

**Civil participation between private and public spheres: the island sphere and fishing communities in the Azores archipelago.**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses civic participation with reference to fishing communities in the Azores archipelago, Portugal. We explore how concepts and political processes actively exclude people, and how researchers could dig deeper to find opportunities to build from diverse cultural practices of participation. Specifically, we describe examples of efforts towards participatory sustainable development as well as introduce a centuries-old highly participatory practice of sharing food. The rituals of the Cult of the Holy Spirit, based on sharing and justice, are an example of strong civic engagement rich with possibility from which to build alternatives to current forms of participation for fisheries governance. We suggest that islands offer understandings of human social interactions in ways that larger landmasses might not. This is a call for reflection on images underlying our understandings of participation and governing the sea commons, and looking more closely at islanders and their long held practices.

*Keywords:* Azores, civic participation, Cult of the Holy Spirit, fishing policy, islands

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**Introduction**

This paper explores issues and images of public participation with reference to the Azores archipelago. We present this with the invitation to consider that islands offer understandings of human social interactions in ways that larger landmasses might not. This invitation is a call for reflection on assumptions underlying ideas about governance, and looking more closely at islanders. These reflections are based on our work with fishing communities in multiple discrete research processes, as well as from our embedded ethnographic experiences and from living in the islands over several years (7 and 5 years between the two authors). This focus on participation arises from our current research mission to understand how people who are active in public fisheries governance processes came, learnt perhaps, to be active in the context in which fishers, Azoreans and Portuguese in general are considered to be politically inactive. To better understand our own questions, we reflect on practices of participation, by invitation and by irruption (Ibarra, 2007), and governance and the underlying values and ideas. We identify tensions between expert authority and public participation in multiple Portuguese contexts. This leads to a short review of participatory budgeting, and finally, based on a concern that

strong contentious assumptions (images) drive much fisheries governance (Song, Chuenpagdee & Jentoft, 2013), we highlight a centuries-old practice of sharing which offers an alternative image with constructive potential for more just sustainability of fisheries communities and systems.

### **Participation in Portugal**

Although the revolution in Portugal in 1974 ended four decades of dictatorship and paved the way for the birth of a new Constitution where the reinforcement of a participatory democracy was inscribed for the first time as a main goal for the state (Article 2), citizen participation in public matters did not become a normal part of Portuguese political organization and administration; citizens are still largely considered bystanders in local government. The political class, which is built on a strong tradition of political families, is legitimated by elections and hence has little need to initiate participatory processes (Dias & Allegretti, 2009). There has been a growing lack of mutual trust between elected officials and the general population, “a deep structural crisis that the country is still experiencing” (p. 327) and where even government specialists feel undervalued by the elected rulers of the county (Dias, 2014). Rask, Maciukaite-Zviniene and Petrauskine (2012) explored various countries for public participation and found that Portugal rates near the bottom of the 37 countries surveyed. They also discovered disenchantment with how democracy works: 40% of those in the Eurobarometer survey of 2004 admitting that they never talk about politics (EU average 21%) and 88% indicating that they would never be actively committed within a political group (EU average 56%, Greece 79%, Spain 83%) (Sofres & EOS Gallup Europe, 2005). In response to this scenario, as a way to bridge the distance and the divide between elected representatives and the public, several attempts of implementing new, more transparent and inclusive participatory practices have been set in motion in Portugal. Such is the case of Participatory Budgeting (PB) which represents a “clear paradigmatic change in respect to the traditional concentration of powers assumed by representative spheres” (Alves & Allegretti, 2012, p. 5) via face-to-face horizontal dialogue between citizens, politicians and technical staff (Dias, 2014, p. 349). This shift in democratic practices has gained international recognition with two Portuguese PB experiments (Municipality of Palmela in 2016 and the Municipal Chamber of Cascais in 2013) being awarded with a special mention by IOPD (International Observatory for Participatory Democracy) for their “Best Practice in Citizen Participation” (IOPD, 2013; IOPD, 2016). However, these experiments have not been easy, nor linear, and have gone through much adaptation and have significant tension amongst the local authorities in charge of implementing PBs – the municipalities and parishes (*freguesias*) - as to which of the two institutions is entrusted, by the Constitution, in the strengthening of proximity and participatory democracy (Alves & Allegretti, 2012).

