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The micro-politics of small-scale fisheries governance in South Africa: a case study of community-based political representation as a form of brokerage

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Abstract

The right of small-scale fishers to participate in governance and management processes has been increasingly recognised by theorists and policy-makers over the last thirty years. Political representation is central to the realisation of the right to participation. In the context of small-scale fisheries, the first level of political representation is usually located within a spatially or socially defined 'community', where both fisher constituents and representatives are members of that community. This 'community-based' form of political representation requires representatives to speak and act on behalf of their fisher constituency, mediating the relationship between their constituency and external actors such as government officials, fisheries scientists, and fish buyers. The role of mediation or 'brokerage' places community-based representatives in a position of strategic advantage—a position that some representatives exploit to gain and exercise their own power, instead of protecting and asserting the interests of their constituency. Community-based political representation commonly manifests as brokerage, yet this phenomenon receives limited attention in predominant approaches to fisheries governance theory. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in a South African coastal town, this paper seeks to demonstrate, at a micro-political scale, some of the ways that community-based representation can be manipulated as an instrument for brokerage by local elites, rather than serving as an instrument for empowering the livelihoods and democratic participation of small-scale fishers. The paper concludes by highlighting some of the implications that community-based representation has for fishing communities, as well as for the practice of fisheries governance and management. Finally, the paper argues for the necessity of a critical perspective when theorising fisheries governance processes, so as to confront and interrogate the strategic practices and asymmetrical power relations by which those governance processes are decisively shaped.

Introduction—political representation as a potential barrier to democratic and equitable fisheries governance

Over the last thirty years, fisheries scholars and policy-makers have increasingly highlighted the importance of including resource users such as small-scale fishers in policy, legislative and regulatory processes (FAO 1995; Mikalsen & Jentoft 2003; Bene & Neiland 2006; FAO 2015). This shift is strongly reflected in South Africa, where

post-apartheid legislative and policy reforms have recognised small-scale fishers' rights to participate democratically in the governance and management of the country's marine and coastal fisheries resources, and to have equitable access to, and benefits from those resources. One of the primary mechanisms for small-scale fishers to assert these rights is that of *political representation*.

The people and groupings involved in the political representation of small-scale fishers in South Africa are highly diverse (as are the fisher constituencies themselves).¹ This paper will therefore focus on 'community-based political representatives', defined broadly here as: people who both reside in and represent a particular spatially defined community (or a grouping within that community). Community-based political representatives are generally the representatives who are most closely positioned to small-scale fishers on the ground—in other words, they are the first level of political representation for small-scale fishers.

Community-based political representation has been an important instrument for empowering the livelihoods and democratic participation of many small-scale fishers in post-apartheid South Africa, but in many communities, this instrument has been fraught with problems. One of the main problems is that some community-based representatives exploit their role to gain and exercise political and economic power, rather than as a means to communicate the views and advance the interests of their fisher constituents. In these cases, individuals and groupings residing in marginalised coastal fishing communities have used community-based political representation as a means to act as 'brokers' between their (usually poorer and less well educated) fisher constituency or 'clients' on the one hand, and external actors such as the state fisheries department, development NGOs, and fish buyers on the other hand. Acting as brokers, these community-based representatives occupy a strategically advantageous position from which to potentially intercept and benefit from emerging economic opportunities associated with the post-apartheid reform of fisheries governance in South Africa.

The phenomenon of community-based representation as brokerage has been extensively documented and theorised in the sociological and anthropological literature on de-centralisation in non-fisheries contexts such as rural community development, terrestrial natural resource governance, and land reform (see for example Ribot 1999; Abraham & Platteau 2000; Blaikie 2006). This literature reveals the pervasiveness of instances in which "local elite groups have (re)captured the benefits of decentralization projects for their own use" (Bene & Neiland 2006: 22). Political anthropologists in particular have studied and debated this phenomenon extensively since the 1950s, using the concept of brokerage as a heuristic device to study intermediary actors emergent in the context of the post-colonial state and international development in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Mosse & Lewis 2006). More recently, political anthropologists have studied the brokerage phenomenon in relation to the neoliberal turn, and the increased role of non-state actors in governance and the provision of public goods. This unfolding context of neoliberal governance serves to create "mediated cultures of development" that "diversify sources of power and influence, via a proliferation of ... intermediary networks", and in so doing, facilitate the conditions for brokers to "assume growing importance and capture significant resources" (Mosse & Lewis 2006: 2).

The anthropological literature provides abundant ethnographic evidence indicating that brokers tend to emerge out of "settings of rapid transition" (James 2011: 318),

“where the state intervenes partly to create conditions where the market will have primacy, but also to ameliorate the resulting inequities through redistributive practices” (James 2011: 336). Brokers are not only an outcome of the structural conditions that necessitate their client-constituents’ dependency, but brokers are also agents who perpetuate those conditions, thus “maintaining the tensions which provide the dynamic of their actions” (Wolf in Mosse & Lewis 2006: 12). They act as ‘intermediaries’ between their clients or constituents, and external actors, often at the ‘interfaces’ between different actors, practices, discourses, and material resource flows (Mosse & Lewis 2006). Brokers are “figures of moral uncertainty”, in the sense that they pursue their own interests (often at the expense of their client-constituents), while at the same time providing some form of tangible benefits to the latter by facilitating access to resources and opportunities proffered by state agencies and development NGOs (James 2011: 319). Brokers legitimise their position and practices through a kind of bricolage, adeptly appropriating and blending multiple (and at times contradictory) identities and discourses “in relation to their strategic interactions” (James 2011: 321).

In the anthropological literature that focuses specifically on the realm of fisheries, the theme of representation and intermediaries has also been explored over several decades. This body of literature suggests that some form of brokerage is a characteristic, even structural feature of small-scale, artisanal fisheries, not least because small-scale fishers’ knowledge, skill, energy and time is concentrated on the act of catching fish, and thus, they are commonly compelled to engage with intermediary actors such as middlemen, fish traders and community-based political representatives (McGoodwin 1980; Petterson 1980; Acheson 1981). Acheson (1981) observes that because “fishermen are absent so much of the time, they are often unrepresented in the political arena and are usually dependent on middlemen and ship owners who are often in a position to exploit them” (1981: 276), but that despite this, fishers in “most parts of the world” usually have little choice but to enter into client-patron arrangements by establishing “strong and long-lasting relationships” with middlemen and other intermediary actors (Acheson 1981: 281).

In contrast, the process of community-based political representation as a form of brokerage has received less attention in predominant theoretical approaches to fisheries governance, such as ecosystem-based fisheries management, interactive governance, and co-management. Referred to collectively here as ‘synergetic governance theory’, these approaches have sought to inform the development of new de-centred, participatory forms of governance that can respond to the increasing socio-ecological complexity of coastal and marine fisheries systems.

