

Shore Knowledge, Traditional Wisdom:

Project Report from the Second CHERISH Traditional Ecological Knowledge Workshop

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CHERISH
Coastal Heritage, Innovation, Tradition and Sea-growth
The seaweed harvesting in the Atlantic



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All report photos: CHERISH 2019, unless otherwise stated.



Introduction: Setting the Scene

This report summarises the events which occurred during the second traditional ecological knowledge workshop within the CHERISH project, held in Viana do Castelo -Alto Minho, Portugal.

The main objective of the CHERISH project is to improve regional development policies, to protect and promote cultural heritage in fishing communities in order to boost the attractiveness of these regions for businesses, citizens and tourists.

The TEK workshop was a one-day event that covered both practical aspects of TEK within the Alto Minho region, and a round table discussion with CHERISH partners on how to progress their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) work. These discussions resulted in a work plan being produced for each partner.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

For the purposes of this report we use the definition that TEK is “the cumulative body of knowledge held by community members due to long affiliations to specific landscapes and generational transmission. The term “knowledge” refers in the context of fisheries to the way fishing communities know their waters and seas. It is usually expressed in local languages and dialects, including specific terms for fish, weather, sea conditions, waves, currents and place names.”



Voices of TEK - Alto Minho

A number of examples of traditional ecological knowledge within the Alto Minho region were presented to the CHERISH partners during the second TEK workshop, they are briefly summarised below:

Pesqueiras do rio Minho

The Pesqueiras do rio Minho (traditional fishing traps) used to catch lamprey on the river Minho were introduced to the group by Álvaro Campelo, a local anthropologist. The CHERISH partners learned about the intimate understanding of nature by local fishers of the Minho. Also, about how a successful catch relies upon centuries of knowledge passed down through families who have fished the same stone fish traps, combined with a deep understanding of lamprey behaviour. We also heard about the fishers' use of environmental indicators, like the flowering time of a specific plant and environmental factors like water level in the river, determining when and where they would put out the lamprey fish traps in the Minho.

Lugar do Real Platform

The Lugar do Real Platform, an example of dissemination of traditional knowledge, was also shown to the CHERISH partners during our time at Alto Minho. The main objective of the platform is to disseminate and enhance the social image of fishing activity and professionals of the sector in the "Aldeias do Mar" territory. As well as safeguarding the memory of "this present" in accelerated transformation. Topics covered on the platform are: Sea and Resources, Memory and Traditions, Gastronomy, and Museums. These encompassed the diverse economic, cultural, ethnographic and social dynamics related to the workers of the fishing sector. Importantly the project works directly with fishermen using audio-visual content to capture their views.

Traditional Seaweed Harvest

The group heard from a knowledge holder, Maria do Céu, about the traditional seaweed harvesting of Alto Minho. Maria is one of the last people to practice the centuries old tradition of gathering seaweed to use as fertiliser on small coastal agricultural fields. Maria told stories of how the harvest had been conducted in her childhood when many people continued this tradition. And how she is one of the last to do this work in Alto Minho. Maria also shared her observations of changes in the local environment, and how the first seaweed can now only be harvested in June, instead of in May like it was when she was a child. This is a clear demonstration of the value of TEK as a first line of observation of a changing marine environment by those with a close connection with the sea.



Building on the foundations set out in the first TEK workshop in Finland, the second workshop has resulted in a defined workplan for each of the CHERISH partners engaging in TEK work (see below). This TEK work will hopefully continue in the context of regional co-learning and dialogue on issues related to traditional ecological knowledge.

Right: Maria do Céu talking about Sargasso

Above: Seaweed storage



Regional Work Plans for CHERISH Partners

Municipality of Middelburg

Overview

Over 900 residents in the Zeeland region are directly employed in the fishing industry. They predominantly work on 50 ocean cutters which haul in a catch of sole, plaice, cod and whiting worth approximately €50million annually. Furthermore, the industry indirectly supports over 2300 employees, who mostly work in the food and catering industry.

TEK Aspects

Cherish representative Jack Dooms will go fishing with two local fishermen from Middelburg who have over 40 years of fishing experience. One of the fishermen has a 40-metre trawler with all the modern equipment. However, for the Cherish TEK work the small group will go fishing on a boat without any modern electronic equipment, and will use experience and knowledge of the fisherman in weather reading to find the best fishing spots. The discussion between the two fishermen will be recorded using notes (they will not be recorded with a recording device due to religious objections). The outcome of the fishing trip is to be published as the Middelburg TEK work. The fishing trip is scheduled for November 2019.

Action Item Suggestions:

- Have Skype call with Jack Dooms if needed before and after fishing trip.
- Suggest Jack to produce a map, to go with written document, showing the area fished with relevant information regarding fishermen's knowledge.
- Work to be presented in Dutch and English if possible.
- Work with Jack Dooms to agree a relevant platform for the work e.g. CHERISH web page

Riga Planning Region

Overview

Riga Bay has approximately 800 people currently fishing using 600 boats. There are also three FLAGS operating in this area. Quotas in general are decreasing in the region.

