



Communication and Culture for Development: Contributions to Artisanal Fishers' Wellbeing in Coastal Uruguay

Paula Santos and Micaela Trimble

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Abstract

The combination of the concepts of Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) and social representations offers a relevant methodological framework to investigate how the exercise of the capacity of voice by vulnerable populations can alter positively aspects related to their wellbeing and aspirations. These alterations can contribute directly to development since they relate to people's "capacity of voice," in the sense of Arjun Appadurai. Using the First Artisanal Fisheries Festival in Piriápolis (coastal Uruguay, 2012) as a case study –an activity of communication for development arisen from a participatory action research group – we investigated how the exercise of fishers' capacity of voice promoted a

P. Santos (✉)
Universidad Católica del Uruguay, Montevideo, Uruguay
e-mail: paulasantosvizcaino@gmail.com

M. Trimble (✉)
South American Institute for Resilience and Sustainability Studies (SARAS),
Bella Vista-Maldonado, Uruguay
e-mail: mica.trimble@gmail.com

change in the figurative nucleus of their self-representation. Semi-structured interviews with 12 informants were performed. The results show that the Fisheries Festival tackled at least four material aspects of wellbeing: catch, boat, fishing gear, and knowledge. Subjective wellbeing implications were also found as the Festival confirmed fishing as a way of life and added value to the existence of the fishers by recirculating positive values about them. In terms of relational wellbeing (the third dimension), the Festival approach to fishers' representation transcended to other sectors of society while enriching their original connection with the environment. In conclusion, there was a change in the fishers' terms of recognition, placing them in a more advantaged position to negotiate their own interests. This modification to existent cultural consensus about fishers in Piriápolis will have a positive effect in their future existence, thus contributing to development.

Keywords

WeD approach · Social representations · Aspirations · Capacities · Participatory research · Fisheries

Introduction

Artisanal fishing communities stand out for their knowledge of the sea. Their oral practices transmitted from generation to generation directly contribute to environmental sustainability and food security, among others. For different reasons, in Uruguay (and the world), these communities historically experience situations of vulnerability, and the richness of their practices remains ignored, particularly from the perspective of fishers themselves.

Communication and culture can play a key role in projects aimed at improving their wellbeing. Giving them "voice" (Appadurai 2004:62) could improve the terms in which they are recognized in society, thus favoring their repositioning in order to better negotiate their interests. This work offers an exploratory model for inquiring about the social change produced in a particular moment of a communication for development initiative in a specific time and space, at a given cultural scenario such as fisheries. The model was applied to the case study of the First Artisanal Fisheries Festival in Piriápolis (February 11–12, 2012), organized by the POPA Group (For Artisanal Fishing), a participatory research group formed by multiple stakeholders.

In general, results indicated that the fishers raised their "voice" to promote a new condition of "different" (Appadurai 2004:62) of themselves in direct relation with their own interests. This increased their ability to "navigate" in society more fluidly. In short, they were able to publicly express their visions and promote transformations in relation with their manifested aspirations of wellbeing. However, the persistence of the transformative process initiated in the social representation of fishers as of the Festival and its scope in the fisher population are presented as challenges to these transformations.

Social Representations as Determinants of Wellbeing

Social representations are a socially elaborated and shared form of knowledge. They are also defined as “common sense knowledge” or “natural knowledge” to differentiate them from scientific knowledge (Moscovici, in Jodelet 1997:53). Through them humans attempt to understand and explain the phenomena of everyday life. They contain a pragmatic or functional dimension, not only in terms of behavior but also in the transformation of the environment in which these behaviors take place. They allow an individual or group to take a stand against different situations, events, objects, and communications that concern them and to orient their action according to that position. Social representations are forms of constituted thought, as they constitute sociocultural products that intervene in social life as preformed structures that serve as a framework for interpretation. Meanwhile, they are forms of constituent thought, in the sense that they intervene in the elaboration or conformation of the same object that they represent, and in this way, they contribute to shape the social reality of which they are a part, determining in a different measure their effects in the daily life. This allows for understanding social representations as processes of construction of reality (Ibáñez 1988:37 in Araya 2002:30).