Though diverse in terms of their ontological, conceptual, and disciplinary foundations, the theoretical approaches that constitute synergetic fisheries governance theory are united by their shared valorisation of resource-user participation, combined with their valorisation of win-win collaboration between multiple state and non-state partners (thus the term ‘synergetic’). As a consequence of their shared valorisation of participation and collaborative partnership, synergetic theoretical approaches are also united by a tendency to downplay the asymmetrical power relations and realpolitik practices that are fundamental in determining the nature and outcomes of fisheries governance processes (Bene & Neiland 2006; Davis & Ruddle 2012).² Proponents of co-management for instance, argue that co-management “seeks to empower the weak

or less privileged groups in a community to allow them to freely participate in and collaborate on management” (Berkes et al. 2001: 205). Similarly, scholars advocating for ecosystem-based fisheries management argue that novel forms of governance are required which “may involve cooperative, multilevel (rather than centralized) management, partnership approaches, social learning and knowledge co-production” (Berkes 2012: 473). Finally, proponents of the interactive governance approach posit an ideal form of governance called ‘co-governance’: an inclusive process of societal regulation in which “parties co-operate ... without a central or dominating governing actor ...” (Bavinck et al. 2005: 44).

Thus, synergetic theoretical approaches promote a vision of governance that foregrounds normative notions of participation and collaborative partnership, at the cost of eliding the political realities of power, domination, exploitation and contestation. These approaches seem to take for granted that de-centred political mechanisms such as community-based political representation generally serve to empower small-scale fishers, and to strengthen the efficacy of fisheries governance by mediating the engagement between fishers on the ground, and other actors located higher in the chain of governance. For this reason, synergetic fisheries governance theory has the effect of predisposing the observer to underestimate or overlook the potential of community-based representation as a form of brokerage through which local elites are able to advance their interests, at the expense of their client-constituents. In so doing, a fundamental element that is latent within community-based representation—a vital link in the chain of governance—becomes obscured.

To begin addressing this lacuna, this paper explores the phenomenon of community-based political representation in the context of small-scale fisheries in the South African coastal town of Ocean View. Drawing on ethnographic research, and elements from the theoretical framework of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, this paper presents the micro-political strategies and tactics of brokerage employed by a grouping of residents who came to occupy the position of dominant fisher representatives in Ocean View. The paper describes how this group of residents came to occupy this position, and how they exploited it in order to gain and exercise power, while also capturing economic opportunities associated with the post-apartheid reform of small-scale fisheries in South Africa. In this way, the paper seeks to demonstrate some of the power dynamics and strategic practices that are obscured or downplayed by synergetic fisheries governance theory, while reaffirming the need for accountable community-based political representation, as well as the importance of pursuing a critical approach to the theorisation of fisheries governance.

Material and methods - ethnography on the Cape Peninsula

This paper is based on Ph.D. research undertaken from January 2011 to December 2012 in the peri-urban coastal town of Ocean View, where ethnographic fieldwork was conducted through extensive participant-observation, formal and informal interviews, and a small baseline survey. The town of Ocean View is situated near the southern tip of South Africa’s Cape Peninsula, roughly 40kms from Cape Town, and bordering the internationally-renowned Table Mountain National Park (TMNP), with spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean, and the surrounding beaches, wetlands and mountains.

Ocean View was formally established in 1968 under the apartheid-era Group Areas Act (1950), which mandated the forced relocation of 'coloured' communities from neighbouring areas on the Peninsula to the newly created settlement.³ The town has a population of roughly 40 000 people, the majority of whom speak Afrikaans as a first language. Socio-economic conditions in Ocean View are typical of coloured and black coastal towns along South Africa's coastline, with unemployment, poverty, and marginalisation characterising the lives of a significant percentage of the local population. The cumulative effect of these conditions is such that many people in Ocean View make the startling claim that 'life was better during apartheid'—a claim that is, however, supported by political economic analysis of neoliberal capitalism in post-apartheid South Africa (Bond 2003, 2005). Having said this, there are layers of locally-specific, intra-community class stratification in Ocean View—not everyone lives in dire poverty: there is a small minority of residents who are well-educated (having completed high school and tertiary education), and who are employed, or own small businesses, and who double-storey homes and multiple motor vehicles.

In the context of Ocean View's economic insecurity, there are roughly 1000 to 1500 residents whose livelihoods rely in some way on participation in the local small-scale fishery. Many of these residents are among the poorest and most marginalised people in Ocean View. In 2012, the author and a local research assistant conducted a baseline quantitative survey with 82 Ocean View residents involved in diverse ways in small-scale fishing. A 'snowball' technique was utilised, yielding a sample of survey participants that was heretogeneous in terms of: age, gender, type of involvement in small-scale fisheries (harvesting or shore-based activities), sub-sector involvement, vessel ownership, type of fishing rights held (if any), and organisational affiliation. The results of the survey indicate that:

- 27% of respondents lived in informal shack dwellings;
- 75% of the respondents had not completed high school;
- 55% of respondents were compelled by economic pressure to harvest marine and coastal resources to survive, regardless of whether they were in possession of a fishing quota or permit;
- 30% of respondents stated that they skipped meals one or more times per week;
- and 39% of respondents lived in households which depended to some extent on social grants.

Of those residents involved in fisheries-related activities, roughly between 200 and 300 participate in shore-based post-harvest activities such as marketing and fish cleaning, or through the possession of fishing permits and quotas (harvested on their behalf by those who do personally catch fish). Approximately 800 to 1100 residents are personally involved in the act of harvesting marine and coastal resources. Veteran fishers estimate that fewer than 250 residents are legitimate or 'bona fide' fishers—a designation commonly reserved for people whose livelihoods are entirely dependent upon personally catching local fisheries resources using low levels of technology and capital, and who are deeply rooted in the local fishing culture.⁴

The local small-scale fishery itself consists of a fleet of about 25 small motorised vessels (between 5 and 10 m in length), all utilising relatively low levels of technology and

capital. Local fishers mainly target 'linefish' species such as snoek (*Thyrsites atun*), hottentot (*Pachymetopon blochii*), and yellowtail (*Seriola lalandi*), which are caught with rudimentary hand-lines. They also target west coast rock lobster (WCRL) (*Jasus lalandii*), a commercially valuable species caught with hoop-nets that are deployed by hand. Most of the linefish catch is sold to local buyers, who then sell the catch in surrounding communities, as well as to local fish shops, restaurants and commercial fishing companies. Small portions of the linefish catch (hottentot and snoek in particular) are often brought home to be consumed by family and friends (Isaacs 2013; Hara 2014). In contrast, WCRL catches are almost always sold in their entirety, usually to buyers from outside the community who have links to commercial fishing companies, with the bulk of the catch being exported to markets in the Far East. Legal access to the various species targeted by local fishers is governed on the basis of individual fishing permits and quotas allocated by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), which is the national fisheries management agency.

