The Structural Marginalization of Artisanal Fishing Communities: The Case of La Boquita

Sabrina Doyon *McGill University*

Abstract: The fishing community of La Boquita located on the West coast of Mexico provides a case study of the structural marginalization that faces artisanal fishing communities. Employing political ecology theory, this article analyzes (1) the conflicts between the community and the government regarding their property rights over the territory, (2) environmental degradation induced by tourism development, and (3) the pressures the sport fishing industry places on artisanal fishing practices. The article analyzes how these changes influence the community's socio-economic organization and jeopardize La Boquita's social reproduction.

Résumé: Les communautés de pêcheurs artisanaux font face à de nombreuses pressions provenant de diverses sources, les plongeant dans une situation de marginalisation structurelle. Le cas de la communauté de pêcheurs de La Boquita, se trouvant sur la côte Ouest su Mexique, en est un exemple. À l'aide de la théorie de l'écologie politique, nous analyserons la dynamique de cette situation à travers 1) les conflits que la communauté entretient avec le gouvernement au sujet des droits de propriété du territoire, 2) la dégradation environnementale de leur région induite par le développement touristique, et 3) les pressions des pêcheurs sportifs sur leur pratique halieutique. Nous verrons que ces variables modifient l'organisation socio-économique de la communauté et précarisent la reproduction sociale de la Boquita.

Introduction

In Mexico, the artisanal fishing sector suffers from structural marginalization characterized by, on the one hand, the growing loss of economic autonomy and control over the economic activity, natural resources, and territory of artisanal fishing communities, and, on the other hand, by these groups' increasing social exclusion and the deterioration of the internal social bonds linking their members. Three main factors have led to this situation. First, the neo-liberal reforms introduced by the federal government have led, on the one hand, to an effort of diversification leading to the promotion of industrial fisheries and, on the other hand, to the increasingly frequent sale of coastal land to foreign investors. Second, a reduction of the government's involvement in the social sector of the fisheries, especially the artisanal fishery has led both to a decrease in the size and number of loans accorded to fishing co-operatives and to a deregulation process that has eliminated the co-operatives' exclusive control over certain species. Finally, despite diverse governmental initiatives to take into account the importance, heterogeneity, and needs of the artisanal fishing communities by commissioning scientific reports and organizing meetings with community leaders, bureaucrats, and scientists, these attempts remain insufficient and often irrelevant to the population concerned because they fail to acknowledge pivotal issues: poverty, environmental degradation, resource depletion and the internal atomization of fishing communities.

This article offers a case study of structural marginalization in the artisanal fishing community of La Boquita, on the Mexican Pacific coast. This community owes its existence to the battle its members have led for the right to keep on fishing and to remain on the territory that they have now occupied for more than sixty years. As we shall see, their struggle revolves around three elements: (1) land conflicts with various government institutions that have repeatedly failed to respect community mem-

bers' property rights, (2) the encroachment of the tourism industry on residential and productive areas, which severely damages the environment and its marine resources, (3) increased pressure from the sport fishing industry to limit the community's access to some demersal species, such as tuna, swordfish, and marlin, and to certain fishing zones. The combined conflicts of this context have embroiled community members in a constant and time-consuming mobilization process, and moreover have jeopardized the community's internal cohesion, rendering its future even more precarious. Let us first consider how the theory of political ecology allows us to analyze this dynamic.

Political ecology and La Boquita's struggle

Political ecology is a relatively new research field in the social sciences. It emerged in the 1980s from political economy, human geography, ecological anthropology, and human ecology as a testimony to a growing concern with the complex interactions between humans and the environment. Even though its definition is quite elusive and somewhat variable between researchers and academic backgrounds, Blaikie and Brookfield (1987: 17) identify some basic commonalities:

> The phrase political ecology combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together, this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups within the society itself.(...)The complexity of these relationships demands an approach which can encompass interactive effects, the contribution of different geographical scales and hierarchies of socioeconomic organizations (e.g. persons, household, village, region, state, world) and the contradiction between social and environmental changes through time.

More succinctly, Bryant (1992: 13) proposes that "broadly, Third World political ecology may be defined as the attempt to understand the political sources, conditions and ramifications of environmental change." I will rely heavily in this article on Bryant's appreciation of political ecology theory as involving three elements. The first element, "the contextual sources of environmental change" (ibid.), refers to the need to relate environmental changes to state politics, interstate relations and global capitalism. The second element of the framework "addresses conflict over access, and emphasizes location-specific struggles over environment" (ibid., 14), which relate in synchronic and diachronic perspective to the issues of constraints and possibilities facing grassroots actors in their struggle over the protection of their environment with local, regional and international actors. The third element involves the "political ramifications of environmental changes," exploring "the ways that environmental change influences socio-economic inequalities, and by extension, political processes" (ibid., 24).

This perspective on political ecology allows the analysis to go beyond simple explanations that link ecological processes, such as soil erosion or deforestation, to isolated socio-economic and political factors. It leads us "to focus not on a description of the physical environmental changes themselves, but rather on the systemic way in which those changes relate to human activity" (Bryant and Bailey, 1997: 29). This more politicized conception of the environment underscores the fact that environmental changes and degradation are not neutral processes, but rather are always a manifestation of some actors' particular interests and are often the materialization of social injustice and marginalization. In this sense, political ecology emphasizes the importance of considering power relations between different actors in shaping environmental relations, and also of acknowledging the major role played by discourses in those power relations, which influences the practices and meanings of the different actors involved. Political ecology approaches the dialectical relationship of society to environment by analyzing the social relations existing between actors at all institutional scales (families, households, communities, the scientific establishment, capitalist enterprise, and the state), thus making sense of the different facets of a group's marginalization.

Numerous studies in various field settings have been conducted within a political ecology perspective. Many have focused on the analysis of soil erosion, degradation and tropical deforestation and are situated within a geographic perspective wherein the study of a natural phenomenon is coupled with a political economy analysis (Blaikie, 1985, 1988; Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987; Dauvergne, 1993; Goudie, 1993; Hecht and Cockburn, 1989; Turner, 1993). Another political ecology approach relates to studies in which the angles of analysis are the processes by which concepts and ideas about the environment are developed and appropriated by different actors (state, enterprises, communities), and how they are manipulated in order to serve particular interests (e.g., critiques of scientific discourses on forest management policies: Banuri and Marglur, 1993; Bryant, 1996a; Guha, 1989; Jewitt, 1995; Peluso, 1992; and critiques of discourses on sustainable management: Adams, 1990; Dore, 1995, 1996; the Ecologist, 1993; Escobar, 1992, 1995, 1996, 1999; Fisher, 1993; Fisher and Black, 1995; Grillo

and Stirad, 1997; Luke, 1995; Peet and Watts, 1993; Redclift, 1987). This research orientation regroups studies generally politically engaged and embedded into a perspective questioning the bases of different "facts." mediated mainly by dominant groups, concerning the environment, its management and the changes affecting it. A third approach explores the links between environment and politics through the analysis of different socio-economic characteristics such as ethnicity (Bullard, 1993; Bryant, 1996b; Colchester, 1993; Gedicks, 1996; Hong, 1987; Jones, 1995; Smith, 1994) and gender (Agarwal, 1992; Carney, 1993, 1996; Dankelman and Davidson, 1998; Jackson, 1993; Joekes et al., 1995; Leach, 1991; Rocheleau and Ross, 1995; Rocheleau et al., 1996; Schroeder, 1993; Shiva, 1988). Finally, all these studies take place in different regional settings allowing the analysis to consider the particularities of different ecosystems and community organisations (Africa: Amanor, 1994; Gezon, 1997; Jarosz, 1996; Moore, 1993; Schroeder, 1997; Latin America: Asher, 1995; Bebbington, 1996; Collinson, 1996; Painter and Durham, 1995; Schmink and Wood, 1992; Stonich, 1993, 1995, 1998; Zimmerer, 2000; Asia: Bryant, 1995, 1997; Peluso, 1992, 1993). Regional studies, which can integrate different perspectives in political ecology, have often been criticized for their lack of theoretical systematization. However, they represent a great variety of case studies encompassing synchronic and diachronic analysis as well as analysis of the different interests at stake at the micro and macro levels regarding the complex relations between environment and society, a perspective which relates closely to the case I presented here.

