'Even Fish Have an Ethnicity': Livelihoods and Identities of Men and Women in War-affected Coastal Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

Gayathri Hiroshani Hallinne Lokuge

Thesis committee

Supervisor
Prof. dr. ir. D.J.M. (Thea) Hilhorst
Special Chair for Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction (HAR)
Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Co-promotors
Dr Malathi de Alwis
Visiting Professor, Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Prof. dr. ir. Georg Frerks
Chair of Conflict Prevention and Conflict Management
Utrecht University, the Netherlands
Chair of International Security Studies
Netherlands Defence Academy

Other members
Prof. dr. S.R. (Simon) Bush (Wageningen University, the Netherlands)
Prof. dr. Jonathan Goodhand (School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS], University of London, United Kingdom)
Dhr. dr. J.M. (Maarten) Bavinck (Amsterdam University, the Netherlands)
Dr. Shyamika Jayasundara-Smits (International Institute of Social Science, Erasmus University, the Netherlands)

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Glossary of Local Terms

Aiya/anna	Elder brother, or a form of addressing an elder with respect (Sinhalese/Tamil)
Anichchāwatha Sankāra	'All things decay'. Usually displayed on grave stones or funeral decorations (Pāli)
Apey kattiya	Our people (Sinhalese)
Bala pannaya/pasi pannaya	Fishing for skipjack tuna using live bait that is kept in a rattan basket submerged in the water (Sinhalese)
Beach seine/maadel/karai vala	A beach seine is a fishing net deployed from the beach that hangs vertically in the water with its bottom edge held down by weights and its top edge buoyed by floats. A group of fishermen set and pull the net. The number of fishermen required varies. (Sinhalese/Tamil)
Beedi	Local cigarettes (Sinhalese and Tamil)
Bilee piththa	Rod (Sinhalese)
Budu Saranai	May the Lord Buddha bless you (*Pāli*)
Daaney	Alms giving (Sinhalese/Pāli)
Dansala	Annual customary mass meal that is provided to the general public, usually on the full moon *Poya* day in May or June (Sinhalese)
Disco net	A type of purse seine net that requires an annual license granted under certain conditions to operate (*Hembili del* in Sinhalese and *Surukku valai* in Tamil)
Durawa	Toddy tappers caste (Sinhalese)
Ekathana pick up	'On-the-spot pick-up'. Used in this context in relation to illegal fishers who are seen to be wanting to become rich fast (Sinhalese)
Goigama/Vellalar	Cultivator caste (Sinhalese/Tamil)
Grameeya Dheewara Samithiya	Rural Fisheries Organisations (Sinhalese)
Horu hathaliha	Forty thieves in the *One Thousand and One Nights* folk story featuring Ali Baba (Sinhalese)

Isso/iraal	Prawn (Sinhalese/Tamil)
Kaappu	A ritual 20-day fast prior to receiving a red thread from the *kovil* meant to protect the wearer (Tamil)
Kali/Kāli	Goddess Kāli, the counterpart of God Shivan in the Hindu Pantheon
Karai/wella	Beach (Tamil/Sinhalese)
Karaiyar/Karawe	Occupational fishing castes (Tamil/Sinhalese)
Kattu valai	A form of trap fishing similar to arrowhead fixed trap (Tamil)
Koneswaram deviyo pihitai	'May the God Koneshwaram bless you/us' (Sinhalese)
Koodu	A stationary fish trap with a cage and one funnel made of wire (Tamil)
Kovil/kovila	Hindu temple (Tamil/Sinhalese)
Maalu/meen	Fish (Sinhalese/Tamil)
Maaāma	Mother's brother, or a form of respectful address for an adult male (Sinhalese)
Matti	Clams and mussels (Tamil)
Mudalali	In general, a trader or money lender (Tamil and Sinhalese)
Pādu	Allocated space or allotment for stationary fishing practices such as a beach seine operation or arrow head trap fishing
Pandura	Making a vow by tying a coin in a piece of cloth at a Hindu temple (Sinhalese)
Pāsi	Seaweed
Poya	Full moon day (Sinhalese)
Ramazan/Ramadan	Holy month in the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims fast for 30 day, starting with the sighting of the new moon (Arabic)
Rassawa/tholil	Fishing (Sinhalese/Tamil)
Rassawata Yanawa	Going fishing (Sinhalese)

Rodiya	Considered the lowest in the Sinhalese caste hierarchy, although thought to be descendants of royalty (Sinhalese)
Sakkili/Sakkiliyar	Derogatory term referring to an unhygienic or uncultured person (Sinhalese); person of lower cleaning caste (Tamil)
Salagama	Cinnamon peeler caste (Sinhalese)
Shivan	One of the Gods of the Hindu Trinity and the counterpart of Goddess Kāli (Tamil)
Sinhala Oru/Sinhala Kulla	Canoes traditionally used by Sinhalese people (Sinhalese/Tamil)
Sudda thamil	Pure Tamil
Theppan/theppam	Catamaran traditionally used on the west coast and Jaffna Peninsula (Tamil and Sinhalese)
Thirunoor	White powder given by the Hindu *kovil* as a form of blessing
Thoondal/bilee katu	Long lining (Tamil/Sinhalese)
Toddy	Naturally alcoholic sap of the coconut tree
Vaadi/waadi	Small and often temporary buildings on the beach, maintained by the wholesale fish dealers for storing or buying fish from the fishermen. Also referred to as fishing camps or *cadjan* structures on the beach (Tamil and Sinhalese)
Valai/del	Net (Tamil/Sihalese)
Vallam	Beach seine boat, usually non-mechanised (Tamil)
Vas Vadinava	Bad/inauspicious things will happen (Sinhalese)
Veder	Indigenous people (Tamil)
Waarakan	Lean fishing period from November to February in the east coast
Zakat	One of the five pillars of Islam. It is a tithe paid by eligible Muslims to provide for the most vulnerable groups in society (Arabic)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AD Assistant Director

BBS *Bodu Bala Sena*

CEPA Centre for Poverty Analysis

CFC Ceylon Fisheries Corporation

DFAR Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

DFID Department for International Development

DG Director General

DS Divisional Secretary/Divisional Secretariat

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization

FCS Fisheries Cooperative Society

FI Fisheries Inspector

(S)HSZ (Special) High Security Zone

IDPs Internally Displaced Persons

JVP *Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna* (People's Liberation Front)

LTTE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MFAR Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development

NARA National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency

OBM Outboard motor (engine)

RFO Rural Fisheries Organisation

TNA Tamil National Alliance

SLF Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

SLFP Sri Lanka Freedom Party

SLMC	Sri Lanka Muslim Congress
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
UC	Urban Council
UPFA	United People's Freedom Alliance

Chapter One: General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the initial stages of my 13-month field work period, when I was trying to gain a foothold inside the Trincomalee wholesale fish market, with its slippery floors, pungent fish smells and swarthy men working as fish dealers and fishermen, my conversations invariably centred on fish. Fish were ever present in my research context—in various sizes, colours and shapes. Along with the names of different types of fish, in both Sinhalese and Tamil, often along with by whom, how and where it was caught, I kept hearing comments such as 'That is a Sinhalese fish', or 'That is a Tamil fish', especially from fish dealers. It turned out that the fish species belonging to the tuna family, also known as blood fish or 'heaty fish' (*kelawalla, balaya* and *alaguduwa*[1]), were considered 'Sinhalese' fish. In contrast, 'cooling' fish, such as the yellow fin trevally (*paraw* in Sinhalese), garfish (*saavalaya*) and mackerel (*linna/bolla*), were considered 'Tamil fish'. Rock fish, such as the mullet (*gal malu*), were considered Muslim fish.

Although this is clearly a gross generalisation of fish consumption patterns, the distinction was obviously important for the mobile retail sellers, as it was in their financial interest to know which types of fish were favoured by which part of their customer base. Interestingly, fish such as the seer (*thora*) and sail fish *(thalapath)*, the more expensive types of large fish, were considered 'Colombo fish', and this was usually mentioned with condescending smiles and jeers, indicating that only those who are ignorant of how fish are caught, stored and transported would eat these fish varieties. These types of fish, which were expensive because of their taste, texture and size, were usually caught by multi-day boats that were at sea from five days to three weeks, and, by the time the fish reached the consumer, they were far from fresh.

As I progressed with my research, I started to notice that fish capture methods, fishing craft and equipment used, and sometimes even fishing locations were given ethnic and sometimes regional designations. For example, from April to May, catching skipjack tuna (*balaya*) with about eight crew members using live bait kept in a rattan basket submerged in the water and attached to the boat (in Sinhalese, this fishing method is called *Pasi panneya*) was a fishing practice specific to Sinhalese fishermen from the Southern Province. None of the other fishing groups in Trincomalee even attempted this. The Sinhalese fishermen who engaged in this fishing method proudly claimed that they celebrated the traditional Sinhalese and Tamil New Year in style with the income generated using this highly skilled fishing method. Similarly, in the Trincomalee Inner Harbour area, I met a group of Tamil Christian men

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[1] All local fish names in this chapter are given in Sinhalese, unless otherwise specified.

who had practiced a particular type of trap fishing (called *Kattu valai* in Tamil) for generations. In the sea area behind the wholesale market in Trincomalee town, I came across a certain type of non-mechanised canoe known as *Sinhala Oru*. In these canoes, traditional fishermen originally from the Southern Province were fishing with wooden rods (*Bilee piththa*). Fishermen using other fishing methods or craft were not 'permitted' to fish in this area. Allegedly with the support of the Navy and the Department of Fisheries, these fishermen had managed to draw boundaries for their fishing grounds using buoys.

From a theoretical point of view, there are many layers to how people talk about fish and fishing. The sector is also permeated with violence, tension, inequality and social conflict. These things continued to affect people's everyday lives after Sri Lanka's three-decade-long war ended with a military victory by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009. For example, the palpable tensions over an 'illegal' fishing method called disco net fishing took the form of an ethnicised 'immoral' and unsustainable livelihood discourse, based on the perspective that it was primarily minority Muslims engaging in this form of fishing. This draws close parallels with the national-level anti-Muslim sentiments at that time. Therefore, the multi-ethnic, multicultural Trincomalee, where people of different identity groups interact in the former theatre of war, is divided along identity fault lines but also exhibits multidimensional connections, making Trincomalee a fascinating site for understanding the interactions between identity and livelihoods. These empirical and theoretical observations illustrate a few tentative research strands followed during the early days of my field work that ultimately laid the foundation for the main analytical threads of this thesis.