The regulatory system governing fisheries on the Cape Peninsula has undergone two distinct stages of reform in the post-apartheid period. In the first stage (1994 to 2007), policy and legislative reform opened political space for small-scale fishers in marginalised coastal communities such as Ocean View to gain equitable access to fisheries resources, and to participate in governance and management processes (Isaacs 2006; van Sittert et al. 2006; Sowman et al. 2014). However, the regulatory system continued to be largely state-driven, science-centric and oriented towards the interests of industrial fishing companies, while excluding the majority of small-scale fishers from equitable access and participation (van Sittert 1995; van Sittert 2002; Sowman 2006).

This exclusion prompted the filing of a class action case in the Western Cape High Court in 2005, on behalf of small-scale fishers in South Africa.⁵ In 2007, the High Court ruled in favour of the Applicants. The Court recognised the rights of small-scale fishers to the marine commons, and ordered DAFF to provide 'interim relief' to a limited number of fishers, and to develop a policy that would address the specific needs of this resource-user group (Sowman et al. 2014).⁶ Through the combination of the 'Policy for the Small-Scale Fisheries Sector in South Africa (SSF Policy)' (DAFF 2012) and interim relief (currently the *de facto* foundation of Ocean View's small-scale fisheries), new opportunities have emerged for people in disadvantaged coastal communities to benefit economically from South Africa's fisheries resources. These emerging opportunities have attracted many newcomers to small-scale fisheries, and as a consequence, there is increasing competition to access and benefit from local fisheries resources. Demand for brokers has increased radically in response to these developments, as marginalised coastal community members seek the assistance of fellow community members who "specialise in the acquisition, control and re-distribution of development revenue" (Mosse & Lewis 2006: 12). It is in this context that the micro-politics of community-based representation as brokerage have emerged and are playing out.

Results and discussion—the micro-politics of community-based fisher representation in Ocean View

Community-based political representation in Ocean View is composed of a fluid and complicated arrangement of individuals, organisations, and practices. There are at least six groupings claiming to represent members of the local fishing community, and the

interrelation between these groupings is characterised by a high degree of tension and conflict—as one local veteran fisher put it: “there’s too many organisations!” The role of these representative groupings, is ostensibly to assert the views and interests of small-scale fishers in governance and management processes, though some also conduct other important tasks on behalf of their membership, such as marketing, facilitating rights applications, and providing general administrative support. These groupings are largely driven by a few individuals who have a loosely identifiable constituency within Ocean View’s small-scale fishing community. The relationship between the community-based representatives and those they claim to represent varies considerably in terms of:

- the formality of the relationship;
- the degree of autonomy and responsiveness exercised by each representative;
- the representative’s knowledge of their constituency;
- the representative’s personal fishing experience;
- the alignment or conflict between their interests;
- and the relations of power between them.

To make sense of some of these complex dynamics between small-scale fishers and community-based representatives in Ocean View, this paper employs the anthropological concept of the ‘broker’ discussed in the introduction, combined with Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986, 1989) sociological concepts of *field* and *capitals*. In crude summary, ‘field’ refers to a distinct social space within which a particular set of relations and practices unfold. Fields are multi-dimensional, encompassing structure and agency, material and symbolic phenomena, as well as the interplay between these different dimensions. Though fields are distinct microcosms with their own logics, they do not exist in a vacuum, but instead are situated hierarchically within broader fields, and with sub-fields embedded within them (Bourdieu 1989). Crucially, the structure of a particular field is determined by the balance of forces—or the configuration of power relations—inhering in the field. People are empowered or disempowered in different ways depending on the position they occupy in the field, while at the same time, they act to either reinforce or challenge the field’s structure, and thereby protect or improve their position (Bourdieu 1989). In Bourdieu’s (2005: 31) words: “a field is a field of forces within which the agents occupy positions ... The agents react to these relations of force, to these structures ... while being, therefore, constrained by the forces inscribed in these fields and being determined by these forces ... they are able to act upon these fields”. This accords neatly with James’ (2011: 335) suggestion that the broker is both “product and producer”. It should be noted here that Bourdieu’s agonistic ontology of the social world is consciously employed here as a valuable and necessary counter to the normative valorisation of collaborative engagement by synergetic fisheries governance theory.

In terms of the focus of this paper, the principal field is the ‘field of small-scale fisheries in Ocean View’. This field is ‘symbolic’, in the sense that it is constituted by the relationships, ideologies, cultural knowledge and discursive practices of local fishers and community-based representatives. At the same time, this field is also ‘material’, in the sense that it is constituted by the Cape Peninsula’s coastal ecosystem and fisheries resources, and by Ocean View’s small-scale fishing activities and economics. The

structure of the field is defined in part, by the asymmetrical power relations between and among fishers and representatives, and these power relations determine which community members gain access to fishing rights and other benefits granted by the state. Depending on their position in the field, fishers and representatives act to reinforce, contest, or harness the power asymmetries inherent in the field of small-scale fisheries in Ocean View.

When acting within this field, individual fishers and representatives draw on their own particular set of 'capitals', which can be described as material and symbolic powers (and which generally correspond with an actor's field position). Capitals can be accumulated, utilised or depleted, and manifest variously in the form of knowledge, skills and resources that fishers and representatives draw on to reinforce or improve their position in the field. In crude synopsis, the principal categories of capitals are 'social capital' (networks of social relationships), 'economic capital' (money or property), and 'cultural capital' (emic knowledge and skill) (Bourdieu 1986). 'Cultural capital' can be described as a body of knowledge, skills, and, discursive practices accumulated through an emic process of "total, early, imperceptible learning", which occurs from "the earliest days of life" (Bourdieu 1986: 47).⁷ Though cultural capital is founded upon emic and 'imperceptible' learning, this paper will demonstrate that it can also be accumulated vicariously by outsiders through strategic appropriation, and consequently, exploited for political and economic gain.

Two specific kinds of cultural capital are fundamental in shaping community-based representation within the field of small-scale fisheries in Ocean View. The first is cultural capital that is specific to the local fisheries field, and which consists of knowledge and skills associated with the harvesting of fisheries species (including fishing practices, discourses, local ecological dynamics). The second form is cultural capital in the wider 'bureaucratic field', or more simply: officialdom. This kind of cultural capital consists of knowledge and skills that are largely accumulated through formal education, including the capacities of reading, writing, numeracy, and verbal communication (with competency in English being of particular strategic importance).

Most community-based representatives have low levels of cultural capital in the fisheries field, when compared with their fisher constituents, who generally have a vast body of knowledge and skill relating to local fishing practices and ecological dynamics that has been accumulated through years of direct personal experience, and through inculcation by family and close social relationships. In contrast to these fishers, the majority of community-based representatives participate exclusively in shore-based activities relating to political representation, administration and marketing support. These 'non-fisher' representatives do not personally harvest fisheries species (often having only entered the local fisheries field relatively recently), and they have limited personal experience, knowledge and skills with regard to local fishing practices and social dynamics.