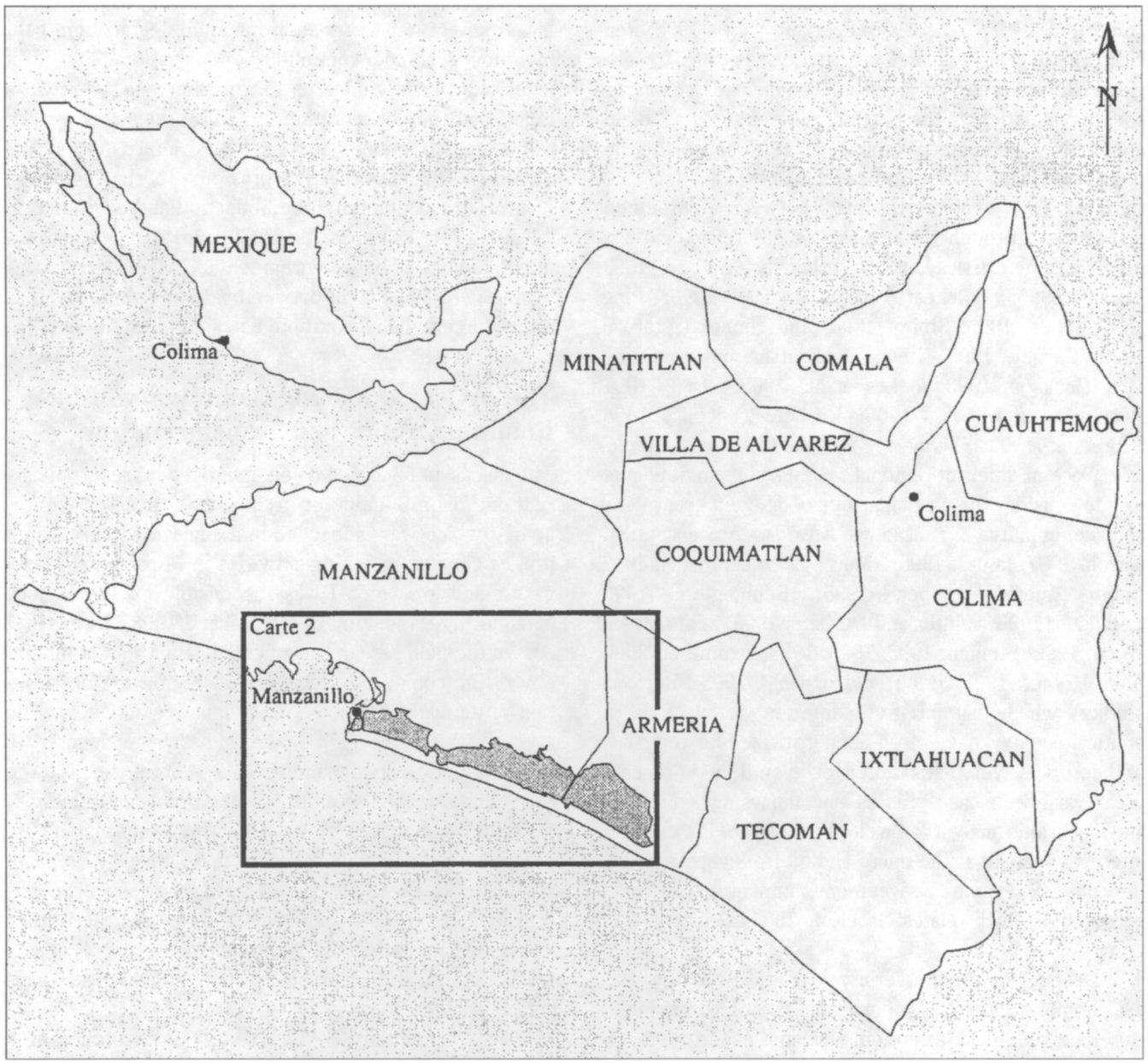
Despite the great diversity of political ecology studies, the political ecology of artisanal fishing communities has received little attention and my paper hopes to redress this neglect. This article provides a case study of such a community within the theoretical framework of political ecology, and assesses the dynamic interactions of government, international tourism development, the fishing community, its reproduction and activities, and environmental degradation. This analysis allows us to shift scales between different levels of social relations and practices to better understand the structural marginalization and struggles faced by the community of La Boquita.

From this point of departure, we can first analyze the links established between the federal and local government and the international tourism development companies and understand that their practices affect more than just the legal status of the lands used, or competitive advantage in the world market. Indeed, they have a direct impact on environmental degradation, fishing practices, and community organization. This first level of analysis guides us to a further one where it is found that the deterioration of natural resources orients the fishing community to a search for alternative means of survival found, in part, in providing tourism services, wherein the community's reproduction and environmental quality are compromised. This in turn leads to an understanding of how environmental changes create conflicts at a regional level between various fishing communities, forcing the elaboration of negotiated solutions.

The Artisanal Fishing Community of La Boquita: Origins and Transformation

The discussion is based on six months field research carried out in La Boquita for my master's thesis in anthropology, which was embedded in a departmental research project comparing fishing activities in Mexico and Madagascar and for which I was responsible for the Mexico part, during the summers of 1997 and 1998.[1] In the first part of the field research I collected data for an ethnography of the community, focusing mainly on the organization of its social relations and productive activities. The second part of the field research has been devoted to understanding the dynamic social reproduction of the community, particularly through the great malleability of the socio-economic relations occurring at the fishing cooperative and households levels, that allowed it to adapt and adjust to a context characterized by a socio-economic transition, external pressures and internal cleavages. Data has been gathered in the community area and in households, through participant observation, tracing genealogies and conducting interviews.