This thesis is about the everyday economic lives of men and women in coastal Trincomalee, embedded in their social, political and cultural lives. To be more specific about the main analytical threads, first, fishing is not just a livelihood in coastal Trincomalee; it is a way of life embedded in social and political worlds of fishers, defining who those men and women are, and, in a way, who they are not. While money was often mentioned, other recurring themes included religious rituals, such as the annual festival of the Kali *kovil* in Trincomalee town, and consumption of alcohol by the fishermen at the nearby Toddy taverns[2]. It also became apparent to me that ethnicity and other markers of social identity such as location, caste and gender often mediated the everyday lives of men and women in coastal Trincomalee. In determining the type of fish caught, the fishing methods used, access to fisheries-related spaces, linkages

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[2] Toddy taverns are places where the naturally alcoholic sap of the coconut tree is sold.

to markets, participation in patronage networks and patterns of accessing state services, 'who one was' played a decisive role. Further, while ethnic identity seemed to be an identity marker that was often used, in everyday life, there was great importance in other identity categories, such as whether one is a man or a woman, the fishing method used or place of origin. Finally, perceptions of how people were treated by the state fisheries actors shaped how men and women engaged in their fishing livelihoods and shaped the everyday politics of fishing in Trincomalee. In a pluralist society such as Trincomalee, with a shared violent history of war in the not-so-distant past, these perceptions of state-society relationships, based on identity are potentially problematic. This thesis documents my journey towards arriving at an understanding of these dynamics.

Figure 1. Map of Trincomalee by Divisional Secretariat Division and ethnicity
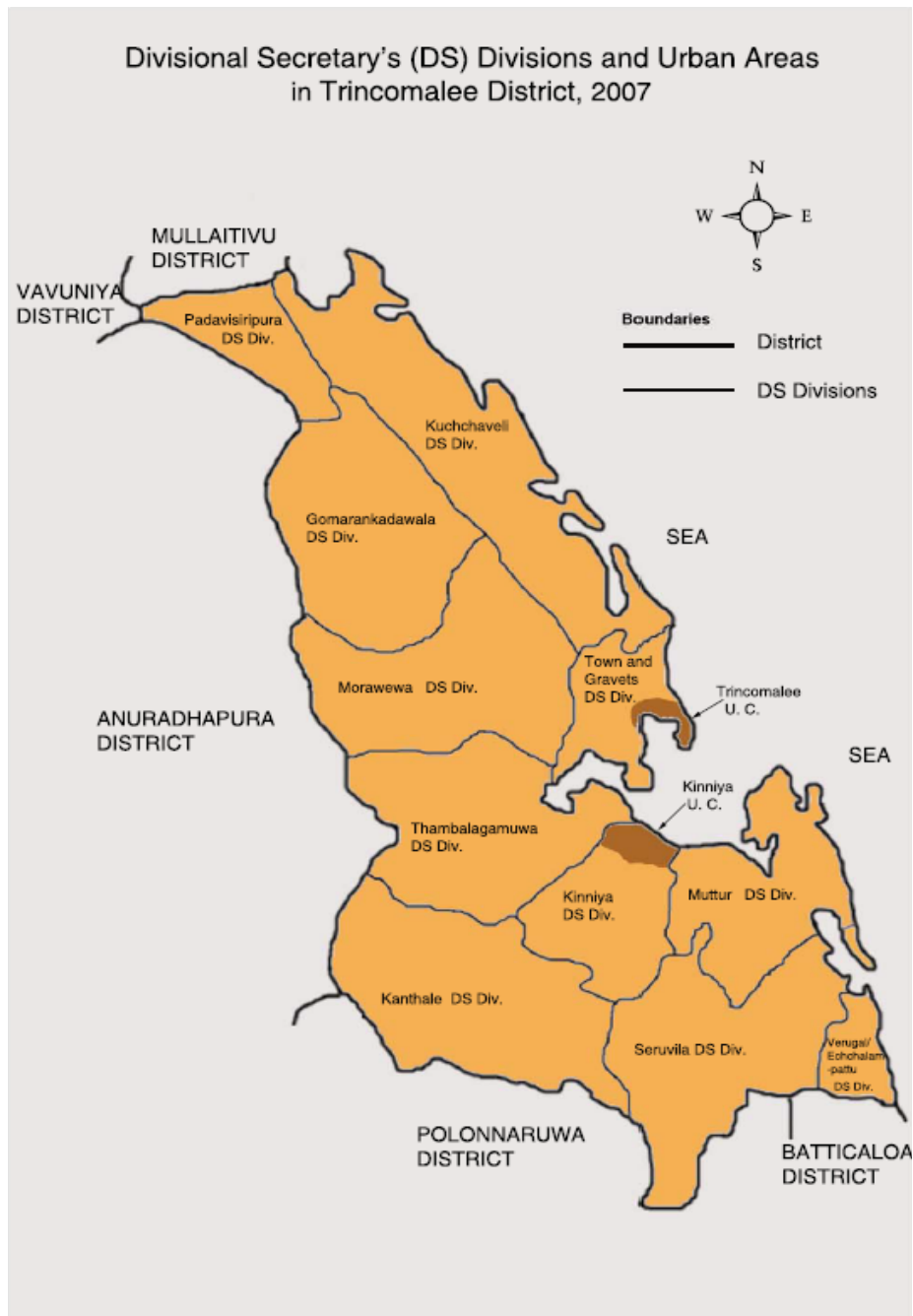
Source: Department of Census and Statistics (2007)

1.1.1. Locating the research

This thesis explores how fisher livelihoods as economic activities are shaped by socio-cultural, identity and state-society dynamics and, in turn, how fisher livelihoods shape and reproduce these dynamics in post-war Sri Lanka's coastal Trincomalee district. Although the three-decade-long war in the country came to an end in 2009, violence, tensions, inequality and social conflict continue to affect people's everyday lives. While discussions on ethnicity and tensions based on ethnic interactions are still very important in post-war Sri Lanka, these discourses are insufficient to explain the nation's post-war social tensions and the inequalities that lead to these tensions. This thesis explores how ethnic dynamics are manifested in the mundane day-to-day lives of men and women as an ideological concept that people subscribe to and pragmatically, as a ticket to access and maximise on livelihoods opportunities.

This chapter begins by locating the research within the context of post-war Sri Lanka and providing an overview of the political changes since the end of the war in 2009. In the next section, I focus on Trincomalee district, providing a brief war timeline and introducing the fisheries, fisher-folk and related stakeholders. This is followed by a discussion of the research objective and research questions. The next section of this chapter covers the theoretical frameworks that form the basis for the analysis presented in this thesis. I then describe the methods and tools used and provide a discussion of positionality, before outlining the remaining chapters, which are then introduced through vignettes.

1.1.2. 'Post- war' Sri Lanka, ethnic narratives and the state

Sri Lanka's history since independence in 1948 has been dominated by conflict centred on competing ethno-political interests, particularly in terms of access to state power. Most discourses on conflict in Sri Lanka have strong ethnic dimensions, but, arguably, ethnic lines have been used mainly for mobilising the masses for conflict. Just after independence, grievances from the majority Sinhalese population that the colonial powers had privileged the minority Tamils—as seen, for example, in the number of positions held by Tamils in the state administration—gained momentum. As a result, a series of political manoeuvres were initiated by the rulers, including the 1956 Sinhala Only Act, which declared Sinhalese the official language. Although this act was amended in 1978, adding Tamil as another official language, the damage was already done in terms of increasing Tamil grievances. The state-sponsored irrigation-related settlement schemes moving Sinhalese people into the Tamil-dominated North and East of the

country and the lack of state-led investment in these regions from the 1950s onwards added fuel to the simmering tensions.

Triggered by the perceived privileging of the Sinhalese by the state, Tamil militant groups emerged, including the LTTE (formed in 1976). The LTTE declared themselves the sole representative of the Tamil cause and demanded a separate state of Tamil Eelam in the North and East of the country. The killing of 13 Sri Lankan Army soldiers in 1983 in an ambush by the LTTE resulted in widespread anti-Tamil riots in the capital city of Colombo and other parts of the country. This event is commonly believed to have been the trigger point for the protracted war between the Tamil militants and the GoSL.

However, other factors also contributed to the conflict. The failure of the economy to satisfy the increasing demands for resources and opportunities made by the upwardly mobile within the welfare state created social inequality. This inequality, in turn, has fuelled violent political conflict (Abeyratne, 2004). Therefore, as Rajasinham-Senanayaka (2009) states, there is a need to 'look beyond the "ethnic" narrative, and understand the embedded social and economic inequalities' (cited in Arambawela and Arambawela, 2010: 373) if one wishes to achieve any meaningful and sustained rebuilding of Sri Lanka.

Irrespective of the causes, the war violence continued for three decades, killing many, causing immense property and asset damage, and creating multiple waves of displacement. Following a massive 'humanitarian operation' by the GoSL military to open an irrigation sluice gate that was closed by the LTTE, the East was declared 'cleared' of the LTTE by the GoSL in 2007. The violent conflict between the LTTE and the GoSL then came to an end with the military victory of the GoSL in 2009 and the death of the LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran in Mullaithivu district in the Northern Province.

However, '[t]he end of the war cannot be taken to imply an end to the underlying conflict' (Venugopal, 2009: 3), and 'a linear and dichotomic understanding of war and peace is naive and over-simplistic' (Klem, 2012). While some new political, social and cultural spaces may open up, certain war-related dynamics will continue to shape the daily lives of men and women, at the local level. For example, the 'naturalised' status of militarisation not only in the North and East, but also in the capital city of Colombo, has seeped into the psyche of Sri Lankans (De Mel, 2007: 242) and continues to shape their daily lives.

During post-war transition periods, new power configurations may emerge, through which 'new rules of the game' are negotiated (Byrne and Klem, 2014: 225). In countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka, shifts in legitimate politics are not merely the result of the end of the war; rather, the legitimisation processes are actively driven by politicians through the reification of nationalist politics and the delivery of patronage (Byrne and Klem, 2014: 225). In the Sri Lankan case, the phenomenon of political elites using the Sinhalese nationalist ticket for regime legitimisation is not specific to the post-war period; this practice has been common since the country's independence (Goodhand, 2010; Rampton and Welikala, 2005; Venugopal, 2009).

The dominant political discourse of the state under the leadership of Rajapaksa from the end of the war in 2009 until 2015 was one of a need for development and addressing poverty while denying minority grievances and the right of minority groups to political space (Byrne and Klem, 2014). Further, assuming that economic development would resolve minority grievances, the government paid little attention to building trust among the fragmented groups that characterised society during and after the conflict (Anon, 2011). Because of the lack of effort towards reconciliation by the state, the social fragmentation caused by the war has not been systematically addressed, and more space has been created for tensions, which have spilled over into overt conflict at the micro level.