The social wellbeing approach was developed by the Economic and Social Research Council Research Group on Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) at the University of Bath. The key lines of thought and research relating to social wellbeing arise within the approaches of economics of happiness, poverty and development, capabilities, gender, human rights, sustainable livelihoods, vulnerability, and social capital (Weeratunge et al. 2013), defined by the WeD group as the “state of being with others, which arises where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one’s goals, and where one can enjoy a satisfactory quality of life”. Viewed as a social process, wellbeing is composed of material, relational, and subjective dimensions that occur simultaneously in a specific time and space. The material dimension includes assets, social security (welfare), and quality of life. The relational dimension is divided into two spheres: the social sphere, social relations and access to public goods, and the human sphere, which refers to aspects-capabilities and attitudes in relation to life and personal relationships. Subjective aspects of wellbeing also have two dimensions: on the one hand, people’s perception of their position (material, social, and human), and on the other, people’s cultural values, ideologies, and beliefs. These different aspects of wellbeing are interlinked and cannot exist without the others. Wellbeing arises in the constant interaction of externally observable and verifiable aspects of reality, with their “subjective” perceptions and evaluations by subjects. Through this process, people build the meaning of their lives (White 2009:9). Wellbeing is then socially and culturally constructed. Therefore, if socially and culturally constructed knowledge is determinant of wellbeing, changes in social representations will produce changes in wellbeing.

The combination of these two concepts (social representations and wellbeing) is rooted in at least four common elements that regard the conceptualization of reality

Table 1 Common elements to the concepts of social wellbeing and social representation

	Reality		The subject	
A combination of two concepts:	A process (...)	(...) in constant change	Capable subjects (meaning having capacities) (...)	(...) act collectively/ intersubjectively
Social representation (knowledge)	Seen as processes of construction of reality	They contain a pragmatic dimension that makes the transformation of the environment possible	Through social representations, humans attempt to understand and explain the phenomena of everyday life	They contribute to shape the social reality of which they are a part, determining in a different measure their effects in the daily life
Social wellbeing (a state)	It is viewed as a social process with material, relational, and subjective dimensions that occur in a specific time and space	It is realized through the “work” people put daily into making meaning out of their lives	People act meaningfully to pursue their goals and enjoy a satisfactory quality of life	Understandings of wellbeing are socially and culturally constructed

and the centrality of subjects in that reality (see Table 1). In particular, both concepts consider reality as a process in constant transformation. Subjects, as capable beings, are active builders of reality. To do so, they rely on their subjectivity and on their capacity to objectivize aspects of reality intersubjectively, socially, and culturally.

Both concepts approach change, but at different levels. Social representations are abstract bodies of knowledge circulating and recirculating indefinitely in society in general, whereas the concept of wellbeing, defined as “state,” shapes and re-shape itself throughout a specific time and space. It is in this subtle combination that micro-generation of social common sense matters for the collective conceptualization of wellbeing (under construction in a macro space and time).

A last justification to this combination of methodological frameworks is the possibility of investigating social change provided by the concept of social representation. The theory of the figurative nucleus of the social representation explains how discourse is structured and objectivized within the representation in a figurative synthetic and concrete scheme of lived clear images. These structured images are the figurative nucleus, a concentrated and graphic conceptual core that captures the essence of the concept. These simplified visions are what enables people to talk and understand things and other people more easily and become natural facts. This scheme or nucleus is the more stable and solid part of the representation. It organizes the representation as a whole and provides meaning to the rest of elements present in

the field of the representation (Moscovici, 1979, 1981, 1984 a, b, in Araya 2002:35). The theory of the figurative scheme has implications in social change, because only those actions intending to modify a social representation that are addressed to modify the nucleus will be successful, as the global meaning of the representation depends on it (Araya 2002:41).

Thus, the combination of both concepts provides a methodological approach to investigate change in social wellbeing as of the study of changes in social representations.

Raising the Voice for Development

In turn, the direct relation between the concept of social wellbeing and that of “capacity of voice” (Appadurai 2004:59–84), a cultural capacity originated in the concept of developmental capabilities of Amartya Sen (1985a, 1999 in Appadurai 2004:63), indicates that alterations in social wellbeing affect development.

