

A Wellbeing Analysis of Fishers in a Brazilian Coastal Shantytown

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Communities, Conservation and Livelihoods Conference,
May 29, 2018
Halifax, NS

Introduction

- The concept of a wellbeing approach contributes to better assess poverty and the factors that affect fishers' wellbeing at the mangrove community of Vila dos Pescadores.
- The analysis of fishers' wellbeing is important at the policy level to allow interventions such as selective urbanization and involvement of fishers in conservation initiatives at the Vila dos Pescadores community.

3-Dimensional Wellbeing Framework

- McGregor (2008) states "wellbeing is a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life" (p. 1).
- Material, subjective and relational dimensions
- Wellbeing is a “multi-dimensional approach to understanding and measuring social progress and development” (Britton and Coulthard, 2013, p. 28).



Photo: Cintia Gillam

Fishers' Wellbeing

- Weeratunge et al. (2013) state: The wellbeing lens is a broad concept that includes fishers' material and non-material needs such as fair and safe working conditions (p. 256).
- The wellbeing of fishers is relevant by the reason that fishing is not only a profession; fishing is part of the identity and culture of fishers and the community.
- Fishers' relational wellbeing, through community cohesion, enables fishers to mobilize themselves against environmental shocks.

Wellbeing – A Discussion

- Gough and McGregor (2010) note issues with cultural bias and preferences in research on social wellbeing in developing countries (p. 31).
- McCubbin et al. (2013) emphasize that one of the reasons ‘wellbeing’ has not been widely applied in policy is that wellbeing “means many things to many people” (p. 457).
- Another critique of wellbeing is that it is often described as the expression of individuals in how they achieve their reliance on Western values.

Case Study: Community of Vila dos Pescadores, Brazil

- Vila dos Pescadores is a mangrove-based slum neighborhood of Cubatão, which developed as a small community of fishers and crab gatherers in the 1960s.
- A large number of fishers and community members in the city of Cubatão are migrants from the semi-arid regions of Northeast Brazil who migrated to the city since the 1960s in search of better living conditions.



Vila dos Pescadores





Photos: Cintia Gillam



Makeshift Houses

Photos: Cintia Gillam, 2014



Port of Santos

Photo: Cintia Gillam, 2014



Research Methodology

- Case study research with qualitative approaches.
- Research techniques included participant observation, informal conversations, video interviews and voice recorded semi-structured interviews.
- The fieldwork involved two trips to Brazil: July 14 to September 2, 2014, and April 16 to May 5, 2015.
- I argue that a pre-existing state of relational wellbeing enables fishers to deal with environmental shocks.

Environmental Disaster in the Santos Estuary: The Fire of April 2015

- A fire at the Ultracargo fuel distribution company lasted from April 2 to 10, 2015 (O Globo, April 9, 2015).
- The release of liquid and gaseous effluents caused the death of thousands of fish, damaging fishing in the region (Reis, 2015).
- Fishers have expressed concerns with previous environmental disasters, which happened in the Cubatão estuarine area involving oil leaks (Fagundes, 2012, p. 26).
- Urban pollution and some of the industries of the Cubatão industrial hub are destroying the mangroves





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Fish Mortality



Social Organization of Fishers Following the Disaster

- The Ultracargo disaster had the positive result of providing an incentive to boost fishers' material wellbeing by 'pushing' fishers to legalize their status as fishers, by registering at the Ministry of Fishing and Aquaculture (MPA).
- Upon the Ultracargo disaster, the pressure from the Community Association of Vila dos Pescadores, the Fisheries Institute, fishers, NGOs, local governments and other fishers' associations in the region led to the conditional reopening of the land crab harvest.



Photo: June 22, 2015. Mudando a Historia na Vila DOS PESCADORES! Facebook Page

Wellbeing and Conservation initiatives

- Pre-existing relational wellbeing is an essential element in fighting environmental disasters in the community.
- Community cohesion led to meetings and actions to revive conservation projects in the past.
- Women demonstrated the need to promote their crafts to supplement their family income from fishing, with the sustainable use of recycled materials from the community.



Conclusions

- Fishers and other community members are susceptible to environmental disasters and subject to ongoing pollution.
- Fishers and community members utilized their social capital in order to gain communal strength.
- Although the community of Vila dos Pescadores has relational wellbeing in terms of community cohesion when exposed to environmental shocks and disasters, it is somewhat unfair to expect from slum-dwellers that they should be completely self-reliant.
- Important to have a community-based approach to wellbeing policies in order to improve the lives of fishers and community members.



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Relevance of Research

- Housing-focused policies should take into consideration how slum-dwellers perceive their communities.
- It is relevant to apply the wellbeing concept by collecting data on the perceptions of slum-dwellers about their wellbeing around the world.
- It is relevant to have further research connecting community wellbeing with environmental racism and vulnerability in slum areas in Brazil and around the world.



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Recommendations

- Combating environmental contamination from industrial pollutants in the Santos Estuary could benefit from more research on the use of phytoremediation.
- Fisheries co-management could be an option to improve the wellbeing of fishers and community members.
- A wellbeing approach in policymaking requires a holistic approach, including racism and inequality.
- The state's role is to conceive structures to strengthen the partnerships between NGOs, Academia and private partners in projects that aim to improve the wellbeing of slum-dwellers.

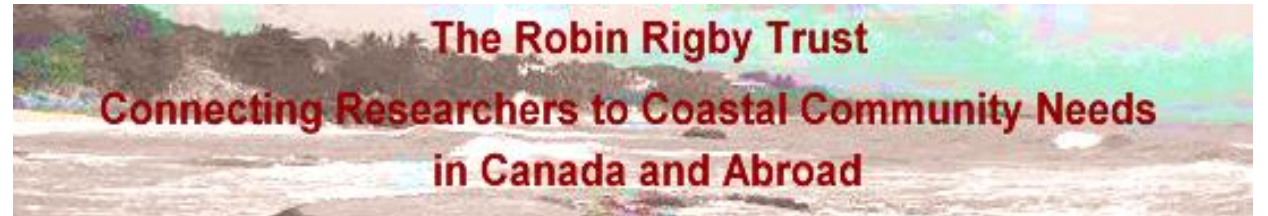
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Thank You!



Community Conservation
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