However, non-fisher representatives in Ocean View generally possess more cultural capital in the bureaucratic field, when compared with the fishers they represent. Non-fisher representatives typically have stronger reading, writing, numeracy and verbal communication skills, and a better grasp of the English language than their fisher constituents do, making these representatives more equipped to navigate the world of officialdom. Many fishers encountered during this research referred to these non-fisher

representatives using the ironic terms 'literate' or 'clever' people. Nevertheless, despite these negative perceptions, the possession of this 'bureaucratic' form of cultural capital was a primary reason why community-based representatives were endorsed by many local fishers, and others involved (in some way) in local fisheries-related activities - it was a set of knowledge, practices and discourses with which they were not adept, but whose strategic utility they recognised.

This recognition affirms Acheson's (1981) observation about the common reliance of fishers around the world upon intermediary actors (whether marketers or community-based representatives) to act on their behalf in relation to matters for which they have neither the time, energy, knowledge or practical ability. For small-scale fishers in South Africa, the value of cultural capital in the bureaucratic field has appreciated during the post-apartheid period, primarily because the administrative burden that fishers bear in order to continue practicing their livelihoods and culture has increased as a consequence of small-scale fisheries becoming more formalised and regulated (see Hersoug & Isaacs 2001; Hauck & Kroese 2006). Crucially, the bureaucratisation of fishing has precipitated a significant increase in the amount of administrative paperwork required to apply for fishing permits and quotas. However, many of Ocean View's fishers (particularly the more senior fishers) find formal documents intimidating and difficult to decipher. Nevertheless, they are compelled to engage with these bureaucratic artefacts in order to pursue their livelihoods, and thereby sustain themselves and their families. As a result, these fishers are forced to rely on the assistance of 'clever' third parties such as community-based representatives who possess the requisite form of cultural capital. This places fishers in a position of vulnerability, while placing community-based representatives in a position of strategic advantage—an advantage that some representatives exploit to gain and exercise power over their constituents.

The asymmetries in cultural capital between small-scale fishers and their representatives are compounded by asymmetries in economic capital. More specifically, many community-based representatives in Ocean View have greater access to economic capital than their constituency. According to local fishers, this economic capital is constituted by the representatives' personal financial wealth, as well as being sourced from marketing agents outside of the community who work for large fishing companies (Veteran Fisher 5, pers comm 20/02/12; Veteran Fisher 13, pers comm 13/07/12; Fisher 6, pers comm 24/10/12).⁸

In a context of structural poverty, community-based representatives who have relatively privileged access to economic capital are able to exert a degree of influence (and even control) over their constituency, most notably through the provision of monetary loans and advances (see below). Economic capital also provides some representatives with a strategic advantage over other representatives in Ocean View - those representatives who can afford telephones, internet connections and transport are able to discharge their duties more effectively than those representatives who have very limited access to economic capital.

To explore the micro-politics of community-based fisher representation in greater detail, the discussion now turns to one of the most prominent representative organisations operating within the fractured and volatile Ocean View, referred to here as the Association of Ocean View Fishers (AOF).⁹ Attention is focused on the AOF leadership, not only because of the influential role they played in the field of small-

scale fisheries in Ocean View, but also, more fundamentally, because their strategic actions provide a case study that illustrates with stark clarity how community-based political representation has the potential to serve as a brokerage mechanism for local elites to gain and exercise further power, often at the expense of the livelihoods and democratic rights of local small-scale fishers.

The AOF was formally established in 2005 by three closely linked residents who serve as the leadership of the organisation. These residents, referred to here as AOF Rep 1, AOF Rep 2, and AOF Rep 3, originally established the organisation to meet the local demand among fishers for consultants who could navigate the increasingly complicated bureaucratic maze of commercial fishing rights application processes. Over time, the AOF leadership also became actively involved in the interim relief system (AOF Rep 2, pers comm 28/09/12). Many of the AOF's roughly 100 loosely aligned members were relative newcomers to fisheries (roughly less than ten years involvement). The majority of members were interim relief permit holders, but several members had commercial fishing rights for linefish, WCRL and abalone.

The AOF leadership positioned themselves as being embedded in the culture, relationships and practices of Ocean View's small-scale fishing community. AOF Rep 2 had resided in Ocean View for more than 40 years, and stated that he was involved in fisheries since the age of 16, and that both his late parents had participated directly in local fishing activities. AOF Rep 1 and AOF Rep 3 made similar claims - according to AOF Rep 3: "I'm coming from a fishing community, I have lived there all my life" (AOF Rep 3, pers comm, 29/03/11).

AOF Rep 1 was the executive chairperson, and the most prominent of the AOF leadership, conducting most of the daily work of running the organisation and representing its members. AOF Rep 2 played a principal but less formal and conspicuous role in the grouping, while AOF Rep 3 provided organisational and representational support. The AOF leadership conducted a number of activities in their role as community-based fisher representatives. These activities included political representation in fisheries governance and management processes, as well as more practical services such as negotiating marketing agreements, and providing administrative support.

At the time of this research, AOF Rep 1 and AOF Rep 3 were formally recognised by DAFF to represent interim relief fishers in Ocean View. According to her colleague, AOF Rep 1 attended weekly meetings with DAFF officials, and reported back to AOF members on an equally regular basis (AOF Rep 2, pers comm 28/09/12). As AOF Rep 2 explained, he and his colleagues had considerable social capital in the form of close working relationships with high level officials: "we sit down with government ..." (AOF Rep 2, pers comm 28/09/12). AOF Rep 2 emphasised that the AOF leadership's relationships with government officials enabled them to access considerably more information about fisheries governance processes than other representatives in Ocean View. He claimed that the AOF leadership honoured their obligation to their constituency by transmitting relevant information in a regular and transparent manner: "the right information is being passed down". He also explained that the AOF leadership had started sharing information with fishers outside of their constituency: "we used to have closed meetings, but now we have more open meetings" (AOF Rep 2, pers comm 28/09/12).

The AOF leadership's efficacy as fisher representatives was also based on their extensive cultural capital in the bureaucratic field. For instance, AOF Rep 1 had strong

literacy, communication and administrative skills compared with most of the fishers she represented—as AOF Rep 2 observed: “because of the work she used to do ... she’s a bit more ... brainy... the fishermen respect her”, adding proudly that she was addressed by members as “Ma’am”. Instrumental to this ‘trust’ and ‘respect’ was the AOF leadership’s ability to harness their particular set of capitals to produce tangible results for their members. The AOF leadership was consistently able to: negotiate favourable marketing agreements, issue monetary loans, and secure access to fishing permits and quotas. As AOF Rep 2 described, this proven track record is what made the AOF particularly successful in relation to other representative organisations in Ocean View. He argued that fishers in Ocean View were awakening to the fact that the AOF produces concrete results, but that some fishers remained with other community-based representatives such as the Democratic Fishers Organisation (DFO) out of stubborn loyalty.¹⁰ He asserted that this loyalty was to their own detriment, because these representatives could not provide tangible benefits for their members in the way that the AOF could. According to AOF Rep 2, these fishers were being negatively affected by their continued allegiance to “the same people that make them dead by the department”. In contrast, he argued that: “our fishers are empowered!” (AOF Rep 2, pers comm 28/09/12).

