

Changing Coastal Communities

Opportunities from Fishing Cultural Heritage

The Norwegian partner in the FISHERNET project is The Museums for Coastal Heritage and Reconstruction of Finnmark IKS. One of the goals of the Fishernet project in Finnmark is to increase knowledge and understanding of the changes taking place in coastal communities and highlight the importance of their fishing cultural heritage.

Norway has an extensive and diverse coastline, which ranges from the Oslo Fjord in the south to the Varanger peninsula near the Russian border in the north. Norwegians therefore have a strong relationship with the sea and a long history of coastal settlement. Coastal communities have long used local resources at sea and on land, through fishing and hunting. Increasingly, trade and seafaring have provided links to the wider world. For example the cod fishery has been commercially viable since the 1200s and provided an economic foundation for coastal communities in the north.

Coastal Communities in Change

Over the years fishing has changed, and fishing communities have changed with it. Modern communications and the global economy have led to inhab-



Cod fisheries - a tradition, and still a source of income in Finnmark



View of Honningsvåg, host town of the second Fishernet seminar

itants of these communities being more easily influenced by society at large.

The changes we face today are considered by many to be alarming because the conditions for life in these communities have changed so radically and rapidly. Many coastal communities, especially in the north, are in danger of disappearing entirely.

Coastal Culture and the Potential for Commercial Development

Dealing with this fragile situation has a strong relationship with conservation of the knowledge and heritage of coastal fisheries, and its communication to future generations. Over the past two years the government has prioritised this issue, setting a goal for coastal culture to be better used as a resource for commercial development along the coast.

Coastal culture and experiences are therefore steadily becoming an important basis for developing exciting and attractive commercial opportunities in Finnmark. For example, as jobs in

the traditional fishing industry disappear, because of increased efficiency and over fishing, development of the travel industry may bring forth new opportunities.

International Conference

Coastal Communities in Change

The Museums for Coastal Heritage and Reconstruction of Finnmark IKS want to actively enter and participate in the debate. They therefore recently hosted an international conference in Honningsvåg on the theme of changing coastal communities. The conference was aimed at both industry and academics and created shared ground for discussion about the opportunities that could be realised by better use of fishing cultural heritage.



FISHERNET is a 3 year project involving collaborators from 6 European countries. It aims to investigate best practices for collection and dissemination of fishing cultural heritage and to establish a network for ongoing development of fishing heritage opportunities and maintenance of fishing communities. This newsletter provides up-to-date information about the programme and fishing heritage issues. A website www.fishingheritage.net will soon be launched. Meantime please register your interest in the project at info@fishingheritage.net in order to receive future newsletters. We also welcome opinions, feedback and new suggestions.

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Fishernet members studying traditional fishing methods in Cyprus

FISHERNET

European Network of Fishing Cultural Heritage

Full Steam Ahead

A year has passed since the FISHERNET Project was approved by the EU Culture Programme, and the network is well underway.

The initial meeting was held in October 2008 in Muros (Galicia, Spain), in January 2009 a second meeting took place in Stromness, Orkney (Scotland, UK) and the third, this July, in Cyprus. Each meeting was used to share experiences, explore approaches to working with fishing cultural heritage and to discuss initiatives which will help to fulfil the network objectives.

Having agreed on a definition for the concept of fishing cultural heritage an early task was to identify examples of existing heritage assets in each participating community. Some countries have carried out activities to record heritage items, others have worked to better disseminate existing heritage information and to raise awareness of society in general about fishing cultural heritage. A wider survey of fishing heritage assets throughout Europe is also being completed.

Primary and secondary school pupils from fishing communities have been participating in the project. They have learned about

the cultural value of fishermen's lives, been involved in fishing activity through games and helped to identify and record heritage elements such as songs, stories and factual accounts. Cyprus, Galicia and Norway have been particularly active in this regard to date.

In the UK, a public seminar was organised in Orkney about the topic, focussing particularly on how to communicate information about fishing heritage. It was attended by around 50 diverse stakeholders alongside the European network members, resulting in productive discussions and exchange of ideas.

A new website has been created in Iceland, introducing the network and compiling information related to the fishing and coastal cultural heritage of the country.

In Galicia, a travelling exhibition on fishing cultural heritage has been produced and rolled out. At each location stakeholders, including cultural and local organisations, are invited to contribute to raising awareness and to providing new input that can enhance the exhibition.

In Bulgaria, activities to disseminate fishing cultural heritage have been planned and designed, and will initially be presented at the Apolonia Art and Music Festival in Sozopol.

During the last meeting in Cyprus, representatives of relevant government bodies with a remit for fishing heritage were engaged in discussions to improve capture and presentation of the rich fishing heritage of the island.

In parallel with these specific activities, contacts with other organisations and communities not yet represented in the network have been intensified in order to grow the network and encourage the widest possible involvement in future activities.