### **Participatory budgeting**

Participatory budgeting started in the late 1980s in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and is a social and political movement which evolved in response to the crisis of representative regimes: “democratic disenchantment” with high rates of electoral abstention and growing distrust of the political class and institutions. Worldwide, various models continue to evolve, but all are based on citizens having direct input on how parts of the budgets of local

governments are used (Dias, 2014). The processes have been said to nurture a “virtuous circle” between participatory democracy and citizenship learning,

... the more people participate in democracy, the more competent and democratic they become, and the more competent and democratic they become, the more equipped they are to improve the quality of the democratic process and more inclined to open new democratic spaces (Schugurensky, 2009, p. 62).

Well over 50 participatory budgeting exercises have taken place in Portugal, initially promoted by CDU, an alliance between the Communists and the Green Party, but most parties across the political spectrum are now involved. Although the long term effects of the virtuous circle in Portugal are unclear, most of the participatory budgeting processes that have occurred have suffered from drastic changes or have been completely abandoned after a few years (Alves & Allegretti, 2012).

Two distinct ‘generations’ or ‘waves’ have been identified since the first PB experiments began in Portugal. Between 2002 and 2006, the wave was primarily advisory in which the participatory processes were consultative with citizens being involved in the discussion of issues and proposals but the final say - as to which investments to be made - was solely up to the local authorities in charge implementing the PB. A more deliberative phase began in 2007 with a higher level of participation granted to citizens to be able to prioritize investments and allocate resources according to a pre-defined amount. However, several weaknesses still exist including the top-down origin of the processes, the small amount of money connected to each PB, as well as the lack of any goal to stimulate social justice with equal redistribution of resources, a situation which differs from other countries where “PB tries to promote a larger awareness of the general municipal financial situation and affects other debates related to planning and several sectorial policies that interrelate with requests presented by citizens in the participatory budgeting process” (Alves & Allegretti, 2012, p. 6). According to Allegretti (personal communication, Nov. 27, 2015), the recent round of Azorean participatory budgeting has greater co-decision making than previous processes in Portugal and is part of a new phase with a larger deliberative part.

We look forward to seeing how these processes play out in the islands, and particularly in how our fishing colleagues engage. For instance, the municipality of Ponta Delgada on the island of São Miguel has a large fishing port; however, it does not include the areas of the island with fishing communities. Therefore, it is likely that no fishers have yet been part of these deliberative systems. The participatory budgeting process in the municipality of Ribeira Grande, did receive a project submission from Rabo de Peixe, the largest fishing village on the island. However this project did not make it into the final list of projects submitted for citizen voting (<http://www.cm-ribeiragrande.pt/participe/op>). Regardless of this list of projects, fishing issues play out at the European level and are not handled by the local government, making this form of participation less pertinent for fishers and our research interests.

### **Participation for sustainability: making rules for access**

Decision-making for managing fishing involves considerably more than solely deciding the budget. The challenge of managing diverse marine areas to ensure a high well-being