As the eventual implementation of the SSF Policy is widely anticipated to create the conditions for the development of local fishing operations, the AOF leadership plans to move towards supplying all of the Ocean View fishing community’s fisheries-related needs, including fishing gear, vessel maintenance and repair, assistance with fishing rights applications, marketing, administration, as well as support with the development of new institutional arrangements being introduced by the government (such as co-operatives and community-based fishing rights). In AOF Rep 2’s words, the vision of the AOF leadership is to become “service providers for my community” (AOF Rep 2, pers comm 28/09/12).

As Mosse and Lewis (2006) and James (2011) emphasise, brokers are adept at the strategic adoption and self-portrayal of disparate identities, discourses, and practices, so as to legitimise their activities. In this case, the AOF leadership portrayed themselves as legitimate political representatives deeply rooted in the culture and practices of the local fishing community, this self-portrayal conflicted in many ways with the empirical evidence, and was strongly contested by local fishers who were former AOF members, and by local fishers unaffiliated to the AOF, the majority of whom would be considered ‘bona fide fishers’ by even the most stringent criteria. Indeed, the research was saturated with data supporting a counter narrative to the one presented by the AOF leadership. Contrary to their own claims, AOF Rep 1 and AOF Rep 2 only became formally involved in the local fisheries field in 2004, when they both retired after nearly thirty years of permanent employment in relatively low-level government positions.¹¹ Furthermore, the AOF leadership’s involvement in fisheries-related activities was exclusively shore-based: they did not personally harvest fisheries species for their livelihood, and in this sense, could not be described as ‘fishers’ (though AOF Rep 2 occasionally skippered one of the AOF’s vessels). A respected fishing veteran in Ocean View observed that the AOF leadership “don’t know the fishers”, and that “AOF Rep 2 ... comes out of a government job ... now he thinks he’s the boss of the beach! He’s not a fisherman!” (Veteran Fisher 1, pers comm 02/11/12).

There was also consensus among knowledgeable and experienced non-AOF fishers in Ocean View that the AOF leadership did not engage with, or represent their

constituency in a democratic manner. Indeed, the AOF leadership had a kind of ‘strategically paternalistic’ approach to their constituency, affirming the moral ambiguity of brokerage, and the way brokers are able to “cobble together a collection of divergent discourse and practices” (James 2011: 327), in this case an uneasy blend of authoritarianism and (ostensibly) responsive, democratic representation. As AOF Rep 1 argued at a DAFF community meeting in 2013: “they’re [fishers] not business people ... they need to move with people they can trust” (AOF Rep 1, pers comm 19/08/13). AOF Rep 2 also claimed that the AOF’s members trusted the leadership to such an extent that they would routinely state: “we don’t want to ask questions” (AOF Rep 2, pers comm 28/09/12).

Many fishers in Ocean View argued that this strategic paternalism reflected the AOF leadership’s contempt for their constituency. One of the most esteemed veteran fishers on the Cape Peninsula (who was an Applicant in the Equality Court class action, and who was not affiliated to the AOF) described how AOF Rep 1 once told him “you [fishers] must just go to sea, and let us talk, because you don’t have the right mind-set for this sort of thing”. According to him, AOF Rep 1’s implied reasoning behind this statement was “because you are incompetent” (Veteran Fisher 17, pers comm 09/02/12).¹² For fishers such as this, the AOF leadership’s strategic paternalism subverted the democratic rights of AOF members, and opened the way for their exploitation.

A significant proportion of fishers in Ocean View therefore described the AOF as a ‘household forum’, or ‘kitchen committee’—colloquial terms for a local organisation run by, and in the interests of a small group of tightly-connected individuals (sometimes kin relations). More specifically, these fishers perceived the AOF leadership as a local elite grouping who sought to capture the position of community-based political representatives, and thereby to capture economic opportunities emerging in the local field of small-scale fisheries (such as those associated with the interim relief and SSF Policy processes). Given the gravity of these claims, it should be emphasised here that the validity of these counter claims were rigorously assessed and confirmed in relation to the weight of the data collected, and through a systematic process of triangulation conducted on the basis of prolonged, in-depth interaction with a large and heterogeneous sample of Ocean View residents. The critique of the AOF leadership was often articulated most clearly by respected veteran fishers, in part because their elevated status in the Ocean View fishing community offered a measure of social protection:

- “AOF Rep 1 and AOF Rep 2 were working for all these years for the government ... then when this thing came in [post-apartheid reform of fishing rights allocations] then they left all of that ... now they’re the main ... they’re the fish organisation—everything” (Veteran Fisher 13, pers comm 13/07/12);
- “they’re like sharks ... they just eat you up” (Veteran Fisher 7, pers comm 02/07/12).
- “we used to belong to them [AOF] ... but as I said ... the misconduct that went on there ... now someone else sits with the bread! But anyway ... I don’t want to talk too much ... in case they eat me up” (Veteran Fisher 1, pers comm 02/11/12).
- “those people are just out for themselves ... they’re stirring Ocean View up ... how did they come into their position?” (Veteran Fisher 13, pers comm 13/07/12).

To understand how the AOF leadership was able to occupy and exploit the position of dominant community-based representatives in Ocean View, it is necessary to

consider the inter-related strategies and tactical manoeuvres through which they constructed an appearance of legitimacy for themselves. These strategies included: i) the accumulation and exploitation of cultural and social capital in fisheries and civic engagement; ii) the building of a large constituency of 'bona fide' and thus legitimate fishers; iii) and facilitating the entry of non-fishers into Ocean View's small-scale fishery.

Speaking at a DAFF community meeting in Ocean View in 2013, AOF Rep 1 explained that: "fishing is a tradition, an inheritance" (AOF Rep 1, pers comm 22/03/13). In the context of small-scale fisheries governance in South Africa, representatives would routinely make claims to this 'tradition' or 'inheritance' as a means to legitimise their role as a representative of small-scale fishers. To this end, the AOF leadership employed the strategy of accumulating fisheries-specific cultural capital in order to bolster their claims to be rooted in the local culture and practices of fishing, and thus to be legitimate representatives. This strategy involves interacting with those who are embedded in the local fishing community, with the purpose of extracting information about local fishing-related practices, beliefs, values, history, social relations, and discourses. Through this strategy, the AOF leadership was able to accumulate, and subsequently demonstrate to outsiders (such as DAFF officials) the requisite amount of fisheries-specific cultural capital, creating the impression of being deeply embedded members of the local fishing community whom they represented.