TEK Aspects

There is an interest to utilise TEK as a tool in the Cherish project to improve the position of fishermen in the region. In their TEK work Riga would like to focus on Lamprey (lampetra fluvialitis) as an emblematic fish species for their region. They want to document traditional fishing practices of the local fishing villages in Riga. This process will include themes such as knowledge of how lampreys are caught and how the catch is prepared. They would also like to include information regarding traditional knowledge and cultural heritage into tourist routes (being one of their policy ideas for the Riga Action Plan). There is another project in the region which is documenting the knowledge of fishermen. Twenty fishermen have already been interviewed, both on record and film. This material can potentially be used in the CHERISH project as well. In Riga Planning Region there is a special interest to reach out to young people and communicate the stories, for example “what it means to be a fisherman”.

Action Item Suggestions:

- Have Skype calls with Riga and Snowchange to further develop TEK ideas into a more detailed plan
- Decide the exact geographic extent of the work e.g.: one fishing village, the whole bay or other delineation
- Suggest local university students are used as partners in conducting interviews with local fishermen.
- Planning and preparing for future projects, i.e. possibility to incorporate knowledge or stories of fishermen in tourism in the region (such as the planned Estonian-Latvian walking trail)
- Work to be presented both in Latvian and English if possible.
- Agree a relevant platform for the work to be presented (depending on the focus group; youth, tourists, consumers)

Development Co. Pafos Aphrodite Ltd

Overview

The Port of Paphos located in the district of Kitima has long stood as an economic focal point of Cyprus, boasting a substantial commercial fishing fleet. The harbour is now home to 300 boats, the majority of which are small active fishing vessels.

TEK Aspects

For their TEK work Paphos intends to document the last few fishermen and women who know how to make traditional nets by hand. This knowledge will be recorded using video. In the interviews it is proposed that the fishermen will show in detail how to make the traditional nets. An old master net-maker has already agreed to be interviewed.

Questions about targeted fish species, mesh sizes and fishing places will be investigated (in scales agreeable for the fishermen).

Also the change in fishing practices and fisheries will be recorded; how was fishing in Paphos in the past and how does that compare with now?

In general the CHERISH project in Paphos already has very good connections and relations with the fishermen in the region and the TEK work plan is already well developed.

Action Item Suggestions:

- Skype calls with Paphos when needed
- Ask fishermen to comment on differences between past and present fishing conditions e.g. changes due to climate change and invasive fish species.
- Try to map the different fishing nets and techniques used for different fish species and different times of the year.
- Suggest workshops for young people to be lead by fishermen and wives on how to make the traditional nets by hand.
- Work to be presented in Greek and English if possible.
- Agree a relevant platform for the work to be presented

Municipality of Kavala

Overview

Four lagoon-fishing areas are located on the Nestos river delta. They are communally led with all profits being shared equally between fishermen. This is in contrary with the sea fishermen of the region who compete for the catches and profits. The fisheries cooperative president decides on the fishing strategy of all the lagoons, and how the fish will be sold to market. Each lagoon has its leader (Kapetanios) who organizes the necessary work to be done. Challenges in the region are that there are not enough fishermen and they do not earn enough from fishing to survive by fishing alone. Thus the lagoon fishing tradition is becoming endangered. Also a lot of lagoons are now hired to private companies with only two areas (Vistonis & Nestos lagoons) still being managed in the traditional way. The Nestos delta has a Natura 2000 and Ramsar designation and is included in the National Park of East Macedonia & Thrace.

TEK Aspects

The Fisheries Research Institute of Kavala has already worked to document some of the fishing practices of the lagoon systems. And is currently working on this through a Horizon 2020 project PERICLES. The institution presently has good cooperation with the fishermen of the lagoons. Kavala municipality has also held a stakeholder meeting with the fishermen. There view was they were happy to participate in this project, as usually they are contacted about fishing restrictions and not about developing the fishery or improving aspects of their life. The fishermen concluded that they want to train more young people in their fishing techniques and document the impact of pesticides from surrounding agricultural land on their traditional fishing practices. They also want to find ways to have better prices for their catches (grey mullet, grey mullet egg row-bottarga, sea bream, blue crab), which don't have a good market value. There is growing interest in incorporating tourism activities within the lagoon fishery, suggestions are: fishermen taking birdwatchers to the lagoons with their fishing boats, and the creation of a small information centre focusing on the lagoons.

Action Item Suggestions:

- Work more closely with Fisheries Research Institute of Kavala and the PERICLES project, to see what has already been documented and to create a baseline understanding of the situation within the lagoons.
- Conduct further interviews (using university students if possible) with fishermen, highlighting their concerns regarding pesticides or other problems they face.
- Use the interviews to raise the profile of fishermen in the local area and in the city of Kavala.
- Promote lagoon fish products to the local markets, getting local people familiar with products that they are unaware of, e.g. blue crab (an invasive species found in the lagoons).
- Conduct a workshop highlighting issues of the lagoons involving local young people to try to generate interest in fishing.
- Documented work to be presented in Greek and English if possible.
- Agree a relevant platform for the work to be presented on.

Suggested action/items for all regions involved in the second TEK workshop

Please produce the following items and actions and send to Snowchange:

1. Definition of the geographical area of fisheries in your region involved in CHERISH
2. Produce a map, potentially with fishing locations, zones or an overview of the coastal/maritime/freshwater fishing areas
3. Collate basic information about the fishery: How many fishermen, what practices and techniques do they use, also where do they fish and when (can be added to the map)?