both of people and of the rest of the ecosystem requires an integration, synthesis and assimilation from differing knowledge systems (Berkes, Colding & Folke, 2000; Wiber, Charles, Kearney & Berkes, 2009) as well as the direct involvement of the public in trusted cooperation (Grafton, 2005; Vasconcelos & Grilo, 2012). While marine issues can be complicated by the unstructured nature of the problems (Castle & Culver, 2013), sometimes categorized as “wicked” (Rittel & Webber, 1973), research demonstrates that public participation can be instrumental in creating beneficial policies that elicit a high degree of compliance (Brewer, 2013; Painho, de Oliveira & Vasconcelos, 2013). Nonetheless, within policy-making structures, there exists a tension between participatory democracy and expert authority that has remained fundamentally unchanged for the last four decades. This involves who is included in the decision-making process, and the reality that participation does not always imply an effective redistribution of power (Ferreira, Coimbra & Menezes, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Indeed, drawing on a comprehensive interdisciplinary framework of political economy, Sumner (2008, p. 23) “proposes that governance has become a vehicle for the spread of [corporate] globalization”. In this context, participation can also be a tool of such globalization. Even in cases where government officials and policy makers unmistakably favour public participation over corporate interests, specific perspectives of citizens do not always get taken up within the policies (Ferkany & Whye, 2011) as few cultural and social objectives exist in European fisheries policies (Urquhart, Acott, Reed & Courtney, 2011). In many instances, increased participation from a wide spectrum of interests has been shown to take precedence over the perspectives of the fisher community (Suárez de Vivero, Mataeos & del Corral, 2008) whose fishing ethics are particularly denied and undervalued (Rodrigues, 2007). Furthermore, it is the policy-making and the “draconian policy measures” which have caused the greatest problems for Europe’s coastal fishing communities (Symes, Phillipson & Salmi, 2015).

The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 1998) states that EU laws must include public participation. During the 2013 consultation period for the National Ocean Strategy, the Portuguese government created a process of inviting input via a series of public meetings as well as inviting written submissions. According to their website ([www.dgpm.mam.gov.pt](http://www.dgpm.mam.gov.pt)), there were over 100 contributions from civil society and more than two dozen public sessions. However, in the Azores, the regional government announced the time and location of meetings with little notice, in some cases only a day in advance and with little publicity. Moreover, the meetings consisted of presentations by biologists, government officials and navy representatives. The public had only a few minutes to speak, and without any recording of their input to contribute to the perspective of the regional government. Having attempted to participate as Azorean residents ourselves, we were acutely aware that our research informants as well as many others missed the opportunity to be part of the public discussion. In the context of our work with RCE Açores (United Nations University Program of Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development [www.rceacores.uac.pt](http://www.rceacores.uac.pt)), we launched a campaign to invite people into the process of discussion during the time remaining for the national round of consultations (<https://vozesdomardosacores.wordpress.com>). This was done after a request for additional meetings and a more inclusive process was tabled but ignored.

In terms of governance for fishing, the EU Common Fisheries Policy, since the 2002 reforms, has used regional advisory committees to advise on management of fishing in all EU waters; however, the actual participatory aspects appear largely superficial (Neilson, Bulhão Pato & Sousa, 2012), as fishers themselves also understand. Principally, the issue lies in the fact that as an advisory body, their advice is not legally binding, and at times the topics of discussions are not relevant to Azorean fishing. Additionally, multiple Azorean members of these committees have expressed their disappointment to us in the way they feel that they are merely being appeased, but where nothing of their perspectives will have influence.

Having explored the socio-political aspects of knowledge construction related to fisheries policy and environmental justice in the Azores (cf. Neilson, Cardwell & Bulhão Pato, 2012; Neilson, Gabriel, Arroz & Mendonça, 2014), as well as having argued for the regional government to engage more fully with the fishing communities and other publics in order to create better policies for sustainability (Neilson, 2014), we do not suggest greater participation from a platform of naïve optimism. Indeed, we have personal experience of how experts share enduring images, representations and models of the public as “ignorant, insufficiently informed and thus hostile to innovation, or misinformed and unwilling to become more knowledgeable (Batel and Devine-Wright, 2014; Castro and Batel, 2008; Entradas, forthcoming; Stilgoe et al., 2014)” (Castro & Mouro, 2015, p. 3). This contempt is counterproductive. Silva (2015) reported on how people in Sete Cidades on São Miguel Island of the Azores felt that the government intruded on their land without inviting them to participate and made use of forms of knowledge whose legitimacy they challenged. A related study in a non-island context, shows how farmers in southern Portugal imagine themselves as participating in biodiversity conservation and that the farmers themselves can maintain hegemonic representations as well as resist them, depending on whether the farmers are speaking about ‘people’ as others who do not bother to participate, or as fellow farmers and neighbours who have localized knowledge which is routinely ignored by experts (Castro & Mouro, 2015). Clearly, our understandings about other people are based on varying knowledge and contested information, but so too are our images of the world and important issues.