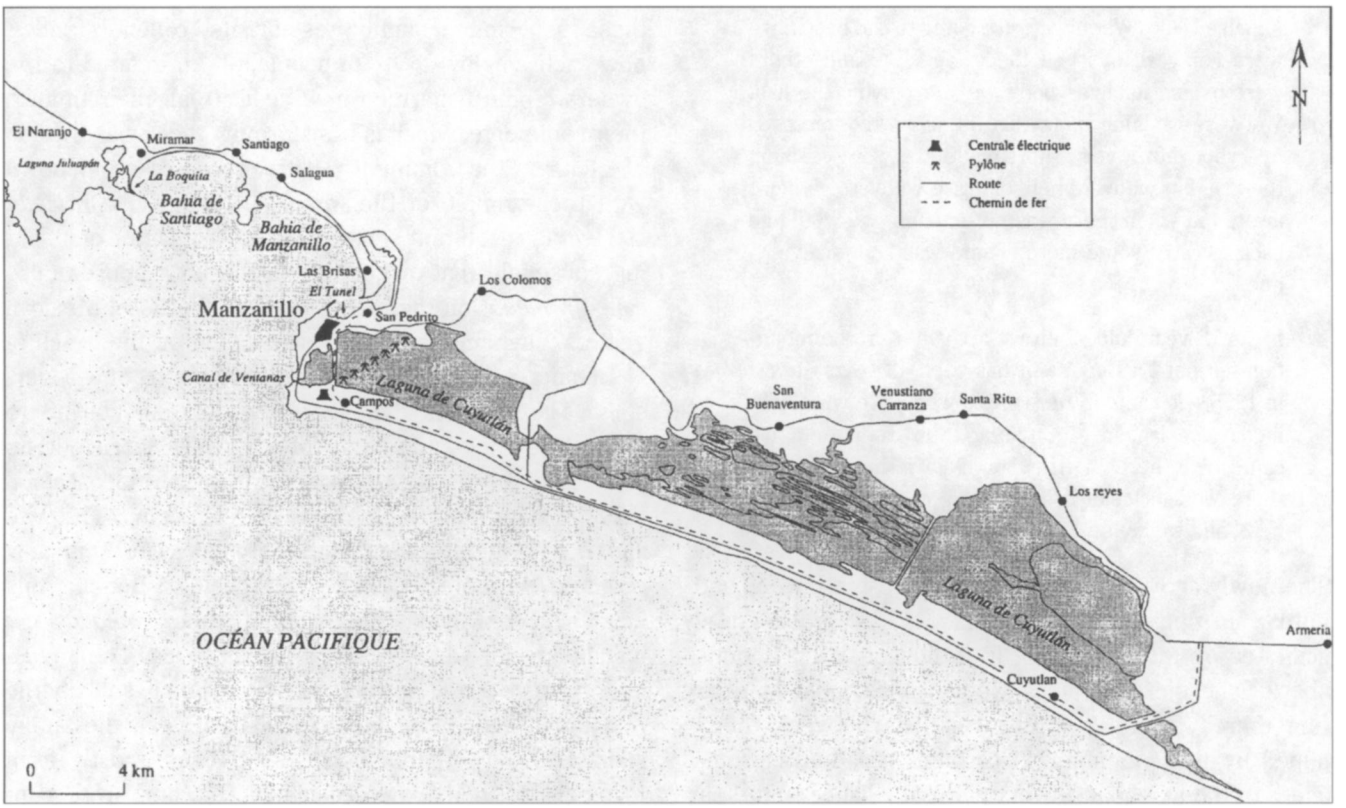
The community of La Boquita is located in the region of Manzanillo in Colima, one of Mexico's smallest states (see map 1). Manzanillo is one of the more populous *municipios*[2] of Colima. Agriculture, fisheries, and tourism are the most important economic sectors in Manzanillo together accounting for the use of almost half of the state's 157 km of coastline (see map 2). The development of Manzanillo's economy can be traced back to a federal government policy of the 1950s and 1960s which was based on a theory of poles, whose main objective was to counteract previous economic difficulties by developing the economic sectors of targeted states and their main regions, while also unblocking the economies of the country's big centres, such as Mexico City and Guadalajara (Bianchi, 1992; Breton et al., 1998; Doyon, 1999). In that context, Manzanillo was thus developed along the lines of the "Walking to the Sea" national strat-



Map 1: Mexico, Colima State and Manzanillo Region.

egy, which aimed, within the theory of poles framework, to give high priority to developing the country's coastal zones and harbours.

La Boquita is one of 14 fishing co-operatives in Manzanillo. All of the co-operatives practise an artisanal type of fishing based on rudimentary equipment and low levels of finances. The kind of technology they use varies with their location. Hence, depending on whether lagoon or coastal fishing is practised, *trasmallos* (a large net, 100m long and 7 metres wide), *cimbras* (long fishing line on which up to 300 hooks are suspended), *atarrayas* (a round net of 3m diameter), *redes de cucharas* (small spoon-shaped net attached to a wooden shaft), *tarimas* (wooden cage similar to the lobsted cages), *tapo* (fixed wooden gear located on a lagoon entry) or *armadraba* (large fixed sea net similar to the Canadian cod nets) may be employed.[3] All require handmade nets and out-board motors of 55 horsepower propelling small fiberglass boats able to carry two to three fishermen. Their activity, and the type of equipment used, rely exclusively on the exploitation of local fish resources found in lagoons and on the sea coast; while coastal fishing, the fishermen do not go farther than 5km offshore. This dependency on the fragile local ecosystem renders the fishermen heavily



Map 2 : Map of the Manzanillo Region

affected by any ecological changes to their environment, such as water contamination and mangrove cutting, which decrease the quantity and quality of their catches, and hence their quality of life.

The name La Boquita, which literally means "little mouth," refers to two things. First, it is a physical location including the lagoon of Juluapan and the beach which separates it from the sea. This place is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, but also by La Facultad de Ciencias Marinas de la Universidad de Colima, a luxury hotel, and the residential development "Club Santiago" and its golf club (see map 3). La Boquita also refers to the small fishing community that has grown up on this site, and where the fishing co-operative is based. Compared to the other co-operatives of Manzanillo, La Boquita is in a relatively rural environment, even if tourism complexes are mushrooming around it. The fishing community of La Boquita is also distinguished by strong and deep kinship ties, which is one of the reasons it can be called a community (see Doyon, 1999).

The community of La Boquita has gone through four key stages of development: agriculture (1930-50); lagoon fishing (1940-70); coastal fishing (developed by the fishing co-operative in the late 1970s); and, most recently, tourism, since the middle of the 1980s. The community was established around 60 years ago, at the same time as the surrounding *ejidos*,[3] during the cardenist revolution of 1930-40. In this period, many migrants from other parts of Mexico came into the region to become *ejidatarios*. At the time, agriculture was extremely difficult, but once it was better established, the government sold off many hectares of the Naranjo and Miramar *ejidos*. In the face of this strong pressure on resources and territory, the members of the *ejido* developed various strategies, one of which was to start lagoon fishing.

Ejido members, along with other recent immigrants to the region, began lagoon fishing at La Boquita's lagoon, Juluapan. They did so sporadically at first, but it soon became a way of life. Although it started off as a rootless place that had attracted migrants from all over the country, La Boquita grew as families settled there, and soon formed a well-established community, whose members identified more with La Boquita than with their home villages. Two members of the community relate:

> I have fished here since the *ejido* was created. We started to fish because there was no work, there were only *cocos de aceite* in the *ejido*, there was noth-

> ing else to do. When we were going to the beach, we were going all of us of the village. Me and others were fishing for everybody, we were giving the fish. We were catching more that 30 or 40 kilograms for everybody. In a very short while, we were catching the fish, but we were not selling it, we were giving it away, and when there was not enough, we would go back to catch some more. There was fish for everyone. [6]

> I was 12 years old when we arrived from the mountain here at La Boquita, it has been 43 years, it was in 1955. We came from Armeria where we were fishing in the lagoon of Cuyutlan, and from there we came over here to fish. We liked it here because there were a lot of fish, it was great, so we stayed here, and we are still here.[7]

The newly arrived migrants quickly created kinship and mutual aid networks in La Boquita. This process was facilitated by the building of little houses at La Boquita where fishermen's families would spend most of their time thereby creating strong relations between them, helped by the commonness of their situation as "outsider" to the neighbouring agricultural villages, and their common needs and way of life, which differs greatly from traditional agricultural Mexican society. These relationships grew deeper through subsequent intermarriages between members of different families and the creation of a system of fictive family, or *compadrazgo*, a primary feature of social relations in Mexico, cementing on a lifetime basis the links joining individuals and families. La Boquita came to represent not only their source of food and income, but also a shared place with a common way of life, their source of social security as well as the birthplace of their children, and this generated a strong community identity.