Based on Hirschman (1970 in Appadurai 2004:63), Appadurai claims that the poor oscillate between the exit from society and the loyalty to norms that reproduce their vulnerability. Between these extremes, there appears the capacity of voice, a cultural capacity, as a means for overcoming this oscillation. This can be achieved because cultural consensus cannot be taken for granted (Fernandez, 1965, 1986, in Appadurai 2004:64). Appadurai finds also that future is implicit in factors central to society and culture (understood as specific and multiple designs of social life), such as norms, beliefs, and values that circulate in society, where cultural consensus is produced.

Therefore, according to Appadurai (2004), the capacity of vulnerable populations to exercise their voice to debate, challenge, and oppose directions is vital for living a collective social life according to their own interests. Not only because the capacity of voice is virtually a definition of inclusion and participation in any democracy but also because it is the only way they will be able to find possible local forms of altering what he calls “the terms of recognition” in any cultural regime. To strengthen voice as a cultural capacity, vulnerable populations should find metaphors, rhetorics, and ways of organizing themselves and acting publicly that better function in their cultural worlds. Appadurai has seen in various movements in the past that, when these work, a change takes place in the terms of recognition and in the cultural framework. This will increase their capacity to navigate in society more fluidly and consequently project their existence in time, to express their visions publicly and obtain results adapted to their own wellbeing and for development in general (Appadurai 2004:66).

Just as the combination of the concepts of social representation and social wellbeing is rooted in the coincidence of at least four conceptual elements, the concept of capacity of voice shares the consideration of reality as a process in constant transformation, where subjects, as capable beings, are responsible for building it socially and culturally and produce change.

An additional theoretical observation is made for methodological purposes regarding a particular contribution from the concept of social representation to the study of the capacity of voice. Based on Durkheim, Appadurai recognizes that “there is no self outside the social frame, setting, mirror.” He says that “wellbeing aspirations are never simply individual but formed in interaction and in the thick of social life” (2004:67). On his side, Moscovici had several years before proposed a step forward in the classic conception of “collective representations” of Durkheim, putting the focus on the individual (rather than the collective approach) and in the elaboration of representations in a process of intersubject exchange (Moscovici, cfr. Banchs 2000:8–9 in Araya 2002). According to this work, the concept of social representations offers the possibility of digging deeper in methodological analysis of the exercise of the voice capacity for wellbeing, finely tackling the very centrality of the subject in the process, and building upon the intersubject level.

In sum, the interweaving of these three concepts offers the possibility of investigating how the exercise of the capacity of voice can alter social wellbeing and how these alterations can be investigated through the study of the figurative nucleus of social representations to assess social change at the microlevel for further upscaling.

Case Study with Artisanal Fisheries in Piriápolis, Uruguay

In this research, we investigated the First Artisanal (or Small-scale) Fisheries Festival in Piriápolis (coastal Uruguay, 2012) as a case study (Stake, 1995 in Cresswell 2003, 2013:15).

Piriápolis is a tourist city in Maldonado Department (Uruguay), founded in 1890. Around 10,000 people live in Piriápolis throughout the year, but this number increases to 40,000 during the austral summer. At the time of this research, there were 50 fishing boats in the Piriápolis area, although some were disused or used only seasonally. Two to four fishers work on board boats that range in length from 4 to 8 m and use motors that vary from 8 to 60 horsepower (see Fig. 1). The fishing gear most commonly employed consists of bottom-set longlines and gill nets of varied mesh sizes to catch different fish species. Most of the catch is sold via middlemen, although some fishers have a fish stall (Trimble 2013).

Over the past 25 years, Piriápolis has received migrant fishers from other coastal localities during the high fishing season. At the time of this research, most artisanal fishers in Piriápolis were mobile (“nomads” or “migratory” in their own words): they move along the coast (either sailing or carrying their boats on a truck) in response to whitemouth croaker movements (one of the main commercial species). The number of fishers therefore varies greatly throughout the year (e.g., from 30 to 150 fishers) mainly due to resource availability. Some migrant fishers also have additional occupations seasonally. Their most common additional occupations are as construction workers, as crew on industrial trawler vessels based in Montevideo, as vendors in the fish market, as woodcutters, and as professional gardeners (especially during the summer).