Several research participants in Ocean View observed this vicarious accumulation of cultural capital. During one interview, a non-fisher resident in his early sixties (whose son had an abalone quota), described how "clever people" had visited fisher households in Ocean View "to take people's histories" for their own opportunistic purposes (Non-Fisher 1, pers comm 02/07/12). One of the established women fishers in Ocean View also described how AOF Rep 1 had exploited the identity and heritage of fishers in Ocean View, exclaiming that: "she's using our legacy to elevate herself!" (Fisher 2, pers comm 22/10/12). Affirming this claim, a veteran fisher (whose 82 year old mother was the most senior retired woman fisher in Ocean View) observed that the local fishing culture was increasingly being viewed as a strategic resource, arguing that "it's only now" that non-fishers are eager to claim this heritage:

"now there's new people coming in, they want to give people the impression that they knew all these things from the past. And what happens is ... they come to my mother, they come to people, and they ask questions, they [fishers] start talking, she wants to share. And then they use that same information for their [fishing right] applications, as the knowledge she had ... What gets you normally is, when they say the amount of years they've been involved in the industry. And which you know it's not the truth, because you know where the person comes from ... how can you have been for 25 years in the [fishing] industry, but you were 20 years in another industry?!" (Veteran Fisher 3, pers comm 22/06/12).

It was also apparent that the AOF leadership had employed the strategy of accumulating cultural capital and social capital in the broader field of civic engagement. Several research participants in Ocean View indicated that the AOF leadership were involved in a number of local civic structures related to community housing and social development: as Veteran Fisher 5, a local fisher and representative: "Whatever you start, people like them latch onto it" (Veteran Fisher 5, pers comm 03/02/12). He explained that the

AOF leadership's civic engagement has enabled them to accumulate knowledge about community-based representation, to establish their identity as 'community leaders,' and to build their social networks within the field of civic engagement. Through this process cultural and social capital accumulation, the AOF leadership's position as community-based representatives has become institutionalised, giving them a veneer of legitimacy to those without detailed knowledge of Ocean View's community politics.

Claiming to represent a large constituency of bona fide fishers was another key strategy employed by the AOF leadership, and other community-based representatives as a means to support their own claims to legitimacy. Recognition of this claim by actors outside of the community provides a rich strategic resource for representatives, potentially facilitating their inclusion in fisheries governance processes, and enabling them to exercise a degree of political leverage in those processes. As one fisher explained in regard to AOF Rep 2's use of this strategy: "the more people he can send to the department, the stronger he is" (Veteran Fisher 14, pers comm 13/07/12). There are also financial opportunities that emerged from representing a large number of people. The AOF leadership were known to charge a fee for securing interim relief permits and commercial fishing rights, negotiating marketing arrangements, and for conducting general administrative services on their behalf for their members—according to one veteran fisher: "it's about money" (Veteran Fisher 16, pers comm 09/02/12).

In their strategic endeavour to build the size of their 'constituency,' the AOF leadership utilised a number of tactics. The first was the tactical use of information. In their role as mediators of the flow of information between their constituency and other actors (such as government officials, industry representatives, NGOs and fisheries scientists), the AOF leadership were well positioned to mediate this flow of information in accordance with their own interests and agendas. This advantage was multiplied in a context of information scarcity, as Veteran Fisher 5 argued: "There's no direction coming from DAFF, and this is sowing confusion in communities" (Veteran Fisher 5, pers comm 15/06/12). Given that this research was conducted during a period of dramatic change in South African fisheries policy and legislation, the lack of communication from DAFF officials had contributed to deep and widespread uncertainty among fishers in Ocean View regarding processes that fundamentally affected their lives. In the words of one fisher: "information is very important! If you don't get the information, you don't know what's going on" (Fisher 1, pers comm 03/07/12).

In this context, information was a valuable commodity, and a powerful political tool. With their formal and informal access to, and relationships with government officials, the AOF leadership was able to obtain information which they used to increase their constituency, and to build and exercise reinforced power over them. It was often observed by research participants in Ocean View that fishers would gravitate towards those representatives who had more information—as Veteran Fisher 5 put it, "fishers migrate according to which community organisation has information. Even if that information is incorrect or distorted ... just as long as that organisation has something to tell" (Veteran Fisher 5, pers comm 09/04/12). One fisher (aligned to the DFO) argued that it was common knowledge in the Ocean View fishing community that the AOF leadership had the most information regarding the formation of co-operatives. However, he described his unsuccessful attempt to obtain some of this information from them, exclaiming in frustration: "they're holding it tight!" (Fisher 3, pers comm 23/10/12). Two veteran fishers (who

were affiliated to the DFO) also noted that on several occasions during 2011 and 2012, they had attempted to attend the AOF's meetings to seek information about co-operatives, interim relief, and the SSF Policy, but were told that non-members were not allowed to attend (Veteran Fisher 11, 12, pers comm 24/06/12).

The AOF leadership's ability to produce tangible results was central to their strategy of expanding their constituency, and was particularly valuable given the widespread economic insecurity experienced by people in Ocean View. Here we see an instance of the moral ambiguity that surrounds the broker. Though relations of "personalized dependence" undermine the autonomy of the client-constituent, brokers do "promise plausible opportunities for their followers" (James 2011: 327).

According to several non-members, one of the main tactics employed by the AOF leadership to produce tangible results (and thereby build their constituency) was that of the monetary advance—a common feature of small-scale fisheries internationally, and referred to in Afrikaans by fishing communities along the southern and western coast of South Africa as a 'voorskot' (Veteran Fisher 5, pers comm 23/09/11; Fisher 1, pers comm 03/07/12; Veteran Fisher 3, pers comm 14/07/12). A 'voorskot' usually takes the form of an advance on the money a fisher expects to earn from their commercial fishing right or interim relief permit, and is usually paid during the off-season, when many fishers are financially desperate, and thus vulnerable. My research assistant described his perception of the power of the voorskot as employed by the AOF leadership: "It's like they've brought this fast track ... they are able to bail people out ... to bring quick solutions to people's immediate needs ... And that's what people in our situation need now in South Africa" (Research Assistant, pers comm 22/06/12). The use of the voorskot tactic appears to have contributed to the AOF's strategy of building their constituency, while simultaneously establishing a debtor-creditor relationship through which to impose obligations of loyalty, and to defend against dissent. As one veteran fisher explained in relation to the AOF leadership's use of the voorskot: "Yes ... it's money that talks" (Veteran Fisher 14, pers comm 13/07/12).

The AOF leadership also had a proven ability to produce tangible results by securing commercial fishing rights and interim relief permits (indeed, they each had an individual commercial fishing right). Since the Equality Court case in 2007, they focused their efforts on interim relief—both AOF members and non-members expressed the view that if someone desired an interim relief permit, their chances were significantly improved if they sought the AOF leadership's assistance. One veteran fisher observed how AOF Rep 2 had gathered people into the AOF fold with the promise of securing interim relief permits on their behalf: "Yes ...then he walks with books ... he drives around the area, then he goes to the homes ... 'man, you can get something [a permit]'" (Veteran Fisher 13, pers comm 13/0/712). Another veteran fisher described similar observations: "they're just scratching [people] together. They drive around the area, they've got lots of money to buy petrol, and all that ... he drives ... to go collect people" (Veteran Fisher 1, 02/11/12). A young linefisher concurred with these observations, adding that the AOF leadership exploited the emotive discourses of 'community' and 'empowerment' in their efforts to convince fishers of the potential of co-operatives: "they promise you through the heart, and through the mouth" (Fisher 4, pers comm 23/10/12).