After some years fishing only in the lagoon, the members of La Boquita started sea fishing on a regular basis, with the aid of government loans obtained after the creation of the *Cooperativa Pesquera de la Costa de Colima* in 1978. However, the transition to coastal fishing was also due to another factor: the lagoon was dredged in 1985 by developers who wanted to build a hotel complex. This destroyed most of the lagoon's mangroves, inhibiting the reproduction of marine resources and hence the fishing activity (see map 4). Due to the fluid and flexible character of social relations in the community, however, members were able to remain united and to adapt to these transformations.

Finally, along with the development of tourism, restaurant services also consolidated and strengthened the community of La Boquita. Small and modest at first, these fishermen's family restaurants, called *ramadas*, now each employ up to 25 people, all kin-related to the owners. Some fishermen now dedicate all their time to their commerce, which is transforming the social division of labour in the community. This process can be shown with the example of the *Ramada el Rey*. This *ramada* started its restaurant service in the 1970s after one fishing household that owned one of the little houses (also called *ramada*) on the beach, realized that local Mexican visitors, spending their days of vacation on the beach of la Boquita with their family, would want to buy beverages. This household bought a cooler and started to serve soft drinks and beer. After a while, local tourists expressed the desire to consume the fish and seafood that the fishermen and his sons were catching. The wife and her daughters then started to cook for this new clientele. As more people began to visit La Boquita, this household expanded the size of their *ramada* and installed tables where people could sit to eat. The household's entire catch of fish was soon being sold in the restaurant. As the business grew each year, the family started to buy other fishermen's catches, mostly from members of their extended family (brother, brother-in-law, son-in-law, cousin, etc.); they employ the girls and women in the kitchen and to serve tables. As years went by, the business grew and the *ramada* now serves 80 tables and employs 22 people full-time, all of whom are kin relatives of the owners and members of the community of La Boquita. With the success of their enterprise, most of the household's fishermen abandoned the fishing activity, buying all their products from other fishermen of the co-operative and dedicating themselves full-time to managing the *ramada*. The five *ramadas* of La Boquita form social networks that link together the whole community, thus helping to give the people strength to resist pressure from tourist developments and even the capacity to adapt to them by serving foreign clients.

The population of La Boquita is now 300 people and is made up of 50 families. Its co-operative has 47 members, in addition to the hundred independent fishermen, almost all of whom are linked by kin ties (son, son-in-law, brother, cousin, etc.) to the co-operative's members. Men dedicate themselves to coastal fishing while women take care of on-shore activities linked to fishing such as sorting the catch, processing and selling, in addition to all household chores. Besides these activities and the restaurant jobs, almost 50 members of the community offer a recreational fishing service to tourists. For example, in one fishing household, the father and two of his sons tend the fishing nets at dusk and collect the catches at dawn. When they come back from fishing, the other

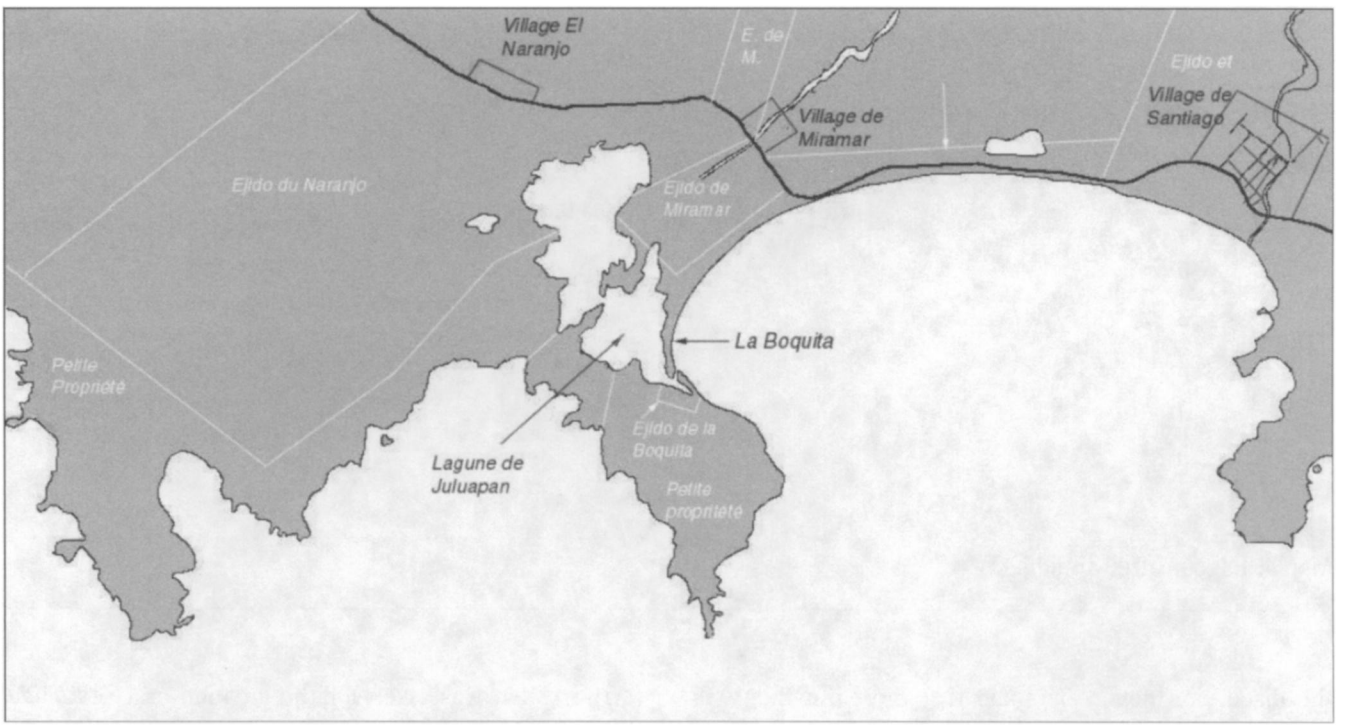
son of the family, along with his cousin and his brother-in-law, start preparing the boat for recreational activities. During the day, while the others are resting, they search the beach, helped by their sisters, for clients to take on a fishing ride near the coast and for trips on a big pneumatic tire, called the *banana* due to its shape, pulled by the family fishing boat.

Community members of La Boquita are members as well of three villages surrounding La Boquita site: El Naranjo, Miramar and Santiago, where their main residences are located and where they benefit from facilities such as running water, electricity and domestic appliances. However, many of them still own a little house at La Boquita beach where they pass their days and where they sometimes sleep. Hence, La Boquita's members go back and forth almost every day between their respective villages and La Boquita.