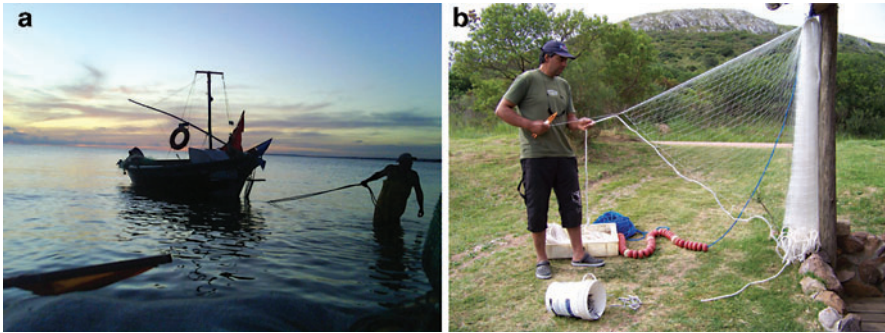


Fig. 1 (a) Fishing boat used by artisanal fishers (POPA photo-art show inaugurated at the First Fisheries Festival in Piriápolis). (b) Fishing gear (Gill Net) used in Piriápolis (POPA Group)

The POPA Group of Piriápolis and the First Fisheries Festival

The POPA Group (POPA stands for “Por la Pesca Artesanal en Piriápolis” in Spanish, which is equivalent in English as For Artisanal Fisheries in Piriápolis) is a participatory research group which originated in 2011 in the context of the PhD thesis of the coauthor of this chapter. The creation of a participatory action research group was proposed to analyze whether the foundations for fisheries co-management could be laid in that area (Trimble and Berkes 2013). To that end, in May 2011, artisanal fishers from Piriápolis, representatives of the state (National Fisheries Agency), academia, and civil society were invited to participate to contribute collectively to the solution of problems of artisanal fisheries in that location (Trimble and Lazaro 2014). Over the months, these different actors formed the so-called POPA Group. During the first year, the Group brought closely together 13 people from the local fishery, academia, civil society, and the state. The first author of this work was a member at the time of creation of the Group and design of the festival.

When discussing the problems of the fisheries, fishers and other Group members acknowledged that, despite representing a relevant economic activity and the way of life of many families, artisanal fishing was not valued by a large part of the inhabitants, who sometimes identify this activity as detrimental to a growing tourism (when in fact tourists show interest in learning more about fishing in the area). The time of greatest sale of fish is the austral summer (December to February), when Piriápolis receives many tourists (from Uruguay and abroad). In winter time, the fish sale decreases, since the permanent population in Piriápolis is much lower than in the summer (and Uruguayans have traditionally preferred beef).

Around 2010, the sale of fish caught by the artisanal fishing sector in Piriápolis began to be negatively affected by the increasing sale of *Pangasius* (also known as basa). This catfish began to be imported into Uruguay in 2008, coming from hatcheries in Vietnam at very low cost (being an aquaculture product). The sale of *Pangasius* in Piriápolis (and in the rest of the country) increased from that moment onward, be it in local markets, supermarkets, or restaurants, where it is often sold as if it were a species caught locally, deceiving the consumer. This problem of the sale

of *Pangasius* in Piriápolis, together with the low social valorization of the fishery, was diagnosed by the fishers themselves, who were eager to be part of POPA Group. During a process of monthly workshops, the team discussed strategies to address this social-environmental problem. As a result, the intersectoral and interdisciplinary group conformed opted for the organization of a communication activity.

Organized by POPA, the First Artisanal Fisheries Festival (Festival or Show) took place from February 11 to 12, 2012 in Piriápolis. It involved an organization process of approximately 9 months. The variety of actors that made up the group in the process favored the support of local, national, and international actors from the public, private, academic, and civil society sectors to the activity implementation.