Increased religious tensions at national level were a recurrent phenomenon observed during the field work. Despite hopes of peace post-2009, 'new' forms of identity-based violence were taking shape, mainly along religious lines (The Asia Foundation, 2011; Gravers, 2015; Hasbullah and Korf, 2013; Stewart, 2015). Although religious violence has a long history in Sri Lanka, from 2010 to 2015, religion became a major form of communal contestation in the country (Verité Research, 2016). June 2014 saw the culmination of one such line of tension, when a Sinhalese Buddhist mob, instigated by a group of extremist Buddhist priests, attacked the Muslim town of Aluthgama in the South. Muslims are considered economic competitors of the Sinhalese Buddhists (Ali, 2014), and, although cloaked in Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, incidents of violence against Muslims are also clearly based on economic rivalry. Further, while political patronage has historically been pivotal in maintaining or escalating some of these tensions, the Rajapaksa-led regime was seen as strongly linked with the incidents of religious unrest that took place from 2010 to 2014, specifically through ultra-nationalist Sinhalese Buddhist movements such as the *Bodu Bala Sena* (Verité Research, 2016). My own observations and experiences in Trincomalee played out against this national backdrop. Although Trincomalee was not a direct target of anti-Muslim

violence, tensions were palpable in the present study's field sites. For example, the issue surrounding illegal fishing, where Muslims were alleged to be the main perpetrators, had strong undertones of Islamophobia at the institutional and community levels.

An important change that has taken place in the political arena after the data collection phase of this study is the defeat of President Rajapaksa by the joint opposition's presidential candidate, Maithripala Sirisena. Undoubtedly, with the defeat of the former regime, the democratic space within the country has expanded, and the return of some of the land that was declared part of High Security Zones and occupied by the GoSL military in the Northern and Eastern Provinces to the original owners is a step in the right direction, although much more needs to be done to address the grievances and root causes of the conflict.

Local conflicts often mirror competing claims at macro level. In a study of three irrigation schemes in Trincomalee district during the 2002–2005 ceasefire, Korf (2005) found that ethnicity had become a fault line in the issue of access to land and irrigation allocation. Further, he illustrated how people use political patronage based on ethnic identity to maximise their access to certain resources and to secure their rights. Conversely, Gaasbeek (2010: 329) has claimed that 'social life is about a lot more than ethnicity […] it is constituted by multiple and intersecting realities'. Ongoing inter-ethnic interaction, in the face of deep mistrust brought about by targeted violence, complicates a simplistic and linear narrative of ethnic segregation. Siriwardane-de Zoysa (2015) has argued that, while recognising the salience of collective primordial identities, including ethnicity, religion and caste, the hegemony of these group identities resulted in them being the main analytical lenses through which moments of violence or inter-group linkages are studied. There is a need to study everyday instances of social inclusion based on loose connections (as opposed to close associational contacts), which may prove to be crucial and stronger. The analysis presented in this thesis aligns closely with the argument that life is about more than ethnicity and that hegemonic identities need to be re-thought, as is illustrated in all of the chapters of this thesis. However, the attempt to understand intersecting identities, combined with the agentive power of those who are marginalised, adds more nuance to the arguments above—a point to which I return in Chapters 3, 4 and 6.

Situated within discussions of socioeconomic inequalities and conflict, the present study set out to explore how these inequalities interact with identity at the micro level. The study focused specifically on micro-level inter-group dynamics, going beyond popular ethnic group discourses by bringing in integrated and

negotiated aspects of identity categories such as gender, location-based identity and ethnicity among fishers in an eastern district in post-war Sri Lanka.

1.1.3. Coastal Trincomalee

> We saw a cemetery on the way to the woman's house and noticed that there were gravestones from different religions and thought of checking it out on the way back. On the way back, we stopped the car and started exploring and it looked interesting indeed because I could capture four different types of gravestones in one frame on the camera! Tamil Hindu, Tamil Christian, Sinhalese Buddhist and Sinhalese Christian grave stones all clustered close by. I don't know how common this is in other parts of the country. Sathiya was clearly impressed, and she said in her area [Central Province] this is definitely not common; each group would have their own cemetery. When we entered the cemetery, I noticed that all the graves towards the front were Sinhalese Buddhist with '*Anichchāwatha Sankāra*' written on the stones. Towards the end and left, there were mixed ethnic/religious gravestones, and towards the right there were mainly Christian/Catholic ones. Tharshini made the comment earlier, 'Let's take a photograph, *oka balala hari hadenne kiyala kiyanne puluwan apita* [hopefully people will at least look at the photographs and start thinking about these issues in a better way]'. This also reminds me of the exercise that Basith, Munas [two of my colleagues at the Centre for Poverty Analysis] and I did at the office when we were talking to a British undergrad about our ideal peaceful community. We had imagined our community to be mixed, but living in ethnic/religious enclaves with certain common services and infrastructure. I wonder whether this is the way forward for us as Sri Lankans […] The community we visited was mixed, including a Muslim group. They live in clusters, however, so although they belong to the same community, there are three villages: one Tamil, one Sinhalese and one Muslim.

> (Field diary extract, 13 October 2013)

Situated on the east coast of Sri Lanka, Trincomalee district, to me, is the epitome of diversity and contradiction: socially, culturally, politically, economically and geographically. Trincomalee is one of the few districts in Sri Lanka where the three main ethnic groups are represented relatively equally. At present, in terms of demography, Trincomalee's population is 27% Sinhalese, 30.6% Sri Lankan Tamil, 40.4% Sri Lankan Moor and 2% other ethnicities (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012). However, this population composition is a relatively recent phenomenon, as Figure 2 illustrates. Trincomalee has also been a site where 'a process of mixing and violent un-mixing of people' has taken place (Skinner, 2005: 3, Rajasingham, 2000). In the past, the east coast has been populated by Tamils and Muslims, two historically and culturally linked but contentious groups (McGilvray, 2008).

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Figure 2. Trincomalee's population by ethnic group, 1881–2001
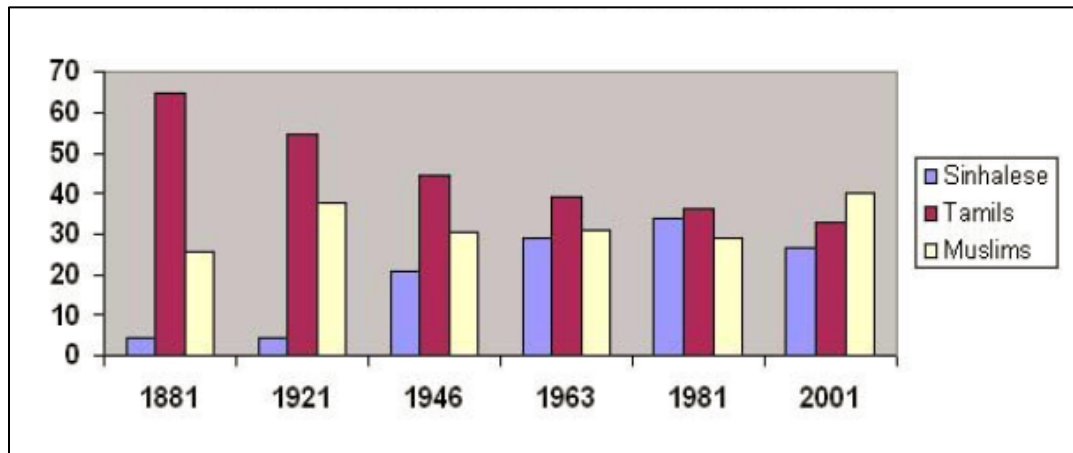
Source: Skinner (2005)

In Trincomalee, changing demographic patterns are part of a long history of population movements: free, forced and state-sponsored (Skinner, 2005: 4). An example is the state-sponsored Sinhalese irrigation schemes[3] (Skinner, 2005) and the migration of primarily Sinhalese fishermen from the south-west and north-west coasts. Inter-coast migration from the north-west and south coasts to the east coast during the British period is well documented, mainly through records of minor disputes. Fishing was not very well developed on the east coast because of the relatively lower number of settlements. Those who did engage in fishing on the east coast were not antagonistic towards the migrant fishers, given that the fish resources were quite abundant (Sivasubramaniam, 2009). Most of these migrants, over time, became permanently settled in Trincomalee. As a result, Trincomalee is now one of the few districts in Sri Lanka that is home to more or less equal proportions of all of the three main ethnic groups of the country. However, although the district's demographics show a mix of people, a closer look at the settlement patterns shows that there is generally a high level of ethnic segregation, with ethnic others living in close proximity (Gaasbeek, 2010).

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[3] With the Allai irrigation scheme, for example, the population tripled in the 17 years from 1946 to 1963 in an area toward the south of Trincomalee called Kottiyar Pattu (Gaasbeek, 2010).

1.1.4. Impact of war in coastal Trincomalee

Since colonial times, Trincomalee has been of strategic military and economic importance, especially to the Dutch and the British, with the former strengthening the Portuguese-built fortifications around the harbour area (see Figure 3 for a 17th century map of Trincomalee fort). From the destruction of the sacred Koneswaram temple by the Portuguese in 1624, to the bombing of Trincomalee by the Japanese during the Second World War, to the district's role as a theatre of the civil war, Trincomalee has had a history marked by violence.