In discussing the importance of image formation in governance of fisheries, Jentoft et al. (2010) point to three implicit images which need to be deliberated openly in order to clarify the “philosophical, ethical and conceptual foundations of the goals” (p. 1316) proposed for policy. They point to “Thomas Huxley’s (1883) idea that ‘all the great sea fisheries are inexhaustible,’ a view that legitimized unlimited fishing effort... Hardin’s concept of the natural world as a resource commons where open access unavoidably leads to overexploitation and ruin ... ‘a pasture open to all.’ A policy based on this image implies that effort should be limited ... [and third] widespread image is that ‘small-scale fishing rhymes with poverty,’ ... Fishing is thus often perceived to be an occupation of last resort rather than a preferred way of life. From this image follows the policy that government should develop alternative livelihoods to fishing” (p. 1315). It is doubtful that anyone could argue convincingly today that the seas are an unlimited well of fish; however, opportunities exist to embrace images of fishers as mindful stewards of the sea. Corvo Island, located at the westernmost point of the Azores archipelago, shows that fishers have concerns for long term sustainability and that they will take active steps

to instigate protection of fish habitats. It is unique in having the only marine reserve in Portugal established by and at a community level: a working idea from a local tour operator and fishers who proudly and actively raise awareness and enforcement of *Caneiro dos Meros* (Abecasis et al., 2013). Good relationships between particular individuals working at the University of the Azores and the fishing community on Corvo appear vital to the continuing respect and understanding between the university and the fishing community.

The lack of perspective, and respect for that of fishers within sanctioned knowledge, is an obvious way in which tensions can arise between fishers and biologists, who could be ideal partners in challenging the problems of globalization and the contradictions of the capitalist system harmful to human and nonhuman life in marine ecosystems (Mansfield, 2011). However, the continuation of scientists to see the knowledge they create as apolitical works against this possibility and, in the past, the university has suggested that enforcement and respect for legislation, along with education of fishers, were needed to promote marine conservation (Santos et al., 1995). This approach, which uncritically posits experts and government as unchallengeable authority, continues to prevail, more recently, in other attempts at managing fishing resources and tokenistic approaches to public involvement in marine spatial planning (Calado et al., 2010).

Such was the case of Luiz Saldanha Marine Park (located in Sesimbra, Arrábida-Espichel Natura 2000 site) where a conflict emerged amongst fishers and managers of the park when the legislation was implemented in 2005. The disagreement was over the fishing restrictions and not on the creation of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) itself. Fishers supported the MPA, were proud of its biodiversity value, and even participated in the 1998 data collection for its creation. But once the decision-making process proceeded without them, fishers believed the rules to be imposed from the top and their perspectives and needs ignored. At the same time, being artisanal fishers, they were strongly affected by European legislation which privileges industrial fishing over their needs as well. This example illustrates that sustainability and marine conservation issues are not so much about matters of an alleged lack of education or legislation enforcement but about inclusion and collaboration. This was shown by the MARGov team who addressed this conflict by facilitating and establishing a platform for communication amongst local users of the park, and successfully implementing a Collaborative Governance Model for its management (Vasconcelos & Silva, 2015).