The Festival offered five simultaneous proposals:

- Art show including varied manifestations: a photographic exhibition of 25 figures of the local fishery (taken by Group members), titled “A Day in the Life of an Artisanal Fisher”; an exhibition of 27 drawings by children of the state primary school of Piriápolis; posters with specific information on artisanal fishing also contributed content. In addition, national artists exhibited their works of art inspired by artisanal fishing and performed live oil painting of works in dialog with the public.
- An exhibition of fishing gear by artisanal fishers allowed the public to know the gill nets and longlines used locally and participate in the preparation (see Fig. 2).
- Health education workshops by a medical doctor focused on disseminating the nutritional properties of fish species caught in Uruguay.
- A gastronomy area, with participation of local chefs, a group of students of local international cuisine, an artisanal fisher, and an international chef, offering marine specialties.
- National music and dance groups offered their shows at specially prepared stage.

The Festival had the participation of approximately 3000 people. Several media disseminated it (before, during, and after its realization): television channels, radios, local newspapers, information center of Piriápolis, social networks on the Internet, and websites of the institutions that make up POPA. Local media and national media supported the proposal. Artisanal fishers were the sole spokespersons of the Group to announce, cover, and inform about the Festival. In general, artisanal fishers in Uruguay appear in the national and international media agenda in relation to fisheries problems. The Festival, however, allowed for an innovative vision of artisanal fishers in the media, repositioning them as agents in control of their condition, not without problems, but addressing them in a positive and constructive manner (see Fig. 2).

Fishers Communicating for Development

The Festival can be described as a communication for development activity. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:8) identify three main conceptual approaches to



Fig. 2 (a) Artisanal fishers interviewed by the media during the Festival (POPA Group). (b) Artisanal fisher sharing their practices with visitors (POPA Group)

development communication: the diffusion model (one-way/monologic communication), the life skills model, and the participatory model (two-way/dialogic communication). The last two models are presented in contrast to the diffusion one. The life skills model is considered an intermediate model of communication for development (Hendricks 1998, in Tufte and Mefalopulos 2009:9). It focuses on the development of personal skills. It originates in adult education, but in development it works connected to the exercise of rights, as well as to address the structural conditions that impede the development of skills. On the other hand, there is the participatory model based on the liberating pedagogy of Paulo Freire of the 1960s. It is characterized by being dialogical and horizontal. Instead of communicating the “correct” information to specific audiences, just as the diffusion model proposes, it is about articulating collective action processes and the reflection of relevant stakeholders. The center of attention is the empowerment of citizens through the active involvement in the identification of their own problems, the search for solutions, and the implementation of problem-solving strategies.

In relation to these conceptual models, POPA Group designed a communication activity spontaneously combining elements of the three models. On the one hand, through a positive approach to artisanal fishers, it addressed the structural problem of their terms of recognition in society, which prevent them from developing their full environmental, economic, and cultural potential as social actors. On the other hand, the strategy of action, which was set a priori by the participatory research model put in practice by POPA, was to empower the fishers through dialogic and horizontal exchange to solve a priority problem in an intersectoral and interdisciplinary manner. Lastly, and in contrast, the Group opted for a diffusion model of communication to tackle the problem identified.

The Festival applied a multitrack model of communication for development, which considers communication fundamentally as a horizontal and participatory process (Tufte and Mefalopulos 2009:14). This approach divides communication in two categories, monological and dialogic communication. Monological

communication includes one-way communication approaches, such as information dissemination, media campaign, and other diffusion approaches, while dialogical communication refers to bidirectional exchange. This last category foresees open-ended processes and results and enables the exploration of topics and the generation of knowledge and problem-solving initiatives, instead of just transmitting information. The Festival combined both categories.

Methods and Analysis

The Festival, a communication for development activity, was an exercise of the capacity of voice of artisanal fishers from Piriápolis intended to reposition them in society. Evidence of change in the figurative nucleus of the social representation of the fishers in these three aspects would mean change toward repositioning themselves in society.

The proposed framework combining these different concepts allowed for qualitative analysis of the case by means of semi-structured interviews (Cresswell 2003:17–19), associative charts (Abric, 1994 in Araya 2002:60–61), and field participant observation. The reconstruction of the figurative nucleus of the representation of the fishers was facilitated by the open questions of semi-structured interviews and the use of associative charts. Spontaneity was the key feature provided by these tools to catch the core structural scheme of the representation. Closed questions double-checked findings.