Figure 3. Seventeenth century map of Trincomalee
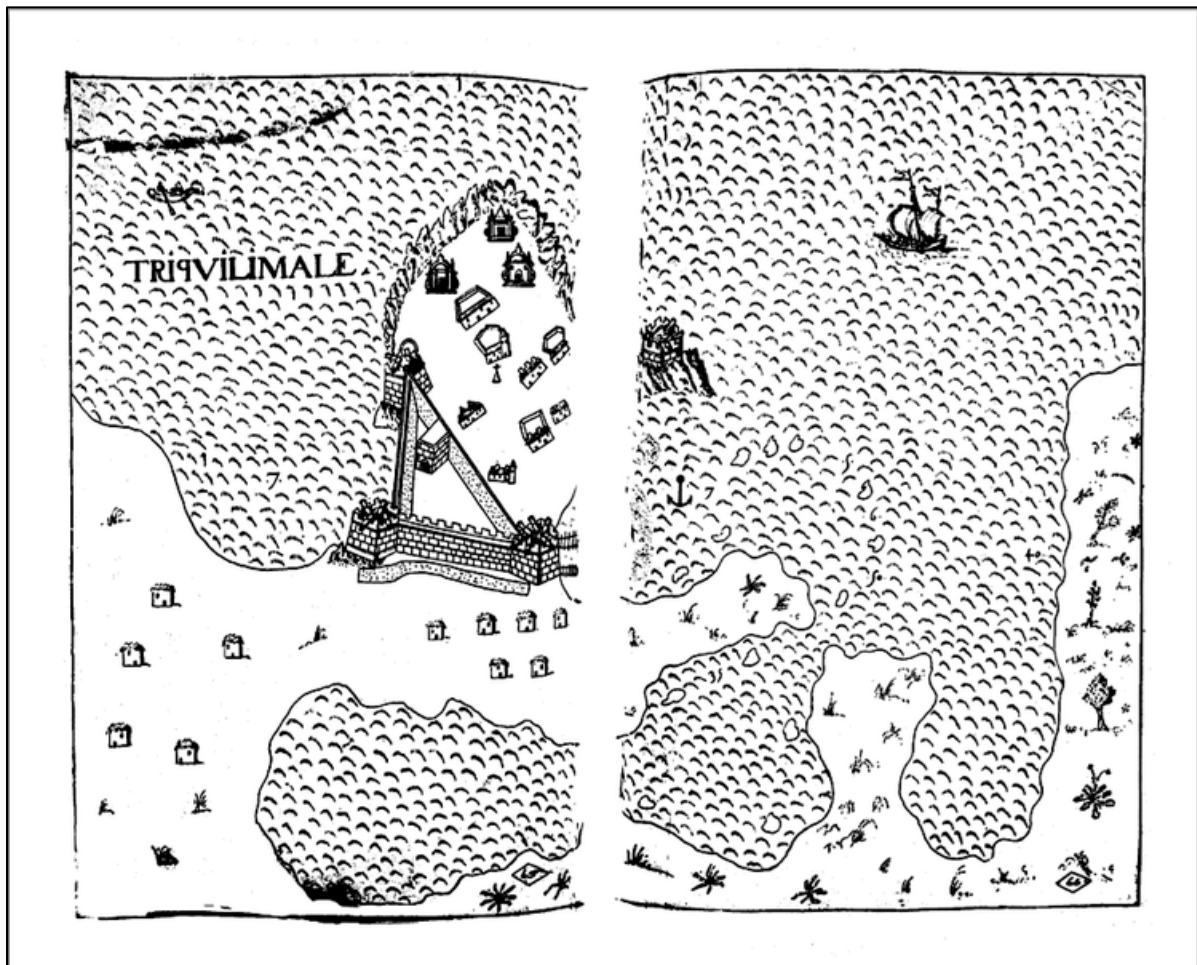
Source: Abeyasinghe (1995), Original by Antonio Boccaro

Situated in a politically strategic location on the border between the formerly contested Northern and Eastern provinces, Trincomalee was affected by violence instigated by the two main warring parties—the LTTE and the GoSL military—who capitalised on the lack of trust between the Sinhalese and the Tamils (Korf, 2004). Trincomalee has experienced different forms of violence of varying intensities. For example, the naval base in Trincomalee Harbour was the target of LTTE suicide attacks in 1990, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000 and 2006 (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2017); five Tamil students were killed by the GoSL military on 2 January 2006; and the erection of a Buddha statue between the main Trincomalee bus station and the wholesale fish market on 5 May 2005 night, resulted in tensions. Trincomalee's history is also marked by the ebb and flow of communal violence during the 1980s and 1990s between Sinhalese and Tamils and between Tamils and Muslims (Goodhand and Lewer, 1999). For example, according to life history data, in areas such as Kokkilai, at the border of Trincomalee and the northern district of Mullaithivu, there was violence against Tamil people, as well as displacement, as early as 1977. Although the violence related to the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP, People's Liberation Front) insurrection of 1988 largely happened outside the North and East of the country, Trincomalee was targeted by the state forces for arrests of JVP supporters, mainly from the Southern Province.

The war contributed to the 'violent mixing and un-mixing' of people in Trincomalee, and the impacts of the war in relation to displacement and the resultant changes in demographics were ethnicised. Tamils in Trincomalee district faced violence and mass-scale displacement in 1983, 1985 and 1990 (Gaasbeek, 2013). In 1987, with the arrival of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), the Sinhalese communities experienced violence and fled the area. Certain Tamil communities were also displaced in 2006, during the last phase of the war (Gaasbeek, 2013). Mass-scale displacement of Muslims, who were caught between the two fighting factions, occurred in 2003 in the areas of Kinniya and Muttur, and in the last phase of the war in the East in 2006. The population shuffling that took place at various points during the war permanently altered the demographic patterns and settlements of coastal Trincomalee. For example, the Sinhalese wholesale dealers at the main fish market and the people living in the permanent (but temporary-looking) settlement next to the wholesale market never returned after being displaced from areas north of Trincomalee town in 1987–1988 during violence related to the intervention of the IPKF.

The war shaped the economic lives and livelihoods of men and women and had differentiated impacts for different segments of the population. To some extent, this process continued after the war. Trincomalee was affected by a variety of actions during the war, including interruptions to fisheries activities, the 'pass system' enforced by the Navy for those going to sea, the destruction of fishing craft and equipment, the extortionate and rent-seeking behaviours of both parties in the war, threats of violence and the taking of lives. Further, ethnicised political capital influenced negotiations for economic and political spaces and opportunities. This led to the emergence of war economies. Goodhand et al. (2000) and Bohle and Fungfeld (2007) have pointed to three different types of political economies that emerged in the East as a result of the prolonged violence: a war economy (controlled by conflict entrepreneurs), a speculative economy (engineered by armed forces and conflict profiteers) and a survival economy (involving the vast majority of the population). Interestingly, the impacts of these war economies and the continued presence of war entrepreneurs could still be observed in coastal Trincomalee at the time of my field work, as Chapter 4 shows through a historical examination of the dealers at the main wholesale market in Trincomalee town.

Finally, because of the multicultural nature of Trincomalee, McGilvray (2001: 1) has argued that 'it has become pivotal to the island's political future' and that 'more than any other part of the country, it is a site for multicultural contestation and alternative ethnic futures'. In pluralist socio-political contexts such as Trincomalee, where there have also been violent divisions along axes of social identity (e.g. ethnicity) as a result of war, it is crucial to understand power dynamics—militarised and non-militarised—at the everyday level. This sparked my keen academic and practical interest in studying the identity dynamics operating in post-war Trincomalee.

1.1.5. Fisheries in Trincomalee

Comprising 11 Fisheries Inspector Divisions, Trincomalee is one of the largest fishing districts in Sri Lanka, both geographically and in terms of the number of fishermen. As of 2015, Trincomalee reported 33,950 active fishermen[4] (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, 2016) of a total of 72,504 employed men (Department of Census and Statistics, 2016). Of all of the districts in the country, Trincomalee is home to the highest number of active fishers (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic

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[4] Fisheries statistics use the category 'active fishermen', and do report separate numbers by gender. The primary data of this study show about 500 women engaged in the sector (see Chapter 3).

Development, 2016). Of the 230 *Grama Niladhari* divisions[5] in Trincomalee, approximately 80–100 host marine or brackish water fishers.

Trincomalee ranks fourth in terms of the number of fishing craft in the district, with 5232 operating fishing craft (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Development, 2016). At the height of the war in 2007, Trincomalee produced only 9,460 metric tons of fish annually (3.2% of the national total). Its production then steadily increased after the end of the war-related violence in the East in 2007, with an all-time high of 38,080 metric tons recorded in 2012 (7.8% of the national total) (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Development, 2016).

In the pre-war period, apart from concerns about the settlement of southern fishermen, especially in the eastern Trincomalee district, the fishing industry and fishing as a livelihood were seen by the Tamil politicians only as peripheral issues for Tamil nationalism. However, the impact of the war on the fisheries sector has put fisheries directly at the centre of post-war rebuilding and reconstruction discussions (Siluvaithasan and Stokke, 2006). During the intense periods of the war, the fishing industry was almost crippled in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, with loss of equipment, lives and infrastructure, as well as complete bans or heavy restrictions on coastal access points, deep sea fishing and fishing times (Siluvaithasan and Stokke, 2006).

The 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami was an important event in the lives of the coastal population of Trincomalee, and a barrage of aid went to the affected areas after the tsunami. Although it had been almost a decade since the tsunami when I conducted my field work, it came up in my discussions with the fishers, mostly in relation to temporary displacement, the loss of lives and assets, and, importantly, changes in the ownership of fishing-related assets. This was linked to a narrative of newcomers to the fisheries sector, post-tsunami. The tension between the so-called newcomers to the sector and the traditional fishers was more palpable in certain fishing locations, such as the inner harbour area, where the traditional trap fishers alleged that 'even those working in the Urban Council[6] received boats'. This created an overcrowding effect on the sea and has ultimately contributed to tensions and conflicts in the fisheries in Trincomalee.

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[5] *Grama Niladhari* divisions are the smallest administrative units in Sri Lanka.
[6] This refers to people belonging to the cleaner caste (*sakkiliyar* in Tamil).

1.1.6. Fisher-folk in Trincomalee

Fishing is traditionally understood as a caste-based livelihood in Sri Lanka. The caste of fisher-folk shows parallels in the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamil caste systems; fishers belong to *Karawa* (Sinhalese) and *Karaiyar* (Tamil) castes. In terms of the caste hierarchies, Sinhalese *Karawa* caste fishers occupy a contested mid-level rank, along with the *Salagama* (cinnamon peelers) and *Durawa* (toddy tappers) castes, who engage in economically lucrative jobs (Roberts, 1982). The Tamil *Karaiyar* caste also occupies a mid-level position in the contested hierarchy, located below the *Vellala* (farmer) caste and followed by temple-based castes and goldsmiths. A 1980 national fisheries survey conducted by the local research institute Marga (Banda et al., 1984) documents that an overwhelming proportion of the fishers belonged to the fisher castes: 46.54% were of the Sinhalese *Karawa* caste and 31.74% were of the Tamil *Karaiyar* caste. Traditionally, fishers engaged in deep sea fishing, with legends pointing to a history of 'warriors of the sea'[7], royal lineage and mercenaries (Banda et al., 1984; Roberts, 1982; Silva et al., 2009). Nur Yalman (1967) identified the *Karawa* caste as coastal people and not fishermen specifically. This could be because some of these people were brought to Ceylon to strengthen the fighting forces, and they were eventually given land in the coastal areas where they could settle.

As the field work progressed, my discussions with the coastal men and women about caste became more nuanced, and it became apparent to me that there was more than one oral history of the caste and livelihood origin of the coastal folk. For example, narratives of 'warriors at sea' were a recurrent theme in my interactions with Tamil Hindus, along with a narrative of them being traders from India, as the following extract from a traditional Tamil Hindu community north of Trincomalee town illustrates. The traditional Tamil Hindu fisher communities in areas such as Pattanombar, located north of Trincomalee town, also believed that there were two caste groups within the fisher caste: *Karaiyar* and *Pattanavar*. The distinction seemed to be mainly based on the location where they fished—coastal shallow sea or deep sea.