Despite the scepticism among bona fide fishers in Ocean View, the AOF leadership's claims have found a more sympathetic audience in the form of non-fisher residents in

Ocean View who are attracted by the economic opportunities emerging in relation to co-operatives, and the allocation of fishing quotas and permits. By formally assisting non-fisher residents to pursue these opportunities, the AOF leadership has been able, not only to enlarge their constituency, but also to secure private economic gains for themselves. At a DAFF community meeting in August 2013, AOF Rep 1 argued strongly that “we must prioritise bona fide fishers!” (AOF Rep 1, pers comm 19/08/13). However, in their effort to expand their constituency, and to capture greater benefits from their position as representatives, the AOF leadership appeared not to have discriminated between those people who were fully dependent on personally harvesting marine resources for a living, and those who had little or no personal involvement in fisheries. By securing commercial fishing rights and interim relief permits for people who did not fish, the AOF leadership were alleged to have secured economic benefits for themselves, while facilitating the entry of non-fishers into the local field of small-scale fisheries at the expense of many bona fide fishers in Ocean View.

In the context of interim relief and the SSF Policy, the entry point for non-fishers is the verification process, whereby prospective permit applicants are required to ‘prove’ their credentials as ‘bona fide fishers’, in accordance with the government’s policy focus on restoring the rights of small-scale fishers who had been excluded by the MLRA and apartheid era fisheries policies. The fisher verification process illustrates precisely what James (2011) has documented in relation brokerage and rural land reform in South Africa: in essence, the post-apartheid state’s developmental and re-distributionist approach has entailed the creation of “new edifices of social engineering” which categorise “people into types and proposed corresponding kinds of property ownership”, and thereby constructing “new spaces and new repertoires for entrepreneurial brokerage” (James 2011: 321). These constructed categories “are productive of new social, cultural and political identities as well as acting upon pre-existing ones” (2011: 327), enabling the “recruiting by elites” (in this case the AOF leadership) of “strategically mobilized groups” (James 2011: 325). During a road show to discuss the implementation of the SSF Policy, one DAFF management official explained that:

“We will have to look very closely at who is a small-scale fisher ... Let me be very clear, we intend to target fisher folk, who’ve made a living from the sea”, this is “not for the lawyers, doctors, teachers ... Because of the financial benefits people have been seeing in these processes, people are infiltrating and causing chaos ... and only for their own benefit” (DAFF Director 1, pers comm 19/08/13).

One fisher observed that representatives who resided in the community—and thus participated in verification—had an incentive to endorse their own members in verification meetings, because they would later take a percentage of the price per kilogram arranged on behalf of those members: “the more people you can control, the better for you” (Fisher 13, pers comm 09/02/12). Another fisher alleged that AOF Rep 1 and AOF Rep 2 had been submitting verification lists composed largely of non-fishers: “they just want to go for the numbers ... you want to run as many people as possible” (Veteran Fisher 16, pers comm 09/02/12). Echoing the views of fishers who did not belong to the AOF, one fisher described the AOF leadership’s *modus operandi*: “they want your vote, they want your name, and then they take it from there ...”, however, he stressed that “it’s only a fisherman

who can identify a fisherman ... we all know each other ... we know 'he is catching fish'" (Fisher 1, pers comm 03/07/12).

The indiscriminate facilitation of access to commercial fishing rights and interim relief permits by the AOF leadership contributed towards the broader trend in Ocean View, in which fishing has become an increasingly attractive option as a source of income in a context of structural poverty and unemployment. As one veteran fisher explained: "Look, like here in Ocean View, here there's almost 2000 fishermen who aren't fishermen, where do they come from? ... The whole of Ocean View is now full ... just fishermen ... but they're not fishermen!" (Veteran Fisher 13, pers comm 13/07/12). Another veteran fisher argued that "the department, the government just gives to everybody, it's not, in a sense, just purely for fishermen ..." (Veteran Fisher 3, pers comm 22/06/12). A local trek fisher also observed that "nowadays, everyone wants to be a fisher ... The department made one mistake, by giving the wrong people permits. Now the clever people come in ... it's not [supposed to be] about literacy, it's about giving people a fair chance" (Fisher 1, pers comm 03/07/12). This claim was affirmed by a veteran fisher, who claimed that: "Now they're smuggling themselves in ... now that they hear about the quotas, they come, everybody comes ... They apply for quotas, and they get it ... and my friend here [Veteran Fisher 2] sits with nothing ..." (Veteran Fisher 1, pers comm 02/11/12).

There was consensus among these and other non-AOF fishers encountered during this research that the majority of the AOF's membership was composed of non-fishers. Some veteran fishers mentioned going on several occasions to AOF meetings, only to be told that non-members were not allowed. From the doorway, they claimed to have observed a significant percentage of non-fishers present at these meetings (Veteran Fisher 11, 12, pers comm 24/06/12). It was also alleged that the AOF leadership "say they're representing fishers, but who are the fishers they're representing?" (Fisher 1, pers comm 03/07/12). One veteran fisher explained that, as a highly knowledgeable and experienced fisher, he was not recognised or taken seriously at AOF meetings: "Yes, I was already at the meetings. But those meetings of the AOF, I don't worry about them anymore ... what will I do with myself sitting there? You don't even get seen" (Veteran Fisher 15, pers comm 13/07/12).

Conclusion—community-based political representation as brokerage: implications for fisheries governance

The Ocean View case reveals some of the micro-political practices and power dynamics that constitute the latent 'dark side' of community-based political representation. It also highlights the conditions conducive to its manifestation, which arise largely from the introduction of political and economic opportunities into a community context of structural poverty, conflict, asymmetrical power relations, and minimal democratic accountability. In the hands of a local elite grouping in Ocean View, community-based representation became an instrument of brokerage utilised to gain and exercise power, rather than serving as an instrument for empowering their constituency and the broader fishing community. The AOF leadership harnessed their specific set of material and symbolic capitals in pursuit of a range of strategies and tactics, with the aim of fabricating a foundation for their claims to be legitimate representatives. In so doing, they manoeuvred themselves into the position of dominant community-based fisher

representatives in Ocean View, and from this position, were able to intercept economic benefits intended to flow to their constituents and the broader fishing community.

As the Ocean View case demonstrates, when community-based representation manifests as a form of brokerage practiced by local elites, it tends to undermine the *democratic rights* of constituents and non-constituents alike. The ability of constituents (whether fishers or non-fishers) to engage with government officials and other external actors can easily be compromised by the opaque mediation of community-based 'broker-representatives,' who distort the communication of information between constituents and external actors. At the same time, non-constituent fishers are also negatively affected because broker-representatives are often in a sufficiently dominant position to monopolise information flowing from fisheries management officials and other external actors into the broader fishing community. Furthermore, power asymmetries and a lack of formal mechanisms for democratic accountability mean that constituents are unable to ensure that broker-representatives operate in a transparent and responsive manner.