In exploring policy making and management processes, Agüera-Cabo (2006) argued that ten years of experience suggested that gender is largely ignored in environmental participatory processes (citing Corral & Ransom, 2002), and the dominance of the notion of “the ‘rational autonomous individual’ who enters the market ... [Although] feminist economists (amongst others) have critiqued the rational economic actor, arguing that individuals do not act in the ways predicted by liberal theory” (Waylen, 2015, p. 500). This is pertinent to fishing communities since fishers, albeit seeking money for their catch from the market, do not enter and leave in the same way one leaves for work from home and leaves from work to return home (Højrup, 2003). A fisher lives within a fishing family, community and the ecosystem within which the fish also live; no one (person or fish) exits a workplace. In fact, as we recently watched fish being sold at the Lota in Ponta Delgada, we imagined the fishers themselves on ice being

auctioned off (Neilson & Castro, 2016), leading us to wonder if indeed the way of life of fishers may be conceptualized as being permanently in the market for sale to the lowest bidder. Allegratti (2014) points out that the word participation risks becoming an empty concept by its frequent use in broadly contrasting processes, many of which lead to weak results. In identifying specific stakeholders for participation, for instance, part of the process gets predefined outside of full participation. Thus, “it is pertinent to ask who participates, who makes decisions, how those decisions are made, and what is the impact of those decisions in the quality of people’s lives and in the quality of democracy” (Schugurensky, 2009, p. 51). We also ask if participating in top down processes for making rules to control fishing behaviour is the only way to participate in sustainable fishing in the commons of the ocean.

### **Participation of the Holy Spirit: sharing**

As we searched for people who would fit into our initial research plan to investigate the ways people became engaged in or learned how to participate in public policy development, we easily identified people we had known to be the leaders: the presidents of associations and members of advisory councils for Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). We had already decided that, in interests of learning about the perhaps more hidden or subtle influences, we would engage with a broader selection of people, in addition to these leaders, so that we could get to know about participatory moments even if these were only brief in time or appeared superficial in comparison to the involvements of more active people. Our searching is complicated by the realization that participatory concepts such as public and private spheres of life do not fit well with artisanal fishing communities. These fishers do not live as primary wage earners, with differentiated work and free time. Instead, “the goal of the family enterprise is ultimately to be able to remain self-employed. It is a means that is its own end” (Højrup 2003, p. 23). Small-scale fishing (SSF) exists in rich, technologically developed places of Europe and North America as well as in other “poorer” places; more than 90% of the total fishing people in the world are engaged in SSF (Rocklin, 2016). They rely on family and other community members whose involvement in ‘fisheries’ is sometimes invisible within analytical structures that rely implicitly on the universality of the logics of wage working and hence mutually exclusive though interconnected public and private spheres of being. While artisanal fishing and the fishing communities in the Azores are portrayed primarily as in dire need of development and rescue from poverty, fishers hold on to their way of life with a fierce tenacity which has endured over multiple generations (Neilson et al., 2014). Additionally, much is written related to indigenous rituals which protect the resources, leading us to question governance in fisheries and look toward other images of sharing the sea in practice: using rituals to share the sea.

What grabbed our notice was the seemingly deliberate rejection of participation based on knowing fully that their knowledge and perspectives are not valued, heard nor taken into consideration locally and most certainly not at the European or international levels. Unlike others who have determined that fishers do not participate in civic society because they do not trust one another (e.g. (Pollnac & Carmo, 1980), we asked ourselves to look for the times, places and alternative channels (Talpin, 2009) where fishers do participate in a social realm broader than the family. While this broadening of view may not appear novel to social scientists, fisheries policy primarily draws from natural sciences (Symes & Hoefnagel, 2010), and hence important social practices not directly

related to fisheries would unlikely be considered as relevant by fisheries or other marine biologists. Working and living on small islands where we regularly encounter people as concurrently research participants, co-presenters on panels about fishing issues, and neighbours, and where we see each other at community events, in the same markets or on the same buses, it is difficult for us to be oblivious to their social and emotional realities of disappearance: an image, or memory only of the past (Symes, Phillipson & Salmi, 2015). Similarly, we believe that important spiritual values of the Azoreans, and the fishing communities in particular, are overlooked in education (Neilson, Blomberg & Gabriel, 2012) and within fisheries governance (Song, Chuenpagdee & Jentoft, 2013).