> They [our ancestors] used to do business in countries like India and were called the *Kadal Vannihar*. They did business using ships. Over time, without going back, they started coming here and catching fish. During his time [indicating the older of the two interviewees], there were

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[7] Coastal dwellers of Sri Lanka are believed to be originally from India and to have taken up residence in coastal Sri Lanka about 1000 years ago. The *Karawa* caste's claim to have been warriors may originate from the *Mahabharatha*, where the war between the Pandawas and the Kaurawas is chronicled (Fernando et al., 1980).

no clay tiles [here]. We had clay tiles in India. We were called the *Pattanavar* or *Aariyanattu Setti*.

(Tamil Hindu fishermen, Pattanombar)

We have two names, *Pattanavar* and *Karaiyar*. Those who do the beach seine are called *Karaiyar* and those who go to the open seas are called *Pattanavar*. Those who work in the boats are *Pattanavar*, and they are called *Karaiyar* because they set the net close to the beach [*Karai* in Tamil]. Our people have divided themselves into *Karaiyar* and *Pattanavar*. They have been doing it for generations.

(Tamil Hindu Fishermen, Pattanombar)

Although Muslims share many cultural similarities with Tamils in the East, the caste system does not seem to be shared. As a Muslim fish trader summarised, 'all of us can pray to God together […] a rich person will pray with a fisherman next to him. Barbers and washers[8] and all are equal in our religion'. However, in practice, when it comes to fishers, a class-occupation based identity seems to exist, as elaborated by a Muslim fish trader: 'This job is a bad-smelling job, but this job will always enable us to have cash in our hands'. Indian-origin Tamils follow a different caste system, and, at present in Trincomalee, some groups from the lowest rung of this caste system engage in fishing, although these groups were not historically linked with that occupation. Because of space limitations, I will not discuss these groups in this thesis.

Another important characteristic that defines fisher-folk in Trincomalee is the type of craft and fishing equipment they use. In the Sri Lankan context, marine fisheries are categorised into three main sub-sectors: deep sea or offshore fisheries[9], coastal fisheries[10] and brackish water/aquaculture[11]. This thesis focuses only on the men and women who engage in coastal and brackish water (lagoons) fishing. Offshore fisheries constitute an important segment of Trincomalee's fishing sector because of the presence of the Cod Bay Fishery Harbour. However, the fish catch from the off-shore vessels generally does not come to the fish markets in Trincomalee; they are taken straight to Colombo or exported, and my

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[8] In both the Sinhalese and the Tamil caste system, barbers and washers are regarded as caste-based livelihoods, positioned towards the lower end of the hierarchy.
[9] Fishing activities that occur beyond the continental shelf, usually using Multi-day boats for fishing trips that last more than five days.
[10] Fishing that occurs within the continental shelf, usually using one-day mechanised or non-mechanised boats and stationary gear such as beach seines or trap fishing.
[11] Capture activities that occur in lagoons and aquaculture such as fish or prawn farms.

focus on the fish markets in Trincomalee as my main point of entry to the field and subsequent data collection meant that the offshore/deep sea sector was not explored. Further, the majority of the deep sea vessels operating out of Trincomalee Harbour are not owned by people who live in Trincomalee, which would have limited my interactions with the boat owners and crew. Further, of the 4,218 offshore multi-day craft in the country, only 152 are in Trincomalee, which has a total of 5,232 craft of all types (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Development, 2015).

Coastal fishing occurs on the continental shelf, as one-day mechanised[12] or non-mechanised[13] boat operations or as beach seine activities from the shore. In Trincomalee, a wide variety of mechanised boats are in operation, in terms of the type and power of the engine and the length of the boat, and the variety in non-mechanised boats is even wider. Of Trincomalee's 5,232 fishing craft, 2,421 are one-day, outboard engine, fibreglass-reinforced plastic boats, and 2,281 are non-motorised, traditional boats (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Development, 2015). The most popular forms of fishing in Trincomalee include fishing using different types of nets, hooks and lines (*thoondal* in Tamil). Some of the more traditional specialised forms of fishing included trap fishing, for example using wire cages (*koodu* in Tamil) or arrow-head stationary traps (*kattu valai* in Tamil); rod fishing (*bilee piththa* in Sinhalese) using non-motorised boats; and fishing for skipjack tuna using live bait (*pasi pannaya* in Sinhalese). During the field work, it soon became apparent that these intricate sub-groupings within the fisheries sector and among fishers based on the nature of the fishing activities were important in how dominant identities such as ethnicity are mediated, negotiated and defined.

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[12] Fibreglass-reinforced boats with an outboard engine, inboard single-day boats and motorised traditional boats fall into this category. These boats use a wide variety of fishing equipment and methods such as nets, long lines and hooks.

[13] This refers to traditional craft that do not have an engine.

Figure 4. *Kattu valai* (fish traps) in Trincomalee Inner Harbour

Fishing is clearly a gendered activity in Trincomalee. One thing that the markets and landing sites in Trincomalee have in common is an almost complete lack of women's engagement. In the pre- and early-war periods, a few Tamil women worked as traders at the main fish market when it was a combined retail–wholesale enterprise. However, with the war and the restructuring of the market to be exclusively wholesale, these women lost their places there. I did not come across a single woman in the wholesale markets or the fish landing sites in Trincomalee, except for consumers interested in buying fish.

1.1.7. State and non-state stakeholders in fisheries

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development is in charge of policy design, with the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) implementing the policies through a network of district-level officers, under the auspices of an Assistant Director (AD). Each fishing district is sub-divided into Fisheries Inspector Divisions, with a Fisheries Inspector (FI) in charge of each of these

divisions. It is the ADs at the district level and the FIs at level of the Fisheries Inspector Divisions who act as intermediaries between macro-level policies and regulations and the grassroots-level fishermen and women. Apart from carrying out statistical surveys, registering craft and intervening in fisher and non-fisher conflicts (Scholtens, 2016), a contentious and often sensitive task under the purview of the district fisheries officers is enforcing fisheries regulations.

Whereas fisheries regulation by the district fisheries officers seems a mundane and almost negligible issue on the south and north coasts of Sri Lanka (see Scholtens, 2016; Wickramasinghe and Bavinck, 2015), this is different in Trincomalee, not least because of the post-war involvement of the Navy in enforcing fishing regulations on banned fishing methods in the sea. This involvement of the Navy is mandated, as, after the war ended, state regulatory authorities increased their presence and reach in relation to banned fishing methods in Trincomalee in an attempt to reclaim the sea space and resource governance mandate. This has led to tensions, as Chapter 5 analyses in detail.

The Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act provides power to the (Assistant) Director at the district level to authorise an 'authorised officer' to ensure compliance with the regulations of the Act. This authorised officer has the power to conduct searches and make arrests, as well as to seize craft, equipment and fish (Section 46 (4) a–g). In the Act, an 'authorised officer' includes any officer of the Army, Air Force or police with the rank of sergeant or higher and any officer of the Navy with the rank of at least petty officer (Section 66). Thus, the military, which was once a warring party, has become a rule enforcement authority over civilian livelihoods.

However, the fisheries-related institutions in Sri Lanka do not originate only from state authority; they also come from the community level, resulting in a context of legal pluralism (Wickramasinghe and Bavink, 2015), where multiple systems of rules and regulations are in operation simultaneously. The relevant community-based organisations are mainly fisheries cooperatives. Guided by the 1972 Cooperative Societies Act (№ 5) and the Fisheries Cooperative Constitution (Scholtens, 2016), fisheries cooperatives have played an important role in mobilising social capital, as conduits for government subsidies (in the past), marketing points and access points for new technology (Amarasinghe, 2009). An interesting and important change in the fisheries cooperatives occurred in 2010, when the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development introduced Rural Fisheries Organisations (RFOs), with Rural Fisheries Federations at the divisional, district and national levels acting as higher bodies. These

organisations were meant to address the inefficacy issues of the cooperatives and were under the direct authority of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (Scholtens, 2016). As a result, in most coastal communities, two parallel fisheries organisations were created, sometimes with the same official members sitting on both committees. Further, in Trincomalee, prior to the introduction of cooperative societies in the 1970s, Hindu *kovil* committees and mosque societies functioned as fisheries management and regulatory bodies (Siriwardane-de Zoysa, 2015). However, my research found that these bodies were still active in certain communities in Trincomalee, bringing a religious morality to the way fisheries are managed at the community level, as this thesis illustrates in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6.

1.1.8. Locating the research within the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

This PhD research was embedded within a broader, multi-country, six-year research programme called the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC). Funded by United Kingdom's Department for International Development, Irish Aid and the European Commission, the SLRC programme began in 2011, with the mandate of providing a stronger evidence base about how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness, and access basic services in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The research presented in this thesis is located within the SLRC core theme on livelihoods and economic activity, which sought to respond to the following overarching research question: 'What do livelihood trajectories in conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support the ways in which poor and vulnerable people make a living?' Apart from a series of qualitative studies that put people and their livelihood strategies and activities at the centre of the research, SLRC also carried out a longitudinal panel survey in five of the focus countries, including Sri Lanka.

One of the primary goals of SLRC's livelihoods-focused research was to better inform governments and agencies seeking to support livelihoods in conflict-affected, post-conflict and fragile states. By paying close attention to governance structures—both those that support and those that undermine people's livelihoods—SLRC links its research within the core livelihoods theme with the consortium's work on legitimacy and state capacity.

Because I was employed at the Centre for Poverty Analysis—the Sri Lankan country partner for SLRC—I was involved in the early research design phase and the subsequent implementation in 2012, prior to the

start of my PhD studies. This involvement exposed me to the broader debates and the latest ideas on livelihoods in conflict-affected areas, while also providing me with the space and freedom to explore my own research interests and aims, specifically in a sector that has always fascinated me and continues to do so: fisheries. Being embedded in the SLRC also meant that, from its inception, my research had to have a research uptake component. This requirement made my project go beyond an academic exercise, communicating the research and actively tailoring policy- or action-oriented messages to different audiences and engaging with them. As a result, I have engaged in a series of discussions, events and sharing platforms, such as blogs and photo essays, drawing on my research (see Appendix I for a list of these events and outlets). Doing this helped me to sharpen my analysis and conclusions. Finally, being part of the SLRC at the global and country level meant that there was a diverse group of people with whom I could share my initial analysis and who were willing to provide feedback and comments and act as sounding boards in general.