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Bulgaria Mobilise Community Interest

In Bulgaria, the Europartners 2000 foundation is presenting its initial project activities as part of the 25th Apolonia Art and Music festival in Sozopol, an old Black Sea port and fishing centre.

The community of Nessebar will also work with the foundation to organize activities connected with fishing cultural heritage in 2009 and 2010. This ancient coastal city, originating over 3200 years ago, is one of Europe's oldest towns and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In a further initiative the foundation has invited institutions and stakeholders from Balchik, Tzarevo, Ahelaj, Kavarna, Ahtopol, Kiten and Kavarna to establish a local sub-network of Bulgarian Black Sea municipalities and organizations working in the field of fishing heritage. The first joint events will be announced after 15 September 2009 in agreement

with the principals of the local schools, museums, fisheries associations and local authorities.

A website portal www.fishernet.bg will host project events, information, and discussion forums to encourage balanced management of the Black Sea coast and eco-sustainable measures in relation to fishing heritage. A newsletter about fisheries cultural heritage projects from Bulgaria, as well as leading examples from Europe will also be published.



The official poster announcing the Apolonia festival

Lagocephalus - Curse of the Pharaohs

Invasion of a fish species from the Red Sea is causing extreme problems to eastern Mediterranean fishermen. *Lagocephalus*, a genus in the pufferfish

family (Tetraodontidae) with powerful teeth, has reportedly been causing extensive damage to fishing nets in the Dodecanese, the North Aegean and Cyprus. Fishermen consider it a pest, referring to it as the *curse of the pharaohs*.

As well as having economic consequences for fishermen, *Lagocephalus* also represents a serious health threat

to humans. The skin, liver and genital organs of the fish contain tetrodotoxin, a neurotoxic substance for which there is no antidote. Ingestion in small quantities can have an immediate impact on the central nervous system, leading to breathing failure and paralysis, which can be fatal. The Department of Fisheries and Marine Research in Cyprus is warning fishermen not to market *Lagocephalus* whilst also looking for solutions for coping with this new pest. Eradication is not necessarily the only option. In Japan and Korea the meat of some similar species is considered a delicacy, but requires specialist preparation. A further market may arise from medical research which has shown that *Lagocephalus* toxin can have therapeutic potential, effective for pain treatment in terminal cancer patients.



Lagocephalus and a close-up of its destructive teeth

Galician Fishing Heritage Poetry

"I just want to be the conch or shell which can produce a sound that imitates you by sounding, my sea, from this shore and to dream you talk to me in essence"

These lines are from the book *Prophecy of the Sea* by Bernardino Graña. This work is an intense and deep poetic reflection about human beings and their link to the sea, which takes fishermen and their way of life as its reference. Types of boat, harbours, geography and fishing grounds, types of fish and catching methods, rites, taboos, hopes and dreams – all aspects of fishing heritage, tangible and intangible, are present throughout this book. It shows very well how creative literature, taking work at sea as its reference, is also part of our rich heritage of fishing culture.

Exploring Communication Strategies

UK FISHERNET project partners Aquatera are using their experience of communicating information about environmental and sustainability

issues to explore ways by which fishing cultural heritage information can be shared and promoted. This work includes the preparation of sample

communication materials focussed on Scotland and Orkney that can also be adapted for use elsewhere. Ways in which pan-European information can be shared and presented are also being explored.

Examples of materials for promoting fishing heritage



The tools being used include mainstream materials such as maps, posters, leaflets and postcards. The potential for more innovative items such as calendars, playing cards and cut-out models is also being investigated. The aim of this approach is to gather and develop best practice ways of presenting information about fishing cultural heritage that are both attractive and informative. This should improve the quality and availability of information, whilst also providing the opportunity for fishing communities to generate income and keep their fishing heritage alive.

Fishernet.is in Iceland

The Icelandic FISHERNET project has focused on gathering and dissemination of resources related to coastal cultures and fishing heritage. An internet archive <http://www.fishernet.is> is the core location of resources, as well as serving as a portal to other sources dealing with Iceland's coastal cultural heritage.

In addition to standard website content (basic information, news and meetings, ongoing projects, links etc), various resources such as articles, essays, and even full text books are already available. Content was allowed to partially dictate form but some main themes have been established such as: **Coastal culture** - includes articles on tourism and on coastal archaeological sites in Iceland; **Fishing** - includes information on fishing locations in northern Iceland and various aspects of whaling;

Community - includes weather-related knowledge of Icelandic seafarers, folklore of the sea, sailors in literature and a special feature on women in fisheries; and the **Coast** - includes articles and

information on lighthouses in Iceland.

Material is continuously added, and new collaborations are being formed to promote and advertise the project.



Maintenance of a wooden whale-watching boat in Húsavík