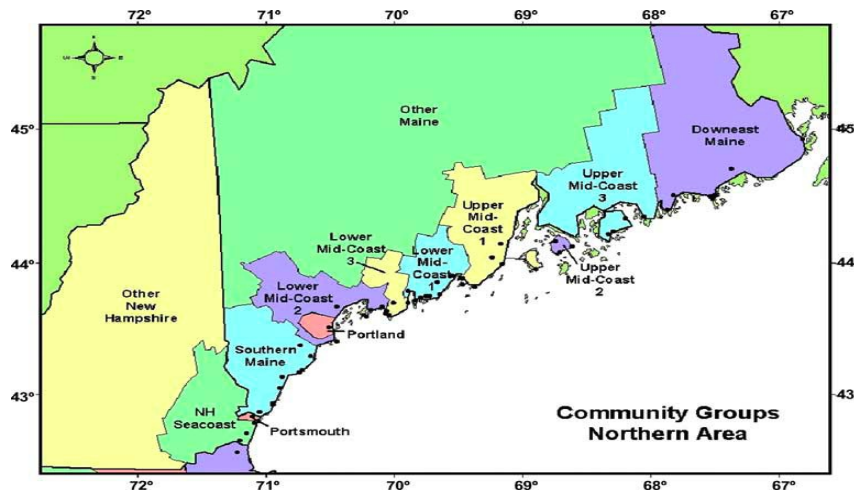


- Map 1: community in land (only individuals fishing in the sea)
- Map 2: community in the sea (fishing trips by port of origin)

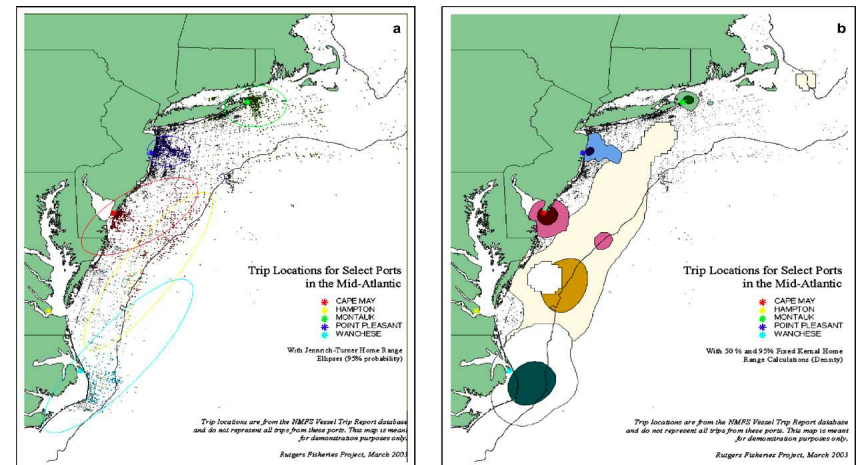
Shaping of community space: where is community constituted (St. Martin, 2006)?

Q: What does his mapping exercise achieve?

In land: New England Fishery Management Council, 2001



In the sea: GIS map of community presence in sea by port of origin



- Mapping exercise: places communities “back in the map” as potential NR owners: it maps community back in the sea resource
- Maps: technologies of **imposing** and **negotiating** power

Spaces of opportunity

- Mixed industrialised environment of New England
 - Not worthless, spaces where tradition has been dominated by modernity
 - Neither modern nor traditional
- Mix/ hybridity = evidence that capitalism/ modern state domination project = incomplete!
 - Space where pre-modern, alternative NR management regimes (commons) are still possible
 - State attempts to establish modern (bio-econs) regimes based upon presenting fisheries as spaces of private econ activity, community as sites of management impact, etc. through policies, events (e.g. participation) and documents are still unfinished/ unsuccessful



Copyright: Matt Wickenheiser | BDN (source: <http://bangordailynews.com>)

Studying power: the post-structuralist way

- Study ways in which social groups, resources, and spaces are **constituted/ shaped** (the power to shape environments, etc.) (Paulson et al., 2005)
- *Where* is power **located**?
 - Inside ‘the subject’
- How does power **operate**?
 - Power forms ‘the subject’ from inside, through rules (s)he voluntarily follows, even whose application by others (s)he monitors
 - Robbins (2007): US suburbs ‘lawn people’ voluntarily contaminating environment and themselves while complying to rule/ image of “good citizen”
- Study places, resources, spaces, communities
 - not for domination, but for **diversity** and as **spaces of opportunity**