1.2 Research objective and research questions

1.2.1 Overall research question

The point of departure for the thesis was the interconnections between people's identities and their livelihood activities, as well as mutual impacts and changes in these interconnections. As such, the overall research question was as follows: **How do the differentiated identities of men and women affect their livelihoods, and how do these livelihoods shape identity-related dynamics and social tensions in fishing communities of post-war eastern Sri Lanka?** Throughout this thesis, I elaborate and add nuance to the concepts of identity and livelihoods, referring to different theories used to understand these two concepts, as well as to the empirical investigation and questioning of these theories through my research. To enable the more specific and elaborate understanding of the nexus between identity and livelihoods, I drew upon the concepts of economic sociology, intersectional identity, and state–society relations and legitimacy in the fisheries.

The specific research questions that operationalise the overall research question are elaborated below. The questions are addressed in multiple chapters of the thesis. The final question on legacies of war runs through all four chapters. These research questions are focused primarily on the individual and collective levels, with limited references to macro-level discourses, as specified below.

1.2.2 Operationalisation of the research question

Research question 1: How do religions and moralities shape livelihoods (and vice versa)?

Fishing is more than 'just a livelihood'; it is a way of life embedded in culture and society. Religious values, as one dimension of culture, impact livelihood decisions and practices, which, in turn, shape religious values. Theoretically, this research question drew on economic sociology and moral economy concepts to study the nexus between religious morality and fisher livelihoods. Primarily focusing on Muslim, Tamil Hindu and Sinhalese Buddhist fishers as individuals, this question sought to explore empirically the centrality of religion and morality in fishers' lives, asking how fishers reconcile their sometimes competing economic and moral values (Chapters 2 and 5). In terms of the scale of analysis, this research question focused primarily on the individual, with reference to collective groupings at the local level where necessary.

Research question 2: How do intersecting identities shape fisheries livelihoods (and vice versa)?

The intersectional identities of ethnicity, gender and, to a lesser degree, caste and class shape differentiated access to livelihood spaces and resources. Livelihood activities, in turn, contribute to the shaping of intersectional identity. Drawing on the intersectionality theoretical approach and masculinities theory, combined with theories about people's agency, this question sought to understand processes of marginalisation, hegemonisation and the subversion of power structures. More specifically, this question explored how Muslim, Sinhalese, Tamil and indigenous women are structurally marginalised in fisheries (Chapter 3) and how hegemonic power structures are created at the wholesale fish market (Chapter 4). This question also examined how men and women use their agentive power to subvert structural forces that marginalise them (Chapters 3 and 4). Similar to research question 1, this question also focused on the individual level, often referring to collective groups, in terms of ethnicity and gender at the local level.

Research question 3: How do state–society relations affect fisheries livelihoods, and what is the role of state–society perceptions among fisher communities in legitimising the state as a fisheries regulator?

Legitimacy as a result of relationships and perceptions formed through interactions between the state and society plays an important role in local-level fisheries regulation. Through the theoretical concepts of

fisheries compliance and legitimacy, this question explored the formation and expression of legitimacy as a process, rather than a static concept. It also analysed how perceptions of state–society relations and legitimacy—manifested at the local community level, but sometimes shaped by macro-level (fisheries-related) political mandates—influence inclusion and exclusion in livelihood spaces. Further, at an empirical level, this question sought to understand how overlapping and sometimes opposing normative frameworks lend legitimacy to different actors, specifically in regulating illegal fishing (Chapters 4 and 5). This research question focused on collective groups at the local level in terms of livelihood practices and ethnicity, making a few selected references to macro-level political discourses related to religious/ethnic ideology.

 Research question 4: How do continued legacies of war and politics shape fisheries livelihoods?

War and related dynamics continue to play an important role in sustaining tensions and inequalities at the local level, and they shape the livelihoods of men and women. This research question, running throughout all of the chapters of this thesis, foregrounded the body of work on livelihoods in conflict-affected contexts. The question sought to understand how war legacies have continued to create differentiated impacts for different identity groups—by ethnicity and gender. Staying very close to the local-level dynamics, the question also explored how livelihood-related tensions at the local level can spill over into identity politics that are manifested at the local level but are potentially influenced by macro-level political discourses (Chapters 2–5). Given that this question drew from all of the analytical chapters of the thesis, the question focused on the individual and the collective group at the local level, with specific references to macro-level discourses on war-related state politics and fisheries regulatory policies.

1.3   Theoretical Framework

As introduced above, my overall objective was to understand the differentiated influence of people's identities on their livelihoods, as well as how livelihoods shape people's identities. As individual concepts, both identity and livelihoods have been studied at length. For example, scholars studying livelihoods in wartime or post-war Sri Lanka have primarily used the sustainable livelihoods framework (Goodhand et al., 2000; Korf, 2004), emphasising the types of capital that they find most useful for their analysis. Scholars studying identity in Sri Lanka, in contrast, have employed a wide spectrum of theories such as feminism, nationalism and post-colonialism (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Ruwanpura, 2008). However, the challenge for me was to identify an overarching theoretical framework that could be used to

study the complex and dynamic nexus between the two concepts (without privileging either of the concepts), with the added layer of the complications and messiness brought about by war-related tensions.

Given the need to understand livelihoods as shaping people's identities and as a way of life, I first turn to economic sociology to explore the economic activity of livelihoods through a broader lens. Next, I turn to intersectionality theory, combined with the concepts of masculinities and peoples' agency, to study the identity component of the overall research question posed above. The combination of these theories enabled a nuanced empirical analysis of the nexus between identity and livelihoods.

1.3.1   Economic sociology

Economic sociology[14] provides a sociological understanding of economic institutions and processes, and it encompasses a broad theoretical, methodological and thematic scope (Beckert, 1996). The sociological aspect of this approach refutes the maximising theory that is central to economics (Beckert, 1996). Instead, sociological aspects including personal interaction, groups and social structures, as well as social controls such as sanctions, values and norms are used to explain economic actions (Smelser, 1963; Smelser and Swedberg, 1996). Further, social networks, gender, cultural context (Granovetter, 1985; Zelizer, 1989) and ecology (Stinchcombe, 1983) form important components of economic sociology.

In economic sociology, an actor is a 'socially constructed entity', 'actor in interaction' or 'actor-in-society', where actors are connected to and influenced by one another (Smelser and Swedberg, 1996: 5). In contrast, in mainstream (classical and neoclassical) economics, an actor is an individual and not connected to other actors (Schumpeter, 1934). Economists approach economic action as maximising utility or profit, which is termed as rational action. Sociologists take a broader view, calling the maximisation of utility 'formal rationality' and also introducing 'substantive rationality' (Weber, 1978), which is based on the allocation of resources to other principles, such as communal loyalties or sacred values (Smelser and Swedberg, 1996: 5). Another important difference between the two approaches is how they treat and position power. Economists treat economic action as an exchange among equals, generally ignoring power in their analyses (Galbraith, 1973, 1984). When they do incorporate power, it is to investigate, for example, the power to control prices (Scherer et al., 1990). Economic sociologists, in

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[14] For a comparison between 'mainstream economics' and economic sociology, refer to Smelser and Swedberg (1996: 4).

sharp contrast, make power a central point of their analyses and focus on its use in society, especially in examinations of politics and class (Smelser and Swedberg, 1996: 5).

Beyond the sustainable livelihoods framework

At this point, it is useful to clarify my stance with regard to the more commonly used sustainable livelihoods framework within development studies to understand economic action. Chambers and Conway (1992) firmly etched the term 'livelihoods' in development theory and practice through their sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF). Although not framed as livelihood studies, a series of investigations in different parts of the world conducted about 50 years prior to the work of Chambers and Conway used localised, cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary lenses to understand how people were making a living (see Farmer, 1977; Lipton and Moore, 1972; Long, 1984; Walker and Ryan, 1990). However, the livelihoods framework is criticised for its lack of attention to power and politics. Despite a few 'marginal discussions' (e.g. Collinson, 2003; Lautze and Raven-Roberts, 2006) around power and social difference, the SLF and related livelihood frameworks continue to be used by practitioners for a more 'instrumental poverty reduction agenda, framed by economics' (Scoones, 2009: 180). Hence, my keen interest in going beyond economic framings and in understanding the social and the political dynamics led me away from the SLF.

A meaningful analysis of fisheries in Trincomalee, and perhaps in Sri Lanka in general, must be embedded in the war-induced externalities. In eastern Sri Lanka, livelihood strategies during war varied from retreat to subsistence production to minimise the risk on lack of returns for investment, diversify the income sources (Goodhand et al, 2000), taking calculated risks to life and equipment, re-organising household responsibilities and seeking external support from relatives, armed forces, NGOs and power holders (Klem, 2004). Further, identity categories such as ethnicity and gender had played a role in shaping livelihoods of people in war affected contexts in the eastern province. For example, Tamil households in Batticaloa used more women and less young men, to market their produce across rebel-controlled territory borders and government military held areas. The Sinhalese young men in the area were recruited as home guards by the state (Korf, 2004). This thesis will analyse how post-war, ethnicised and gendered livelihoods still persist in eastern Sri Lanka. Further, in the war-affected areas of Sri Lanka,

civilians are not just passive victims of the changes and threats that occur; rather, these people actively seek to alter 'entitlements and resource access' (Korf and Fünfgeld, 2006: 11) in their favour by changing their political and social capital and networks. For example, in urban Trincomalee, the fish trade became dominated by traders and boat owners of the majority Sinhalese ethnic group as shown in chapter 4.

Economic sociology in this thesis

I have chosen to ground my work in economic sociology. I could also have opted for a lens of political economy. Both perspectives partly overlap, although political economy is more associated with the analysis of power. However, I consider the social to encompass the political as well. Granovetter (1985: 487) included the political within the broader framing of the sociology of economic life in stating that the 'sociology of economic life approach premises that economic actions form a part of concrete, ongoing systems of socio-political relations'. Further, my desire to understand how men's and women's ethnicity and religion interact with the economic sphere and to understand work as 'economically oriented action' led me to the sub-theory of moral economy, which is encompassed in the broader economic sociology approach.

The theory of moral economy premises that market forces can never completely escape non-market and non-economic processes (Sayer, 2004: 3). This line of thinking goes back to the work of Adam Smith, who claimed that all economic processes are embedded in the social world and cannot be understood separately from a society's morals and norms (Booth, 1994: 653; Hollingsworth, 2006: 103; Sayer, 2004: 2; see also Narre, 2011; Polanyi, 1957: 46). Morality—or ethics, as it is sometimes called—concerns the norms (both formal and informal), values and dispositions regarding behaviour that affect others and imply certain conceptions of what is good (Sayer, 2004: 3). Further, being moral can be understood as having goals other than the mere accumulation of profit; these goals may include maintaining social status and prestige, striving towards social cohesion and the sustainability of an economic system (Narre, 2011: 400). Weber ((1922) 1978: 63–64) introduced the term 'economically oriented action', meaning that, while the attainment of utilities maybe one function of work, there may also be other functions as well: for example, spiritual goals (Smelser and Swedberg, 2010).