Fieldwork for this research was conducted in Piriápolis from May 2012 to September 2014. The perceptions of (12) informants were registered. During the interviews with fishers (eight, four of whom were members of the POPA Group) and other fisheries stakeholders (three were members of the POPA Group representing the academy, the civil society, and the state and one external local journalist), the following topics were tackled:

- What ideas, values, and beliefs the Festival attributed to the artisanal fishers from Piriápolis?
- How these relate to ideas, values, and beliefs about artisanal fishers that circulate in the area of Piriápolis?
- Did the Festival contribute to improve the wellbeing of fishers from Piriápolis in any manner?

The data gathered was subject of two types of analysis. A primary analysis was based on the recovery of unit of analysis containing perceptions about what is an artisanal fisher and what wellbeing aspirations they have. This first part of the work gave rise to general categories, each of which was assigned to one of the three aspects of wellbeing they relate to. A secondary analysis on the categorized content assigned the wellbeing categories to one of three stages established by the research questions (see Table 2).

Table 2 Stages of analysis of the figurative nucleus of the social representation of fishers from Piriápolis within the framework of the First Artisanal Fisheries Festival taking into consideration the three dimensions of social wellbeing

Stage	Description
1. Social representation of artisanal fishers from Piriápolis	Identification of material, subjective, and relational aspects of the figurative nucleus of the representation Categorized information from interviews with 8 fishers
2. Social representation of artisanal fishers from Piriápolis within the framework of the First Artisanal Fisheries Festival	Identification of material, subjective, and relational aspects of the figurative nucleus of the representation: Which ones were confirmed, which ones did not appear; comparative study of content Categorized information from interviews with 12 informants (including the 8 fishers)
3. Wellbeing aspirations of artisanal fishers from Piriápolis	Identification of material, subjective, and relational aspects of the wellbeing aspirations of the fishers Categorized information from 8 fishers

Results and Discussion

Results indicate that, as a consequence of the First Fisheries Festival, the figurative nucleus of social representation of the artisanal fisher of Piriápolis experienced a change in the number and content of social wellbeing categories (see Fig. 3). In some categories, their content was confirmed, whereas in others, innovations were incorporated.

Regarding fishers' material wellbeing, the Festival confirmed the categories of catch, boat, fishing gear, and fishers' knowledge that were present in the nucleus of general self-representation of the fisher. On the contrary, technology used on the boats (such as the echo sounder) and the fishing licenses issued by the government were not mentioned when asked about the Festival.

Regarding aspects of fishers' subjective wellbeing identified within the nucleus, the Festival described fishers as of two categories, already present in their self-representation: fishing as a way of life (in contrast of a job) and the values associated with the fishing activity. However, a turning point was the change in their content, as it will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Lastly, when referring to relational aspects of wellbeing, the Festival added categories to the nucleus of the representation originally retrieved, namely, the family and the institutions (the state, the municipality, the military, and the media, among others, all of which supported the Festival in different modalities). These two categories do not appear in the general self-representation of fishers, who explicitly name themselves a Quixote or pirates, in contact almost exclusively with peers. The middlemen, who play a central role in the commercialization of the catch, did not

