

People and the Sea conference: 'Bridging science and policy for sustainable coasts and seas'. MARE Centre, University of Amsterdam, 6-9 July 2011.

**Blurred boundaries: livelihoods, informality and compliance in small-scale fisheries**

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Theme 2: "Negotiating policies for marine resource use" and/or special panel on "Deviance in the coastal zone"

Fisherfolk livelihoods require the negotiation of complex, often contradictory, values. Ways of living under such uncertainty are made possible through informal relationships, which are not sanctioned by formal institutions and may challenge formal rules. Moreover, informality is not only a response to absent or ineffective norms, but also the product of formal institutions, including those regarded as well established and effective. This argument is supported by empirical research carried out in estuarine fisheries in Southern Brazil between 2006 and 2008. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to explore patron-client relations and non-compliance to regulations in urban and rural settings. The findings demonstrate how formal and informal relationships were closely entwined in the livelihoods of fisherfolk, and informality led to both increase and decrease in their vulnerability. A focus on understanding the boundaries between formal and informal could make fisheries governance better able to tackle issues of social justice and sustainability.

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