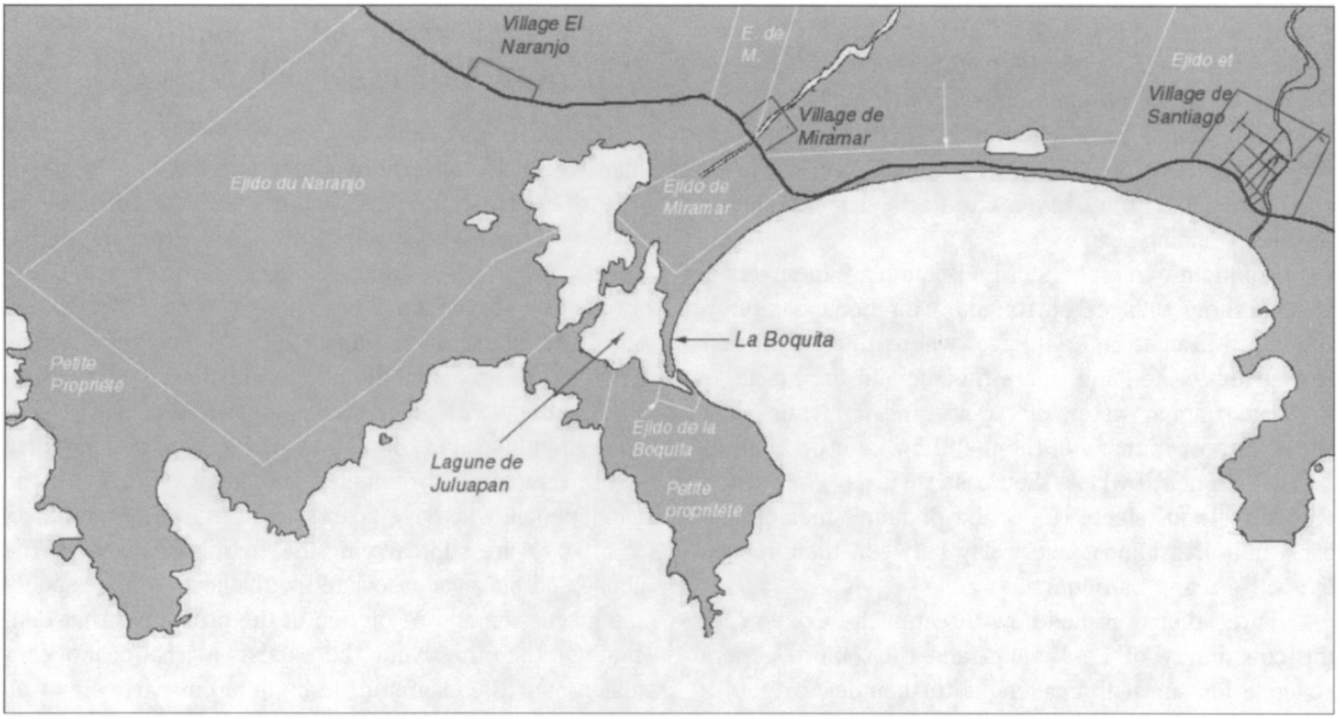
Three thorny issues now threaten the existence of the community of La Boquita and their more general struggle for survival: challenges to their legal rights to occupy the territory of La Boquita; the environmental degradation of the site; and, the atomization of the community's solidarity.

Whose Property? Public, Private or Communal? Confusion and Struggle

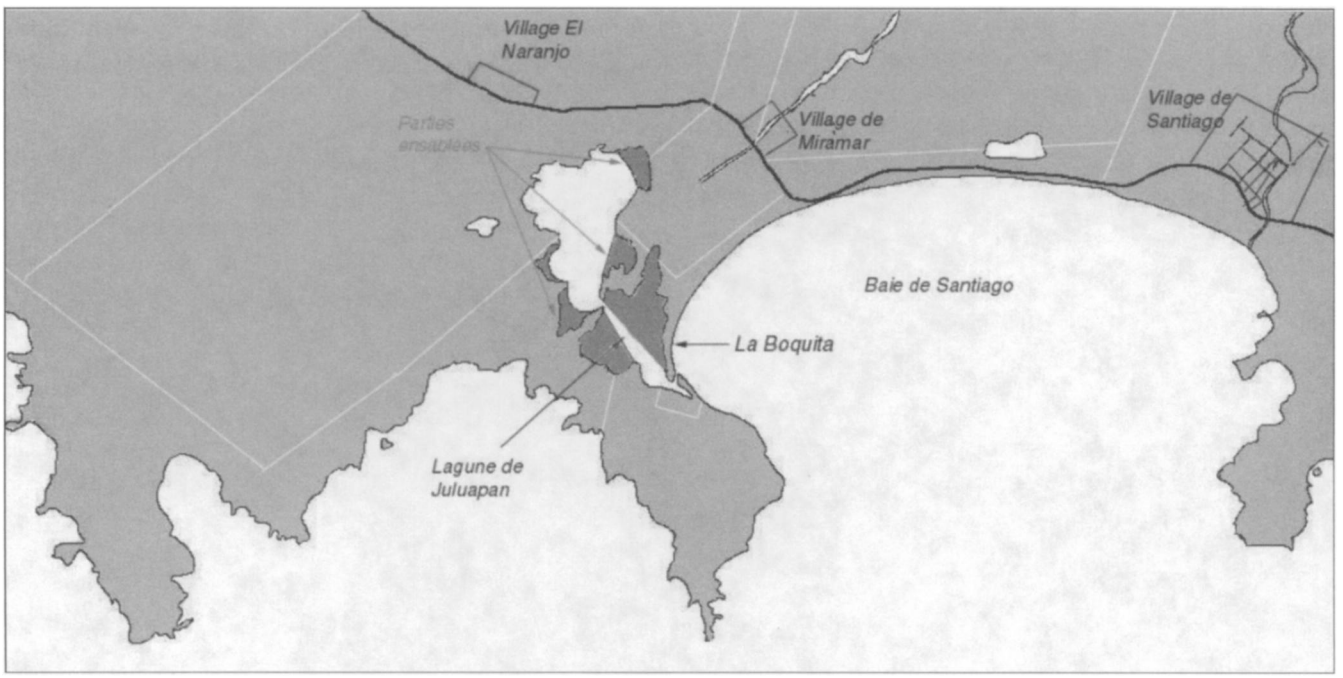
La Boquita's members have faced, and are still facing, many conflicts concerning property rights over the territory they are occupying. Current conflicts are rooted in history and are very similar to problems that the neighboring *ejidos* of El Naranjo and Miramar have also faced. Two types of conflictual situations can be distinguished since the 1950s: one kind related to the creation of new *ejidos* in the area, and the other over three land sales on the territory with all their accompanying disputes, misunderstandings and corruption. The question of property rights remains very complex and confused. On the one hand, people who have taken part in the various conflicts of the past are still carrying the emotional charge of the abuse and betrayal associated with them, which renders the discussion and resolution of the problem rather delicate. On the other hand, there exists a great deal of confusion over the claims made by different parties as well as over the government's management of the situation. Indeed, each actor claims to own the territory on the basis of various arguments, but everything remains very ambiguous, and the formal type of land-use for the territory has never been decided. However, this may sometimes suit the social actors involved, since it means that



Map 3: Ejidos and small properties.



Map 3.1: Sold land and hotels.



Map 4: Lagoon after dredging.

the discussion never ends and that therefore they will always have the opportunity to claim more.

One of the land property problems faced by the community of La Boquita is related to the legal status of the territory that was taken for the creation of a new *ejido*. When the Mexican federal government first formed the local *ejidos*, some parts of the territory were declared *pequenas propriedades* (see map 3). These "little proper-

ties" were given away by the federal government to the public servants, such as the engineers and managers, who had taken part in the creation of the *ejidos*. However, the population did not know of the existence of such units, and they therefore considered them as abandoned land.