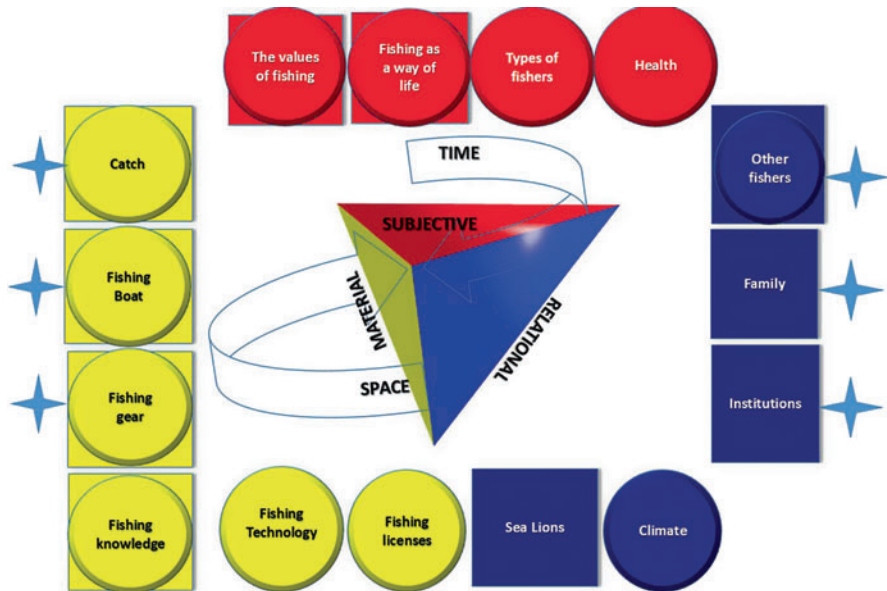


Fig. 3 Figurative nucleus of the social representation of the artisanal fisher from Piriápolis following White's presentation of the triadic dimensions of tridimensional wellbeing (2009). Circles indicate information categories of the self-representation of fishers. Squares indicate information categories of the representation of fishers incorporated by informants as of the Festival. A square around the circles indicates that the Festival confirmed the information category of the self-representation of fishers. Stars indicate those categories related to the personal aspirations of fishers

appear in fishers' relations in any of the two moments analyzed (neither in the self-representation nor in the representation at the Festival). Nature was present in fishers' self-representation through their reference to the climate and the sea, but marine fauna was only mentioned when reflecting upon the Festival, through the presence of information about sea lions in particular.

Regarding the content of the categories found, the obvious centrality of the material category of catch appeared in both moments. However, the difficulties to obtain it, and a perceived decrease in the resource (noticeably reiterated in the self-description), did not arise when reflecting upon the Festival. The Festival recreated the boat and the fishing gear; informants remembered them positively as a possibility offered to visitors for boarding the boats (mainly kids) and for learning how to prepare the longlines for fishing.

With respect to subjective aspects of wellbeing, fishing as a way of life, as an adventure, as a legend, and as an act of freedom was also perceived at the Festival, but from a positive vision (on the contrary to the self-representation). As of the Festival, innovative content was retrieved. Fishers stated that they started to "exist" for society as of the Festival, that they "felt included" (in society), and even described themselves as being able to make others feel happy. When analyzing how fishers value themselves, the general self-representation pictures them as Quixote, pirates, as mentioned above, and even thieves or drug addicts. According

to a non-fisher informant, the Festival achieved “a space for valorization, or at least a step towards a new value of fishers that not everyone recognizes.” Informants also stated that the Festival brought forward the human aspect of fishing, the values of dignity, sacrifice, and honesty, as characteristics of the fishers’ way of life.

Lastly, the Festival innovated also in the relational contents of the nucleus of the representation of Piriápolis fishers. It depicted them as having families and adding value to their representation through their presence. It showed “a different fisher,” “one who has a family integrated in the fishing practices,” according to a fisher informant. Regarding their relationship with nature, the sea lions’ category appeared when referring to the Festival, not in their self-representation in general. Although there is a conflictive interaction between the fishery and the sea lions, the Festival innovated in showing the fisher concerned and investigating about how to tackle the problem.

At a final stage, when comparing material, subjective, and relational categories of the nucleus of the self-representation in both instances, with the wellbeing aspirations of fishers, the communication process poses challenges and opportunities to the fishers. The Festival strengthened material categories present in the self-representation of fishers that are in direct relation with fishers’ wellbeing aspirations.

“Progress,” conceived as material growth by the fishers, is an aspiration for most of them, even though an informant defended the existence of a “subsistence fisher” that even gives away exceeding catch. Material growth can be “making a good wage,” “being able to fish full time and not having to switch occupations.” Both aspects are closely linked to the improvement of material assets: catch, boats, and fishing gear.

“Comfort,” which stems from economic growth, is also an aspiration of fishers, together with the education of their children, housing, and social welfare. Neither the concept of “progress” nor the concept of “comfort” was mentioned when reflecting upon the Festival.

Regarding relational categories, there is evidence that the “destination” of fishers’ aspirations is their families, but they also feel responsible for their peers. The Festival appears as a scenario that clearly contributed to the positive presence of the family and the importance of their peers, but also widens their relation to others (including institutions), which is also part of their aspirations.