This drew our attention to the rituals of the Cult of the Holy Spirit (*Espírito Santo*). The cult has religious aspects, but is not formally part of the Catholic Church; it is rather a celebration of the Holy Spirit involving everyone, and as such, the brotherhood is of lay people, not clergy. The Cult involves a ritualized practice of sharing food among the community. One of the defining characteristics of the cult is that women perform the same roles within the same positions and rights as men (Costa, 2007). Hélder da Fonseca Mendes (2007, p. 40) describes it thus,

the cult and feasts of the Holy Spirit, as practiced in the Azores, can serve as a moral pedagogy in the perspective of giving and justice. While other displays of a popular nature are closely associated with penance and the individual dimension of the subject, in the cult of the Holy Spirit the promises are not paid for with sacrifices in the temple, or going there, nor in private, but grace and joy are the fruit of what is given, of what is shared and of what is received, thus dreaming of a world of abundance and justice, a messianic sign of the Kingdom of God in the presence and sovereignty of the Spirit.

We know of people who hold strong political beliefs in opposition to the church and any religious activity, but who participate nevertheless in these rituals, appreciative of the system of sharing, justice and communion which underlies the social relations in the community. Every year, a new group of people open the temple (*Império*) and organize the rituals and feasts. For five centuries, these rituals based on the value of social equality have been led by different families with strict rules of horizontal power structures and limitations to resist the development of hierarchy or continuing leadership. There are some differences between islands in terms of the details of the rituals as well as differences which have evolved in the practices within the Azorean migrant communities in the US, Canada and Brazil (Leal, 1994; 2000) but the important aspect for us is the core participatory nature of the activities. It is a traditional system of managing and sharing resources – a community of practice – that deserves acknowledgment and recognition, both from the scientific community and the political institutions of the modern state (specifically those in charge of fisheries policy), as a peculiar collaborative governance model. In some locations, the main dining place (*tasca*) is built every year prior to the week of feasts. During this time, all the work is done by the community on a voluntary basis, including members cooking and feeding the people who are doing the construction. This is done in addition to the baking and distribution of bread, meat and soup shared during the feast days. The organization and involvement needed to succeed in this endeavour every year, especially with the implicit rotating leadership of the brotherhood, is simply remarkable. We do not want to discount the important issues of

gender inequities and domestic violence which are present within Azorean communities (Sousa, 2011; Fogaça, 2010) and undoubtedly any existing tensions within the community or other social problems must impact these activities. In small close knit communities, decision-making by apparent consensus is complicated by interdependencies (Urfalino, 2010); however, no decisions are made about who gets a share of food or gets served at feasts as the decision to share with everyone has been made over centuries of this continual practice.

While we do not fully accept the definition of the Azores as an isolated and remote island which would ignore much of its actual history and politics (Stratford, 2013), we believe that the closeness of the population – where generational social relationships are nourished and reinforced on a daily basis, and where it seems that *everyone knows everyone* – provides unique opportunities to understand the lived experiences of power dynamics and participation in civil society. Conflicting agendas can occur within the regional government between the fisheries department with that of the environment (Abecasis et al., 2015) which mimics the situation in most jurisdictions and at a global level; however, the islands offer a unique opportunity to face this perplexity directly and create a sustainable development that is based on protecting fish and fishers (Neilson & Castro, 2016). There are nine unique islands in the Azores archipelago. In our work in fishing communities across the islands and in facilitating communications between fishers and scientists (Neilson, Bulhão Pato & Sousa, 2012), we have seen anger arise between fishing communities caused by existing conflicts as well as by historical inter-island rivalries. In exploring tourism logistics and rhetoric, others have pointed to the problem of branding along with a centralized approach and a regional cohesion policy which is driven by the organization of regional electoral politics (Baldacchino & Ferreira, 2013). As these electoral politics and challenges are based on representative democracy, supporting greater participatory processes may overcome problems of convergence toward an idealized Azorean identity or finding the equally problematic authenticity of each island.

We hope that this reflection on a practice of sharing could change the way fishers are perceived since the strong negative image of fisher is part of the definition of “problem” inherent in many of the biodiversity and sustainability initiatives that attempt to use participation. We believe in the necessary goal of changing the power dynamics to democratize decision-making or indeed the entire field of sustainability. This is difficult in the Portuguese context where lack of trust exists between specialists and elected officials; fishers get lost in the struggles of experts hoping to maintain their expertise as power base and to thus gain authority and leverage over the elected politicians.