This situation gave rise to conflict in La Boquita in the late 1960s when a group of fishermen decided to build houses and cultivate the land where the Palma Real hotel is now located, on the north side of the lagoon. Because the territory was unoccupied, the group thought that they could legally take it to create a new *ejido*, which they called the *ejido* of La Boquita. But this land was in fact a *pequena propriedad* and once the owners, who are non-resident of the region, realized what was going on, they informed the federal government of the situation. Shortly after this, the army arrived and ordered the population to destroy their belongings and to leave the site, which they wouldn't do. Facing this refusal, the army burned the crops and houses of the site, forcing the people from the land. This situation, and particularly the role of the federal government, still remains quite obscure, but the members of La Boquita who would talk about it hold the Mexican government directly responsible for the destruction. The truth about the case has never fully come to light, but it is typical of the ambiguity of the relationship between the people of La Boquita and the government.

In addition to these problems, the question of land property rights has been rendered even more complex by a number of land sales (see map 3.1). One took place in the early 1970s, when an investor bought the lands surrounding the lagoon of Juluapan, which constituted almost half of the Miramar *ejido*'s lands, in order to construct the Club Santiago, a residential development, where rich Mexicans coming from different parts of the country as well as Americans now live during their vacation period. This transaction took place even though it was illegal: privatization of ejidos has only been allowed since 1992, when article 27 of the constitution was modified. However, the administrative council of the Miramar *ejido* sold the land secretly and then ran off with the money. After the event, when the *ejidatarios* and the members of La Boquita discovered what had happened, they went to the state governor to reclaim the land, which was essential to ensuring the livelihood of many of Miramar's *ejidatarios* as well as the lagoon's fertility. The governor, however, refused to hear their case. The *ejidatarios* therefore had no choice but to cultivate the remaining parts of the *ejido* in the mountainous lands behind the village of Miramar.[8]

After this land sale, to which the fishermen and *ejidatarios* objected, the Club Santiago owner asked the government to sell the contiguous lands, which belonged to the El Naranjo *ejido*. In spite of renewed protest by people from the *ejido* and La Boquita, the government accepted, and 30 hectares were sold. Seventy-four *ejidatarios* were thus deprived of their shares of land and their livelihoods. This episode ultimately led to violence. The Club Santiago owners demanded that the members of La Boquita leave the site permanently, which would force them to stop fishing and to close their restaurants. In order to get them to do so, Club Santiago representatives blocked the entry to the site, but La Boquita's members managed to enter by other routes to protect their property. But open violence broke out and Club Santiago's representatives burned and destroyed some *ramadas*, while some members of the community were laying ambushes, such as blocking the only road to the beach with big pieces of firewood in flames. One *ramada* owner summarized the situation:

> He came, he was an engineer, his name was Ramon Rodriguez (pseudonym), he is the one who would not let us work. We were building a *ramada*, and he was tearing it down, and we were building another one, and he was angry, and it got to the point that he was punching us. He wanted us do nothing here because he was working for Club Santiago, and he did not want us to build a *ramada* here. At one point he got tired and he left us in peace. Well, he got tired because he died in a car accident, so on every area that is in the federal zone we started to build again houses and *ramadas*, and so we have continued until now.[9]

After a tense period, the atmosphere calmed down, and the community was able to resume normal activities.

The third land sale on La Boquita's territory occurred during the early 1980s. A foreign investor purchased, from the federal government, La Boquita's lagoon of Juluapan and all the remaining lands surrounding it. Again, this transaction took place even though it was in contravention of the territory's federal zone status. In point of fact, coastal waters and beaches are supposed to remain federal properties, and thus accessible to all the population. But here again confusion reigns over the case. Community members initially accepted compensation and relocation to another place around the shore of the lagoon within the six months following the transaction. However, the terms of the contract were not respected, and as time went by almost all members withdrew their commitment, realizing the importance of what they were about to lose. Even though the community was not in total consensus over this question, they decided to fight

for the territory they occupied, despite the threats of expulsion received from the foreign company that wished to destroy all properties on the site in order to construct their hotel and marina. The battle continues today, having moved to the judicial arena where the community aims to demonstrate, on the basis of law and the constitution, the illegality of selling federal zones, especially when it is to the disadvantage of the Mexican population. They also argue that their prior occupation on the site takes precedence over any subsequent claims to it. Once again, the federal government, which is in the middle of all this, has adopted a rather ambiguous position, giving contradictory promises to each party while remaining inactive, thus disabling any decisive action.

As we can see from these conflicts over territory, attempts at legal resolution of property rights and land use problems lie in stagnation and chronic confusion, which may be interpreted as a form of power control on the part of the national government. On one side, La Boquita's members do not recognize the transactions made and they fight to remain on the territory they already occupy, which sustains not only their livelihoods, but also their identity, their social life and their future. On the other side, the investors want to make the property profitable. Meanwhile the government sits between the battle lines, apparently unwilling to resolve the question, if one considers its inaction to date. Legal property rights and use of the territory have never been clearly established. However, while the conflict in all its complexity still poses some obstacle to the pursuit of the companies' and the government's goals, it also prevents the community of La Boquita from functioning and evolving and renders its existence ever more precarious.

Whose Work First? Fishing or Tourism: A Battle against Contradictions

In my discussion of earlier struggles, we have seen how the corporate tourism industry has expanded through its occupation, of dubious legal status, of La Boquita's territory. From the community's standpoint, this represents further encroachment on their residential and productive areas, which has a grave impact not only on natural resources but also on the community's social structure and organization. While the people try to resist the intrusion of the tourism industry, they also find themselves caught up in some of the more appealing aspects of tourism, which makes the situation even more complex.

Tourism developments in this sector have caused irreversible damage to the lagoon and marine ecosystem on which the community of La Boquita depends (see map 4). The company involved in the third sale of land that I discussed dredged the lagoon to construct a marina for their hotel in the lagoon without carrying out any kind of environmental impact study. The soil dredged up was dumped on the lagoon's shores, which also destroyed large sections of the nearby mangroves and fresh water sources that provide nutrients and oxygen to the local ecosystem. Moreover, the dredging sanded up many parts of the lagoon, considerably diminishing its surface area. The entry to the lagoon was particularly affected. Whereas it once reached depths of up to 10 metres, it is now totally dry in some places, with a maximum depth of half a metre. As one resident describes:

> Before, here in the lagoon, there were fish coming from the sea. The lagoon was more natural. There were red snapper, The entry of the lagoon was very deep, up to 10 metres, and big animals were passing the entry, it was beautiful. But slowly, all that diminished, and now it's very sad here. The lagoon had scallops, crab, and oysters, there were a lot of all of these fish, there were large quantities, but now, they just dredged and they destroyed all of this, it has hurt us very much.[10]

The damage to the ecosystem has had significant negative effects on the fishing activity of La Boquita's members. Fishermen confirm that, since the dredging, the marine resources have decreased not only in the lagoon, as might be expected, but also along the sea coast where they set their nets. Fishermen's productivity and income have decreased proportionately and, hence, so has their quality of life. Their feelings about the decline in quality of life can be observed in the nostalgic discourse about the lagoon as it used to be, apparently a paradise on earth where all fishes, birds and vegetation flourished in abundance:

> With the dredging, they destroyed the natural lagoon, so, the lagoon is dying. It is just about to die. Before, it was so beautiful, you could hear at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, when I was throwing my net, you could hear the birds' shrill calls. There were a lot of animals, they live in great numbers in the mangroves. It was pretty because that was by night. During the day, when they were feeding, you could see all the different birds, but now, where do you see that? Now, there is nothing left.[11]