Finally, the interviews showed a noticeable gap between the richness of subjective aspects in the self-representation and the absence of spontaneous reference to subjective aspirations. From the theoretical point of view, subjective aspects of wellbeing were confirmed as a component of the figurative nucleus of the representation and, therefore, matter for social wellbeing and development. Developing subjective aspects of fishers’ representation should be an aspiration in itself for them as a means to improve their capacities and capabilities for achieving the “progress” and “comfort” they desire.

Final Considerations

This research indicates that valorizing the dimensions of wellbeing in the self-representation of vulnerable populations is key to repositioning them in society. However, this work calls the attention on lack of subjective aspects of fishers’

wellbeing (the need for improving the society's perception of their position, for instance) when asked about their aspirations in general. This is a contradiction between their manifested material and relational aspirations of "progress" and "comfort," their aspiration to valorize their way of living (which motivated the Festival), and the need for valuing their own representation in order to achieve the state of triadic wellbeing. This aspect is particularly worrying, considering recent research in the area of Piriápolis concludes that "they feel neglected by state" and that "they need to be made to feel that they are valued partners in the governance of fisheries and in coastal development" (Trimble and Johnson 2013:7).

Regarding the social and cultural process of Piriápolis fishers in space and time, and the historical milestone the Festival constituted to them, the first challenge was whether the positive transformations in fishers' representation would remain over time. In this respect, fishers and non-fisher informants stated that the Festival was a point in time. Therefore, despite this research shows a positive change in fishers' representation as of the communication activity, the question that arose was: would material, subjective, and relational dimensions valorized in the nucleus of Piriápolis fishers' representation finally have an impact in the material and relational aspirations they have? In 2017, the POPA Group turned 5 years of uninterrupted activity, having implemented two development and research projects with funding from the Ministry of Cattle, Agriculture, and Fisheries of Uruguay (approx. US\$ 100.000):

- "Mitigation of the impact of interactions between sea lions and artisanal fisheries: a participatory research for the evaluation of fish traps as alternative fishing gear." (2013–2014)
- "Innovations for family production in artisanal fisheries of Piriápolis: improvement and evaluation of fishtraps as complementary fishing gear." (2015–2016)

Among the activities developed involving natural and social sciences research, both projects foresaw the continuity of communication for development components with the fishers as protagonists. When informally exchanging with the Group members on the success of the fund raised, they expressed that this can largely be attributed to the mobilization initiated at the Festival.

A second challenge was whether the effect of the change in the nucleus would transcend to other fishers from Piriápolis or abroad or even reach other sectors of society. Both projects abovementioned involved spontaneously fishers from other localities of Canelones, Maldonado, and Rocha (three of the six coastal departments of Uruguay), who approached specific project activities of the Group attracted by the results of its action. A milestone of the reach of the Group was the invitation received by the National Union of Sea Workers (SUNTMA, "Sindicato de Trabajadores del Mar") to the Parliament of Uruguay to discuss artisanal fisheries' priority issues with the National Congress Commission for Cattle, Agriculture, and Fisheries (Act of the Committee Session, July 8, 2014). Fishers of the Group accepted the invitation to present their views of fisheries situation in Piriápolis. However, it was also the opportunity for them to undertake the presentation of the project under implementation. Finally, the Group directly participates upon invitation or request at the

meetings of the Fisheries Council of Piriápolis, a governance structure created by the Ministry of Cattle, Agriculture, and Fisheries in fishing locations of Uruguay. The last presence of the Group in the Council dates back to June 2, 2016.

Finally, at the general level, the value of this investigation is centered in the study of the transformations that the exercise of the capacity of voice by a vulnerable population can promote in the self-representation of subjects in a situation of vulnerability and how these changes relate to their wellbeing aspirations. This research proposed a theoretical and methodological model integrating the concepts of capacity of voice, a cultural capacity, with the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD), along with the concept of social representation, which helps assess alterations in cultural consensus. The research process could serve as an example or guide for evaluating communication for development actions in the field or actions focused on promoting the wellbeing of vulnerable populations.

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