Related to economic sociology is the concept of embeddedness, which was first introduced by Polanyi (1957, 1971). Embeddedness refers to the extent to which economic action is linked to or depends on

actions or institutions that are non-economic in content, goals or processes (Granovetter, 2002, 35). However, it must be kept in mind that actions are not embedded in fixed cultural repertoires that lead to simplistic and reductionist generalisations. Contexts and cultures change, and, in that sense, embeddedness also changes. A large body of research has analysed macro-level economic processes (see Biggart and Beamish, 2003: 444), but much less attention has been paid to micro-level processes of economic decision making (Biggart and Beamish, 2003). This is precisely where the present study is situated, aiming to focus on individuals, collectives and their lived experiences of fishing and related activities.

Further, economic institutions and activities are not only socially, politically and culturally embedded; they also produce and reproduce society, politics and culture. In doing economics, these activities and institutions reproduce power, social relations, norms and rituals. To illustrate this point more specifically, I turn to the discussions on gender and economic sociology. Economic relations and institutions are not only embedded in society; they produce and reproduce gender while also producing and reproducing wages, labour and commodities. In other words, economic institutions are not only gendered, but also gendering (Milkman and Townsley, 1994: 600; Smelser and Swedberg, 1994). Similarly, economic institutions are not only social, but also socialising, politicising and culturing.

However, my analysis differs from the economic sociological approach to gender in my opposition to the stance that gender should be treated at a different analytical level from that of other subordinated groupings. Milkman and Townsley (1994) argue that gendered divisions are based on a different logic and that, therefore, gender should not be lumped together with other categories of subordination, such as race. I position my analysis on the logic that it is this very 'lumping together' of different grouping and social categories that allows social difference to be understood. My premise is that class, ethnicity and regional disparities intersect with gender to produce social difference (Bilge, 2010; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). At this point, I draw on the intersectionality approach to complement to the economic sociology approach.

1.3.2   Identity, intersectionality and beyond: Structural inequality and people's agency

I take as my point of departure an understanding of identity as socially constructed. Identity is an expression of difference, sameness and belonging (Escobar, 2008). Questioning the concept of a cultural

'melting pot', or assimilation, the social constructivist approach to identity formation takes the point of view that identity is fluid, dynamic and situational, understanding identity to be perfomativity (Bell, 1999; Butler, 1990, 1999). Further, social identity theory posits that 'individual identity is not a constant, but a shifting identity based on social interactions between the individual and her or his social environment' (Jabri, 1996: 125). People's realities are shaped by structural forces in the form of social, cultural and political factors and of discourses that people cannot control (Anthias, 2013), as well as by their own agentive power. Among other things, people use their multiple, overlapping identity categorisations to react to the circumstances with which they are faced (Long, 2004). Relatedly, discussing identity boundaries, Cohen (1994) highlighted the importance of analysing an individual's consciousness of boundaries. In the analysis presented in this thesis, identity is understood as socially constructed, situational, relationally developed through social interactions and as both a structural phenomenon that shapes people's lives and a field through which people manoeuvre to make the best of a given situation.

However, not all situations are changeable, and not all situations allow for a choice with regard to identity. For example, women from racial minorities may not be in a situation to pick and choose (Verdery, 1994). This line of thinking leads to the crucial importance of integrated identities or the intersectionality of identity categories (i.e. ethnic, sexual, gender, caste, class and other categories). Originating in Black feminist discussions, intersectionality refers to 'the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power' (Davis, 2008: 68). The deployment of an intersectional framework enables the understanding of how certain groups are troubled or marginalised (Staunæs, 2003). However, citing Long (2004: 18), Frerks and Klem (2005) have argued that, irrespective of restrictions on their choices, actors are able to find alternatives in their goals and to put these goals into practice. In line with this argument, this thesis will study identity as a process that is both structurally shaped and individually enacted and challenged, also taking into account its multiple and overlapping nature.

In situations of multiple identities, as is found in Trincomalee, the hierarchical vs. non-hierarchical nature of identities becomes important. I agree with Gaasbeek (2010), who argued for the need to study identity in its multiplicity, asserting that, although discourses of ethnic separation dominate public life in Sri Lanka, everyday realities are also shaped by other categories of social identity, including caste and gender. However, my analysis diverges from Gaasbeek where he rejects the hierarchical nature of these

identity categories. In my view, the denial of this hierarchy also denies the existence of the power, inequality and dominance that is inherent in everyday reality. To give an example from the sub-field of masculinity studies, the multiple masculinities model posits that there are inequalities between groups of men and attempts to examine the dominant and idealised forms of masculinity (Adkins, 2010: 5). Certainly, dominance and hierarchy are not fixed; they are context and time bound. Nevertheless, they do exist at a given time and space, and for a particular group. Further, the marginalised are not just passive victims; they actively subvert the existing hierarchies.

Parallel to this, my search for a framework that explicitly addresses the power dynamics shaping people's livelihoods—something alleged to be missing from the sustainable livelihoods frameworks—ended up with intersectionality theory. For at least two decades, the interrelatedness of social divisions in terms of the production of social relations and their impact on people's lives has been discussed and analysed. In fact, it could be argued that this interrelatedness is the very core of classical sociological theory (Anthias, 2013). 'Caste, class, gender and colonialism framed the emergence of intersectional analysis more than a century ago' (Ackerly and McDermot, 2012: 3). Growing out of Black feminist work, the term 'intersectionality' is generally accepted to have been coined by Crenshaw (1994), who studied 'overlapping categories of interconnectedness'. However, the analytical approach underlying the concept of intersectionality is not new. For example, Patricia Collins' pioneering work on gender, class and race was completed before the term 'intersectionality' was coined.

Collins used the phrase 'matrix of dominance' in explaining the complex oppressions that people experience based on four domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal (Collins, 2000, cited in Bilge, 2010). For most households, gender, along with other identity markers like age and class affect inter- and intra-household decision making (Feldstein and Poats, 1989), with regard to decisions on both livelihood-related activities and other matters. In the case of fisheries, Bene (2003) states that control of and access to fishing resources by individuals, households or groups depends upon their positions in the community (i.e. ethnic/religious affiliations, social networks and ownership of livelihood-related assets) and institutional arrangements, which legitimise this control (e.g. formal and informal norms and rules for resource governance).

Although the intersectionality approach allows for a nuanced analysis of the structural powers in operation that disadvantage certain groups compared with others, it lacks the capacity to capture the

agentive power of the people to subvert these structural powers. Indeed, a common critique of the intersectionality framework is its tendency to focus on macro-level structural forces and gloss over the micro-level agentive processes with which men and women engage. As introduced in the section above on identity, men and women are not passive victims of structural forces that marginalise and discriminate against them. Rather, they negotiate and renegotiate power structures, and some thrive on their very marginality. For example, discussing the marginality of fisher-folk in India, Ram (1991) has argued that this marginality carves out a space for these people to articulate a distinct cultural identity that challenges the general caste hierarchies. Raghavan (1957) has made a similar case for *Rodiya* communities, who are considered the lowest caste group in the Sinhalese caste system, noting that they seem to thrive on their marginality. My analysis of the *Veder* (indigenous) women on the border of Trincomalee district in Chapter 3 also shows similar patterns. To understand these processes of subverting power structures, I turned to the actor-based (Long, 2004) and room for manoeuvre (Hilhorst, 2003) approaches.

In the pluralist Trincomalee context, it is possible to identify multiple dimensions within one identity category: There are several aspects of Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese people within each ethnic identity category. At a given point of time, personal narratives and single-group identities can be analysed at the intersection of single dimensions of multiple categories. For example, in the study of a recently resettled Tamil fisher caste woman, the categories are location, ethnicity, caste and gender. This is considered only as a starting point in trying to understand the complexity of social relations and their link to social inequality. However, even single-person narratives and single-group analyses cannot be restricted to one dimension. For example, there are men of mixed Muslim and Tamil parentage who would pick and choose which identity dimension to embody and express, depending on the occasion, in ways they deem appropriate and useful. Gaasbeek (2010) has identified nine such multiple and overlapping identity categories, studying Kottiyar Pattu—the southern part of Trincomalee district. However, this thesis limited its analysis to the identity categories of ethnicity and gender, drawing on location and caste where relevant as discussed in chapter 3.

Masculinities

While intersectionality theory proved useful in the analysis of women's experiences, given its strong linkages with feminist theories, I turn to masculinities theory to understand the differentiated experiences

of men in fisheries. Given the overwhelming involvement of men in the sector, such an analysis proved to be essential.

Although the fisheries sector is an inherently masculine domain, scholarly interest from a gendered point of view focuses almost exclusively on attempting to understand and analyse women's role in the sector (Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], 1980; Gupta, 2003; Hapke, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Srinath, 1987). As a result, a strong body of work now confirms women's varied participation in the fisheries sector (Weeratunge et al., 2010; Yodanis, 2000) in fish processing, marketing and capture, as well as in providing supporting services. In South Asia, women's minimal involvement in fish capture is linked to cultural constructs such as the notion of pollution (Gupta, 2003; Thompson, 1985). For example, in Kerala in India, Hindu, Christian and Muslim fishing communities are all socially stigmatised as 'impure' and 'untouchable' (Gupta, 2003). Although the Sri Lankan Tamil caste system, in contrast to the Sinhalese caste system, is strongly associated with the notions of ritual purity and impurity (Silva et al., 2009), in coastal communities in Trincomalee, shared cultural norms have resulted in an adaptation of these norms and beliefs across ethnic groups.

Apart from men's overall dominance of the fishing sector, the war-post-war theatre in Trincomalee meant that certain types of masculinities became dominant and subverted others. One important dominant masculine subtext was that of a nationalist masculinity. A feminist approach to nationalism, apart from studying the involvement of women in nationalist projects (or the lack thereof), invariably includes discussions on masculinities, although sometimes not explicitly stated or critically discussed in terms of the existence of a multiplicity of masculinities. Nationalism is tasked with defining communities and boundaries for these communities, as well as articulating a national character, a shared history and a common vision for the future, which, in turn, fosters ethnocentrism. During conflicts, these ethnocentrisms become animated, and nationalism turns murderous (Nagel, 1998: 248). While the story of Trincomalee is not exclusively about this violent face of nationalism, lingering effects of the violent tensions based on identity, especially as a politically mobilised force, were still obvious at the time of my field work in 2013–2014.