Besides the environmental degradation and land property problems, the development of the tourism industry has affected the community's social structure rendering it fragile. Firstly, the tourism industry has created

changes in the social division of labour. Many fishermen of La Boquita have modified their activities in order to provide tourist services, such as fishing day-trips and fast rides on inflatable banana-shaped rafts. Hence, co-operative members are no longer all practicing fishermen. Moreover, the young people, who are the most attracted to the tourism industry, are learning related activities but not the main practice of fishing. An old fisherman is worried about this situation:

> We want the young people to follow the example we set, to work with motivation for their own good and not to have problems. They have to work in a straight way and with good heart, and god will help us all. They also have to work to sustain us, they have to work. Some of them don't want to understand, but we have to make them understand, for the good of all.[12]

The community is thus in the process of losing the bases of its fishing knowledge. This situation is changing the community's social structure, and is causing divisions in the co-operative since not all members make their living with the same shared interest. Furthermore, services to tourists do not help the organization of the co-operative in any way, since members contribute to it financially on the basis of their catches of fish. Those who spend more time selling their labour to tourists catch fewer fish and therefore contribute less money to the co-operative, while benefiting from its services as much as those who spend their time in full-time fishing. A fisherman and a *ramadero* explain their point of view:

> The *ramadas* are fine, but I would like that every one of the 47 members would get a part of the land, because here only 4 or 5 *ramadas* occupy the whole beach. I would like that they share the land and that they would say this is yours and you can give it to whoever you want. This way, we would all be able to have a *ramada*, or get associated with 3 or 4 other members, or make an union, and from there would come out the money for the fees, but everything to only one person, no. The others, what are they going to do, just watch them, no.[13]

> Everyone of us who has a *ramada* has put efforts into it. The others haven't helped us at all, and for that they should not feel bad; here, the land was always free. They didn't do it because they didn't want to. What made them want to do things, to build a *ramada*, was when others were already built. They didn't think about it before when the place was empty, and now that they see that sometimes there is a lot of tourism, there is some jealousy, but there wasn't any when the place was empty, when there were no owners here. So they should have thought of building a *ramada* in those days.[14]

This creates conflict within the co-operative which spreads into the other major issues concerning the community, such as what direction to take in negotiations with the tourism industry over territory, or what agenda the co-operatives should favour in regards to members' services to tourists.

The conflict between the fisheries and the tourism industry is complex and each side has its own internal contradictions. The tourism industry wants a coastal paradise for its clients, but it ends up destroying the very environment it wishes to promote and profit from. The fishing community is fighting to stop environmental degradation but they lack the advice and finances they need in order to be able to manage the ecosystem properly.[15] The community is also attracted by some aspects of the tourism industry, since it brings in money and allows members to diversify their work activities. But at the same time, members realize that the very advantages of tourism are leading to transformations in their social structure: young people, sons of fishermen and others member of the community, do not want to become members of the co-operative any more since they say that "no es civilizado," or "it is uncivilized," to be a fisherman as opposed to work with tourists; elders who want to retire think about selling their equipment to outsiders of the community since members of their own families do not want to take it up; the co-operative does not represent all of its members' interests any more and many are slowly disengaging themselves from it; and, as the latter process is taking place, some women of the community are starting to take on stronger roles in the community, which is challenging local gender ideologies. In spite of the conflicts the tourism industry generates in the community, the people of La Boquita are still willing to fight to remain on their land and to keep their environment as healthy as possible. They are not going to give up all they have been working for.

Whose Fishing Counts? A Battle for Recognition

While on the one hand tourism creates opportunities for some fishermen to make money by developing new kinds of services, it also puts certain constraints on artisanal fishing and contributes to its marginalization. Sport fishing is an example. This increasingly popular fishing activ-

ity, mostly oriented toward a foreign tourist clientele, involves day-trips to fish particular demersal species, such as tuna, marlin and swordfish. Not only has it become a key activity in Manzanillo's economic development, it also earns the region international recognition. Manzanillo is known as the swordfish capital of the world and every year, a well-known and popular international sport fishing tournament is held there.

However, this event is not appreciated by the artisanal fishing communities of the region, including La Boquita. In fact, in order to ensure that there are sufficient supplies of the fish sought after by the sport fishermen during the tournament, Capitania de Puerto, the government institution responsible for fishing law enforcement, suspends all other fishing activities, including those of the co-operatives two weeks beforehand. The co-operatives are thus deprived of their right to work and are put in a precarious situation.

Secondly, sport fishing is a controversial activity from the co-operative's point of view because the local fishermen are not able to fish those species themselves. The fishing of demersal species is only allowed a long way out from the coast, which prevents artisanal fishermen from practising it because their boats are too small and their equipment too rudimentary. Some fishermen still risk their lives to attempt it, and others risk a fine and the confiscation of all their equipment in the zone where it is forbidden because the selling of demersal species is very lucrative. On the other hand, sports fishermen, who are not members of any co-operative and come from downtown Manzanillo, can practice this activity wherever they want to because they are supposedly not doing it for commercial use, even if many local fishermen say that these people are actually selling their catches illegally.[16]

Some members of La Boquita have been trying to change the conditions of sport fishing by proposing to modify the regulations governing the activity. They are asking the fisheries ministry to allow them to fish demersal species at the beginning of the week (Monday to Wednesday), while the sport fishermen would have exclusive access on the remaining days of the week. The elaboration of this plan demonstrates their awareness of the need to protect the resource as well as to maintain tourist activities, and also their desire to benefit from this type of fishing. This could be crucial, since the artisanal fisheries are in a more and more difficult position due to the decline in marine resources from which they can now barely eke out a decent living.[17] One fisherman holds that the lack of respect for the lagoon's ecosystem cycles is the cause:

> In the lagoon there were a lot of fish and not many fishermen, not like today. Now there is not a lot of fish because there are more fishermen than fish. They catch too much fish and that is why there is not much fish. They should let two months, four months pass without fishing, and then the number of fish would grow a lot in the lagoon, because there is a lot of fish, but because they continue fishing, the number of fish can't increase.[17]

However, as with the other problems facing artisanal fishing communities, the government is not making any progress towards dealing with the fishermen's claims. Meanwhile, sport fishing is gaining in popularity and is having a growing impact on the region.

The case of sport fishing is typical of the general context surrounding artisanal fisheries and their reorganization. The withdrawal of government support from the co-operatives has driven many to bankruptcy; the governmental emphasis put on the expansion of the private sector is detrimental to government's investments in the social sector, which regroups all of the fishing co-operatives of the country and hence employs the great majority of fishermen. This last example of La Boquita's battle for the recognition of its right to exercise its activity and to diversify its catches in order to maintain the community typifies the government's failure to implement resource management policies that correspond to artisanal fishing communities' needs, or even to give them answers about their demands. In this way, the communities are kept in a situation where it is impossible to improve their conditions and where others' recreational activities seem to count more than the needs of the population who have to live on such wealth as the fisheries can generate.

Conclusion

Although community members at La Boquita have had some successes in their fight against marginalization and disempowerment, their future is uncertain. Over the past few years, the confusion over land tenure, the environmental destruction and social friction caused by the development of tourism, and the lack of central government or other external support in their battle to have their agenda recognized and their activities developed have undermined the community's internal cohesion. The socio-economic transformations and related pressures that the community has faced in the past actually contributed to its initial formation and its subsequent cohesion, thanks to malleable adaptations in a context of change. However, the pressures of change are now so intense that they tend to create divisions in the commu-

nity around apparently irreconcilable interests. This leads to atomization within the community, inhibiting its social reproduction and compromising its existence and future.