What gives us hope to continue to explore social relations as they could influence participatory processes are the conditions of the small island context. The names and faces of those who decide who is a stakeholder, what constitutes participation, when and how participation is sought, are known (e.g., Farrugia, 1993). Any person, whose biological perspective on marine governance is privileged over that of a community leader, also is recognized locally, and likely has a history of sharing meals during festivals, including those of the Cult of the Holy Spirit feasts. When specific regulations are created, or new penalties suggested as ways to protect sea life, everyone knows whose behaviour will be scrutinized and whose will not be questioned. The fisher who is known to *sometimes* ignore the guidelines for harvesting lapas is a cousin of the one who

regularly helps university students collect data using the fish catches to study fecundity. The lived experience of the academic discourse and policy rhetoric of participation are largely transparent, as well as embedded in the complex relationships that contest the very concept of participation. Indeed, we know the faces of most of the names we have cited in this paper, as they too know ours. To ignore the ways in which we as researchers may miss important aspects of participation if we do not reflect on our own embeddedness in meaning-making, would be to ignore the power and politics within the very ways in which participation is defined. Advocating for such overtly political behaviour may be risky in today's hostile environment of the 'publish or perish' paradigm of science and the emerging bureaucratization of scientific activities. However, having shared words as well as bread and soup with many of these people, we feel safe within this island sphere.

The Cult of the Holy Spirit involves family circles and friendships but also other citizens, and unlike much public administration (Dias and Allegretti, 2009), it is based on the collective interest and common good. The Cult has proven results which maintain participation for generations, mimicking the virtuous circle of participatory process. It is a practice of dynamic education and training in citizenship and participatory democracy, with the objectives of justice and social cohesion. Ledwith and Springett (2010) write about participation as biodiversity and refer to John Ruskin who wrote about there being no wealth but life, pointing to a new economics that understands wealth as well-being; "economics can only be understood when situated within the wider ecosystem that is dependent on diversity" (p. 28). The small size of the Azores islands, in which you can see the Atlantic from most locations on land, is a constant reminder of this dependence on the ocean ecosystem. The closeness of neighbours, fishers, researchers and government officials also allows a clearer view of the micropolitics, and the rules and processes at play which reinforce dominant power relations.

## **Conclusion**

In accepting her 2009 Nobel Prize for her analysis of economic governance of the commons, Elinor Ostrom identified extensive empirical evidence to argue the importance of face-to-face communication and the need to build trust in order to create structures to manage resources. In the context of the Azores Islands, the idea of trust in fisheries governance is complicated by the significant loss of sovereignty by the islanders upon the entry into the European Union. This has complicated matters between the islands and the continent. By 1998, the fishers and their associations were frustrated with the lack of Portuguese effort to patrol and protect Azorean fishing waters; they eventually took the Portuguese government to court over this failure in 2002-2004 (Neilson, Cardwell, Bulhão Pato, 2012). It is crucial to have a safe place for people to come together for critical reflection and integrate the politically critical with the pragmatic and to engage with the intelligence and wisdom within everyone, not just so-called experts, in order to co-facilitate discussions about governance (Ledwith & Springett, 2010). The Cult of the Holy Spirit feast and activities are such a safe space, so: why not look to these existing safe spaces as a place to begin new participation forums?