Consequently, the lack of democracy makes it possible for community-based broker-representatives to subvert local fishers' *economic interests*. Here the ambiguous effects of broker-representation becomes clear. On one hand, the AOF leadership provided tangible economic benefits to their constituents, securing a source of income for the latter by facilitating access to fishing permits and quotas, selling catches to outside buyers, and issuing monetary advances. The tangible, immediate nature of these benefits is especially significant to people living in a context of structural poverty. Thus, to understand the phenomenon of brokerage in Ocean View and other communities living in similar conditions of material deprivation and insecurity requires an explicit recognition of, and engagement with the substantive contribution that brokers make to local livelihoods, income generation, and food security. On the other hand, the AOF leadership provided economic benefits to their constituents in the context of a relationship of 'personalised dependency' and unequal power that can ultimately be seen to undermine constituents' long-term economic interests. When community-based fisher representation is co-opted into a form of brokerage, fisher constituents have minimal agency in the sale of their catches, and often receive unfavourable prices because their marketing agreements are negotiated by broker-representatives concerned primarily with the pursuit of self-interest. Moreover, fishers' agency is constrained by their financial indebtedness to broker-representatives who have provided them with monetary advances. While these advances bring short-term benefit to fishers in financial need, they establish a debtor-creditor relationship that ultimately compromises fishers' long-term economic interests. The economic interests of non-constituent fishers are also directly affected, most evidently through the loss of scarce opportunities to access fishing permits and quotas when these are intercepted by broker-representatives.

Community-based broker-representation also has implications for state fisheries management officials. To manage inshore fisheries effectively, officials must make decisions on the basis of detailed and accurate information about realities on the ground among fishing communities, including fundamental issues such as local fishing practices, patterns of regulatory compliance, and fisheries resource dynamics. Fishers are the principal holders of such information. However, when seeking to access the ground level information held by fishers, management officials usually engage with community-based representatives, rather than engaging directly with fishers. In instances where community-

based representation manifests as brokerage by local elites, the information that management officials obtain from these representatives is likely to be unreliable, directly compromising the ability of officials to make decisions that correspond with realities on the ground. Conversely, the opaque mediation of broker-representatives has the effect of subverting attempts by officials to communicate crucial governance and management-related information to fishers on the ground.

Finally, the dark side of community-based representation has implications for the analysis and theorisation of fisheries governance. As discussed in the introduction, synergetic theoretical approaches such as co-management, interactive governance, and ecosystem-based management posit the desirability and viability of a governance model in which fishers, fisheries management officials, scientists and other actors engage collaboratively as partners. However, the tendency of synergetic theory to valorise collaborative partnership leads to a vision of fisheries governance that elides the role of asymmetrical power and *realpolitik* practices. In the context of community-based representation, the effect is to predispose the observer to de-emphasise or overlook the dark side latent within this vital institutional link in the chain of fisheries governance, and how the manifestation of this dark side in the form of brokerage by local elites might jeopardise the practical feasibility of collaborative engagement between fishers and external actors.

The Ocean View case affirms the need for fisheries governance theory to focus greater attention on the phenomenon of community-based broker-representation. This is particularly important because the micro-political practices, power relations and conditions illustrated in the Ocean View case are present in many other coastal communities in South Africa, and in the Global South more broadly.

While synergetic theoretical approaches make an important contribution towards the formulation of new modes of fisheries governance that are more inclusive, de-centred and participatory than conventional modes of governance, there is reason to argue that the explanatory and policy utility of these theoretical approaches is compromised by their valorisation of collaborative partnership. To better understand the fraught political realities of community-based representation—a microcosm of the larger, multi-scale governance system—requires the pursuit of a theoretical perspective that directly interrogates the power relations and strategic practices that are fundamental in shaping the nature and outcomes of fisheries governance processes.

Endnotes

¹The term ‘fisher’ is used broadly here, and unless otherwise specified, it refers to people who personally catch fish for a living.

²‘*Realpolitik*’ is defined here simply as: self-interested, zero-sum political strategy and action.

³It should be explicitly recognised that the apartheid-era racial categories of ‘white’, ‘coloured’, ‘black’ and ‘Indian’ are social constructs. Yet these racial categories continue to find expression in popular discourse, and in South Africa’s policy and legislative frameworks. The racial category of ‘coloured’ was used by the apartheid state to refer to Afrikaans-speaking people who resided mainly in the Cape region, and who were deemed neither ‘white’ nor ‘black’ due to their mixed racial ancestry (Adhikari 2005).

⁴The concept ‘bona fide fisher’ is widely used in the context of small-scale fisheries governance in South Africa. Though it is a subjective and contested concept, ‘bona fide

fisher' features as the fundamental unit of governance in South Africa's new small-scale fisheries paradigm, as mandated by the Small-Scale Fishing Policy (2012). This concept has also been incorporated into the discourse of small-scale fishers and other residents in marginalised coastal communities.

⁵Two fishers from Ocean View who participated in this research were named as Applicants in the Equality Court case.

⁶DAFF implemented interim relief through the allocation of annual fishing permits to roughly 1500 people in the Western Cape and Northern Cape Provinces who were identified as small-scale fishers. These permits were not allocated in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal Provinces, because access to fisheries resources is governed under the authority of provincial conservation management agencies, rather than under the authority of the national fisheries department (as is the case in the other two coastal provinces).

⁷Bourdieu's conception of 'capital' pre-dates, and is distinct from the conception of 'capital' employed in the context of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. The latter presents a conception of capital reduced to an instrumental 'asset' for meeting basic material needs (epitomized by the problematic neoliberal notion of 'natural capital'), while also de-emphasising structural asymmetries of power and political contestation in the distribution of capitals between different actors at the household, local, national and global scale. In contrast with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, Bourdieu's conception of capital is founded on an agonistic view of social relations, and is thus fundamentally political: crucially, he posits that an individual's specific set of symbolic and material capacities (or capitals) is a direct function of the multi-scale, structural power relations in which that individual is embedded.

⁸It should be emphasised here that the term 'wealth' is relative to the socio-economic context in Ocean View.

⁹The names of all organisations and individuals have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

¹⁰The DFO was established in 1995 (having evolved from an earlier organisation formed in 1992), with both its leadership and constituency being composed of bona fide fishers. This organisation played a central role in the political representation of fishers in Ocean View since the start of the post-apartheid era, but in late 2010, the DFO's elected leadership were deposed in an alleged coup by the AOF leadership, who then took over the formal positions of DFO executive chairperson and deputy chairperson. With the elected leadership removed from formal office, the DFO was effectively rendered inactive.

¹¹Their specific government positions have been withheld for the sake of maintaining their anonymity.

¹²This fisher sadly passed away due to ill health during the period of this research. His death was deeply mourned by Ocean View's fishing community.

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OJS is the sole author, and conducted the research upon which the paper is based.

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

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