The case of La Boquita suggests that the viability of such communities is in doubt, due to a combination of factors: the non-enforcement of the tenurial rights of artisanal producers, adverse government regulations giving privileged access to competing interests in local fishery and environmental resources, and changes in property law that undercut community resource bases. The reproduction of community is a pressing policy issue, and more favourable policies can only emerge if the problems, viewpoints, and diversity of the communities are recognized. As shown in this paper, a political ecology analysis of such groups is one way of understanding and analyzing the great heterogeneity and dynamism of fishing communities, represented through the multiple, divergent, and fluid interests and practices of their members in the face of government actions, tourism expansion, and environmental degradation, a perspective that would reward the wider attention of the social sciences in the future.

We must also take into consideration the significance of a broad matrix of variables when trying to understand fishing communities and to develop supportive measures. Political ecology focuses our attention on the dynamic interactions of environmental, political, economic and cultural factors, at macro- and micro-scales from households and local co-operative, to domestic and international market pressures, to state laws and policies.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Prof. Sally Cole as well as the two anonymous readers for their useful suggestions for revisions to this article. I also want to thank Profs. Colin Scott and Yvan Breton for their general support and insightful comments on previous versions.

Notes

1 This fieldwork was made possible by financial support from the Fonds pour la Formation de Chercheurs et l'Aide à la Recherche (FCAR) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC: sub. no.410-96-1121) for the Mexico-Madagascar Project under the supervision of Prof. Yvan Breton at Laval University.

2 A municipio is an administrative unit comparable to a municipality.

3 The *ejidos are* villages in which inhabitants collectively manage land held in common. They were created in thousands after the 1910 revolution, when the government redistributed lands owned by *haciendistas* to the population. This structure remained in place until 1992 when the government allowed its privatization.

4 For more information on the different fishing technologies used in Manzanillo's co-operatives, see Breton et al., 1998, chap. 3.

5 "Tengo pescando desde que se hizo el ejido, iva a pescar. A veces agaremos la pesca, como no había chamba, el ejido era puro coco de aceite, no había más que hacer. Cuando nos ibamos a la playa, ivamos todo el rancho de aqui. Yo y otros sacabamos pescados para toda la gente, regalado. Y sacabamos mas de 30 o 40 kilos por toda la gente. En un ratito sacabamos, y no vendiamos el pescado, puro para regalar, si no ajustaba, nos metiemos de vuelta un ratito, y toda la gente tenía." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

6 Andaba de 12 anos cuando caimos aqui nosotros en la Boquita, en el cerro, hace 43 anos, en el 1955, ya. Veniamos de Armeria, de ahi pescamos en la laguna de Cuyutlan, y de allá, nos venimos a pescar aqui. Nos gustó aqui porque había algo de pescado, estaba bien, y ya nos quedemos aqui y aqui estamos todavía." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

7 The mountainous part of the *ejido* of Miramar, located right behind the village of Miramar, is still farmed by the *ejidatarios*. The main crops farmed are mangoes, lemon, peppers, and coconut, which are cultivated without any mechanization and very few chemical inputs.

8 "Nos tocó, era un ingeniero, se llamaba Ramon Rodriguez (pseudonym), el fue el que empezó a no dejarnos trabajar. Haciemos una ramada, y nos la tumbaba como ora, y otra haciemos, y se ponia bravo, y llego el momento que nos agaro a golpe. El quería que no hacemos aquí nada porque el era como encargado de Club Santiago, y no queria que se hicieron ninguna ramada. Hasta que se enfadó, y nos dejó en paz. Pues se enfadó porque se murió en un carro, entonces, lo que es zona federal, nos empezó a hacer de nuevo casitas, ramaditas, y asi nos fuimos hasta ahora." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

9 "Anteriormente aqui en la laguna se arimaba pescado ribereno, la laguna estaba más natural, entonces había robalo, la boca era muy onda, de unos 10 metros y pasaba animalones asi de grande para dentro y para fuera, en la boca, era una chulada. Pero poco a poco disminuio, y ahora, está muy triste. La laguna teniá cayo de acha, pata de mula, almejion, y almeja, todo eso había mucho, había en quantitad, pero no más dragaron y nos acabaron, nos perjudicó mucho a nosotros." Interview extract, Doyon, 1999.

10 "Con la dragada, le acabaron con lo natural que tenía la laguna, entonces la laguna anda muriendo, está quasi por morirse. Antes era una lindura, oías tu a veces a las 2 o 3 de la manana, yo andaba atarreando, y tiraba la atarraya, y oias la grita de los pajaros asustados, el animalero, habia en quantitad en los mangles. Era lindo, porque eso era en la noche, en el día, cuando andaban comiendo, vías aves, garzas, gaviotas, toscanos, y aora, a donde ves eso, ya no hay nada de esto." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

11 "Queremos que los jovenes siguen el exemplo que estamos poniendo, ganas a trabajar por proprio de ellos y que no arman problemas. Deben de trabajar derecho y con buen corazón, y dios nos socorre todos. Deben de trabajar para que nos mantegan también, tienen que trabajar. Hay unos que no quieren entender, pero hay que hacerlos entender, por las buenas." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

12 "Las ramadas, está bien, pero me gustaría que a cada quien de los 47 socios le toca parcela del terreno, porque aquí no más son 4 o 5 que están ocupando toda la playa. Me gustaría si reparterían el terreno, y que dicen eso te queda a ti, y le puedes dejar a quien quiera. Asi podriamos tener todos una ramada, o asociarnos con 3 o 4 mas, o hacer una unión, y de allí saliera para los gastos, pero a uno solo no más, no. Los demas que vamos a hacer, no más verlos, no." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

13 "Cada quien que tenemos una ramada, metimos nuestros esfuerzos, y los demas no nos ayudaron para nada, y por eso no tienen que sentirse mal, aquí el terreno estuvo todo el tiempo libre. No hicieron porque no quisieron. Les han dando ganas de hacer cosas, de hacer ramadas, porque ya están hechas. No les han ocurido antes cuando estaba vacio, ya que ven que hay mucho turismo a veces, hay algo de envidia, pero no había cuando estaba vacio, que nadie tenía dueno aquí, entonces les hubiera ocurido de hacer una ramada en ese tiempo." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

14 In this regard, the co-operative tried several times to dredge the lagoon entrance in order to restore flushing by sea water, enhancement of the lagoon's natural resources and the possibility for fishing boats to shelter from stormy seas. However, lacking the knowledge necessary to properly undertake this operation, they ended up worsening the previous situation.

15 La Boquita's fishermen could buy a sport fishermen's licence however the fees are prohibitive and the possession of such a licence hinders the simultaneous practice of commercial fishing. Moreover, the fishermen implicated in this kind of activity must buy a large boat and sophisticated equipment to accommodate the tourists, in addition to the life insurance, the costs of which are beyond the means of most artisanal fishermen.

16 The average income of an artisanal fishermen is approximately 150$CAN a week.

17 "En la laguna pués, había mucho pescado y poco pescadores, no como hoy. Orita, no hay pescado porque hay más pescadores que pescado. Le atrapan recio y por eso no hay mucho pescado. Deben de dejar unos 2 meces, 4 meces sin pescar, y aumentaría mucho el pescado en la laguna, porque hay mucho, pero porque continuan pescando, no aumenta." Interview extract, Doyon 1999.

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