Given its connection to the Catholic Church, this cultural practice may be envisioned solely as a religious manifestation and thus prevent natural scientists from looking at its potential for fisheries. The way people become socially engaged in the

building of the feast is a form of community created governance. It is a political act that results from a common effort of redistributing wealth among the community. During the activities of this feast, spaces of the public and the private merge. Families, commonly thought of as private and apolitical, organize the celebrations and food distribution which is for meeting the needs of the community: within and for the public. In this way, we see that family is not simply private and is a reflection of how the cult is based on the principle that there is no separation or differentiation between the private and the public of the Holy Spirit within a human body. This manifestation is acknowledged to be in each person but their acts of sharing are also acknowledging the Holy Spirit's public presence. Our suggestion that this represents a re-merging of the public and private offers researchers much for further inquiry. Our description of the ritual is focused on what we can learn from it for the study and the practice of participatory governance. The Cult, according to its rules of governance, family instead of individual leadership, yearly changing of brotherhoods involving diverse and opposing national and regional political views, religious and other views, creates solidarity rather than division, and leadership cannot be held to create power. There is potential for further research into these ideas and to engage with its participants to explore the ways they understand the Cult, and ways to re-conceptualize openings for greater participation in fisheries governance. As fishers from another island, Iceland, point out,

small-scale fishing is already restricted by weather, tides and wind; that the boats are small and do not carry much gear and the waves on the other hand are bid, especially in winter; that there is no need to for governmental interference in fisheries management as nature itself regulates the fishing effort (Einarsson, 1993, p. 117).

Images have strong influence, as Song, Chuenpagdee and Jentoft (2013, p. 168) suggest from their meta-analysis of the fisheries governance literature,

Two properties of values, images and principles give rise to difficulties in resource governance. They often differ between stakeholders, especially those with different interests, and they are subjected to change. In addition to their diverse and dynamic nature, they tend to interact in ways that are not easy to explain. As implied by several theories, such of those of planned behaviour and the value-belief-norm model, they may be best understood together ... Values and beliefs interact with mental models (i.e., images) in multi-loop learning processes. These studies suggest that one can expect lively interplay among these elements, requiring therefore joint consideration when attempting to understand how they influence resource governance decisions.

Structures and forums created from the top can undermine the process by herding people into interactions that feel foreign to them (Ledwith & Springett, 2010). Moreover, we must examine the consequences of government policy by engaging with the voices and perspectives of those involved and affected by the policies. This also clearly suggests that we must examine all our practices as researchers: how we construct our questions, our grant applications, our writings, our teaching, and how we allocate our time once we commit to examining questions of knowledge construction and environmental justice

related to fishing policy. Having asked for/claimed a place in the community ourselves, and ate at feasts of the Holy Spirit in the islands, we understand that we have additional responsibilities to make use of our various skills and positions of power to bring ideas and practices of sharing to the arena of fisheries policy. We are now within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). We too follow Ledwith and Springett (2010, p. 195) in their “emphasis on critical public spaces in which to develop critical dissent dialogue, across difference, in order to reach a mutual consensus on knowing a situation in order to act on it”. Fisheries governance fails to protect fish populations when fishing communities are excluded as part of the situation of interest, aside from the perspective that the fishers need to change their behaviour and values or learn from biologists and educators. Without enough input from social scientists and fishers, there is no shared understanding of the issues nor consensus on what should be considered when managing marine fisheries. Working toward consensus on the situation and the definition of problems is a strategy for generating knowledge in action; reconnecting theory and practice.

Returning our focus to the island sphere, we suggest that islands, especially small ones, contribute to deeper understanding of participation and governance on account of two of their defining characteristics. First, there is a closeness of people: the family connections and who is in charge. Even for newcomers to the Azores islands, it does not take long to easily recognize the identity of a handful of families who are prominent within local and regional government, businesses, and many other aspects of civil society. This clarity of one aspect of society, allowed us the room for looking around to see what else was happening, hence our interest in the Cult of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, we note that Corvo Island, with the successful marine reserve, has less than 500 inhabitants, which is undoubtedly an influencing factor. Second, the physical ocean around the island keeps many social activities fully within the island boundary, as opposed to including other people from other islands or on the continent. Islands with small populations can allow us to more easily identify significant community involvement that may be hidden in larger places by virtue of the greater number and complexity of social relations. Hence, islands may be the ideal places for creating useful theories about participation and governance, as well as offering centuries old value, principle and image of sharing/practice as an approach for sustainable and just futures.

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