During militarised violence driven by the need to defend the nation, the gendered roles of both men and women change. For example, a militarised form of masculinity is called forth, deeply marginalising not only women, but also certain groups of men (Bouta at al., 2005). In this situation, women are seen as

victims, survivors, 'heroes' outside the battlefield—for example, for taking on responsibilities outside the private sphere and providing for the family during times of emergency (Korf, 2004)—and perpetrators of violence on the battlefield. In the Sri Lankan context, the female LTTE cadre is an often-cited case for women's role as perpetrators of violence (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004). These role changes are mediated by women's other social identities, such as ethnicity and location (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004).

1.3.3 Fisheries compliance and legitimacies

Finally, the way fisheries are governed—both formally and informally—provides interesting and valuable insights into how socioeconomic tensions are either mitigated or exacerbated in politically volatile contexts such as post-war Trincomalee. In the 1980s, globally, scholars started to realise that governance is not identical to state and is not only bottom-up or top-down, but also horizontal (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee, 2009; Scholtens, 2016). Within the fisheries sector, this thinking resulted in a range of approaches to governance, such as community-based management (Pinkerton et al., 1995), co-management (Evans et al., 2011), human rights-based fisheries management (Allison et al., 2012) and interactive governance (Kooiman et al., 2005). Rather than engaging with a comprehensive analysis of governance mechanisms in Trincomalee fisheries, this thesis focuses on fisher compliance and how perceptions on legitimacy of those who regulate fisheries shape fisher livelihoods.

Historically, fisheries compliance has been studied predominantly from the neoclassical economics point of view of the rational actor who is primarily interested in profit maximisation. This model is based primarily on Becker (1968), and fisheries management systems also follow a similar path on the premise that fishers' compliance or non-compliance behaviour is primarily decided based on the calculation of economic gain and the potential risk of being apprehended (Blewett et al., 1987; Furlong, 1991; Sutinen and Gauvin, 1989, cited in Gezelius, 2004). However, recent lacks of compliance have directed the attention of fisheries managers towards the important role that morality and legitimacy play in influencing compliance behaviour (Hatcher et al., 2000; Hønneland, 1998, 1999; Kuperan, et al., 1997; Nielsen, 2003; Nielsen and Mathiesen, 2001, cited in Gezelius, 2004). Recent studies have shown that morality, peer involvement and fear of social disproval are the main factors influencing compliance (Gezelius, 2002: 308). Therefore, the most recent thinking on compliance states that actors are both strategic and moral in their responses to management systems (Jentoft, 2000: 145).

Legitimacy is an empirical phenomenon concerned with 'whether, how and why people accept (or reject) a particular actor or institution', and it transforms power or domination into authority (Bellina et al., 2009: 8). Legitimacy of the state is strongly dependent on what the constituency expects of the state, and legitimacy exists only as long as the relevant constituencies consider authorities to be legitimate (Bellina et al., 2009: 3). Legitimacy is often studied when there is a lack of compliance and prevailing rules are rejected—a situation commonly termed 'legitimacy in crisis'. The case of illegal disco net fishing in Trincomalee is one such instance. Discussing everyday local legitimacy, Roberts (2012) asserted that, through the process of serving the everyday needs of the people such as social welfare, state legitimacy can be engineered at a local level. Further, in the absence of such processes by the state, public trust may anchor to other social or cultural bodies (e.g. religious bodies) that cater to people's needs. As a result, alternative forms of social legitimacies are created by these institutions that have been substituted by people (Roberts, 2012: 7).

Finally, in legally pluralist contexts such as Sri Lankan fisheries (Bavinck et al., 2013; Wickramasinghe and Bavinck, 2015), competing and complementary formal and informal norms and regulations legitimise certain actors, institutions and norms over others, often in contradictory and competing ways. Further, militarised forms of resource governance is explicit in post-war Trincomalee (Siriwardana-de Zoysa, 2015). Given the shared history of violence, involving the military as one party the war, the continued involvement of them in fisheries regulation raises question of legitimacy of state actors in fishing regulation as addressed in chapter 5 and 6.

1.4   Researching on a slippery floor: Methods, tools and positionality

During the first few weeks of my visits to the wholesale fish market in Trincomalee town, one of the things that I kept hearing from the wholesale dealers and workers at the market was the cautionary phrase '*Balagena, polawa lissanawa*' (Be careful, the floor is slippery). With water dripping off ice and being splashed on the fish to keep them fresh, the cement floor of the newly built market indeed tended to be slippery. From time to time, the dealers and workers would tell stories about people who had slipped and fallen. Initially, I regarded this as a simple word of caution to me, an 'unsuspecting young woman' visiting the market often. However, in retrospect, this phrase took on a layered meaning.

As I realised with time, conducting ethnographic research in a public space that was dominated physically and ideologically by economically, politically and socially powerful men and that was also full of

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slippery, wet and strong-smelling but fresh fish provided a series of challenges to me and my research assistants, as women. Apart from learning to side-step the fish that were spilling over into the walking sections of the market and to avoid being splashed with water, we soon had to learn how to strike 'an appropriate balance' in terms of with whom we spoke at the market, the length of time we spent speaking to the different men and when to ask what. Despite the considerable age difference between the research team and most of the men at the market, spending too much time talking to one dealer or worker tended to be construed as inappropriate by others at the market. When I got to know the dealers better and started building some rapport with them over the months, I was told how some of them had to explain to the others that we were just students and that we were collecting data and were not looking for husbands at the market! I sometimes got the feeling that I had to watch even my smile when I was at the market, lest it be construed as inappropriate by those who were watching. We also had to be careful in the way we accepted invitations or offers from these men. Over the months, this became easier and more natural, and we developed several strategies to start conversations with the men at the market.

One of the strategies we frequently used was to ask about the names of the fish, the type of craft and equipment with which they were caught, who caught them and, of course, the fish prices. At one point, I felt that the men at the market somehow considered me to have passed some sort of test, when I could name most of the fish in their stalls, in both Tamil and Sinhalese! Gradually, to introduce topics of a more personal nature, we began to pose questions such as what it means to be a '*mudalali*' (a wholesale dealer) at the market, and this line of discussion eventually provided us with the opportunity to ask further questions about their life histories and social networks.

> Once, a male fisheries expert in Sri Lanka who had read my research proposal jokingly and half-seriously asked me, 'Do you think you can sit and drink alcohol with the fishermen in your participant observations?' My response was, 'I think an even more pressing "problem" is being a vegetarian and studying fishing!' So am I taking too much on? By trying to study fisheries?

> (Pre-field work reflections, June 2013)

By about the second month of my 13-month-long field stay, I had started eating fish, after being a vegetarian for about 12 years. Apart from the feeling I had that I was somehow offending the men and women I was working with by refusing to eat seafood, which they considered almost an insult to them and their work, the 'freshness' of the seafood also lured me into giving up my vegetarianism. More importantly, when my research assistants and I were invited to local people's homes for meals, apart from

rice, fish was often the only dish accompanying rice. However, as I had already expected prior to starting my field work, turning non-vegetarian was not the only 'reflexive' action I performed while in the field.

1.4.1 Research approach and data collection

Before I go into detail on my positionality and the implications for reflexivity of being an 'outsider–insider' to the 'field' I was studying, in this section, I introduce my approach to the data collection and analysis. Given my interest in studying the nexus between identity and coastal livelihoods, as well as my understanding of identity as fluid, situational and constructed through social interaction (Jabri, 1996), ethnography seemed the most appropriate approach for me. An ethnographic approach called for 'living within a community, and getting deeply into the rhythms, logics, and complications of life as lived by a people in a place, or perhaps by peoples in places' (McGranahan, 2014: 24). Further, through my keen interest in understanding structural and cultural inequalities that impact men and women (Bilge, 2010), firmly coupled with a belief in people's agentive power (Long, 2004) and that certain marginalities create enabling spaces for women (Ram, 1991), I attempted to 'give voice' to the groups being researched. In retrospect, I realise that my attempts to draw attention to the invisibility of women in the fisheries sector give a certain sense of politics to my work, where I have taken women's lives and experiences as the foundation for the creation of knowledge (Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa, 2002; Essers, 2007).

I lived in Trincomalee, about 5 km from the town centre, from October 2013 to November 2014, conducting participant observation, as well as other data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews and a census of coastal villages. Tamils and Muslims in Trincomalee mainly speak the Tamil language, and Sinhalese people speak the Sinhalese language. Sinhalese is my first language, but, despite eight years of research experience in predominantly Tamil-speaking areas of the country, my Tamil language skills were almost non-existent. Therefore, I worked with two Tamil female research assistants: one from Trincomalee and the other from the Central Province. By about the third month of the field work, I was able to grasp sufficient phrases to follow a conversation in Tamil. Comfortable in knowing that my respondents were familiar with me by that point, I started prompting in Sinhalese during our conversations, without waiting for translations from the research assistants.

A typical day in the field comprised three parts. It would start with a visit to one of the five wholesale markets or auction sites I was following closely at around 5 or 6 a.m., where the research assistants and I

observed and interacted with fishermen suppliers and fish dealers for about 2–3hours, recording observations as well as any conversations we had with them. Alternatively, we would visit the work sites of the women with whom we worked closely (at the lagoons or the sea areas) around 7am and stay with them for about 3 hours, again observing their work and having conversations with them on various topics. Some of the most memorable experiences of 'participant observation' for me involved getting into the muddy lagoons with Muslim women who were catching prawns with their hands and trying to imitate their actions. My two research assistants often had much better luck in their prawn catch than I did.

During the second field session each day, we usually visited the home of one of the research participants whom we were following more closely, sometimes sharing a meal with them before leaving around noon. In the third session, back at my temporary residence in Trincomalee, which we also used as our 'office' space, we would record our observations in detail, fill in the gaps in our field notes and translate them into English, and type up the observation and conversation notes, either individually or as a team. These activities were often peppered with discussions of what had happened that day, what we found interesting and what needed to be marked for further follow-up during our subsequent visits to the same field site or house. A day of work usually ended around 5 p.m. However, religious festivals, fishing seasonality brought on by the monsoons and holidays resulted in changes to this general pattern.

1.4.2 Types of data and tools

I, along with the two research assistants, observed a wide range of fishing activities including fish capture, gleaning for clams and mussels in the lagoons, collecting seaweed, marketing of fish and other seafood and participating in fisheries societies. Further, recognising the prominence given to religion and rituals in the daily lives of the fisher-folk, the ethnographic observations and informal interviews also included religious sites and festivals. In total, I studied five small- to medium-scale wholesale fish markets, three landing sites and 30 fisher communities. I interviewed, observed and interacted with over 188 women and 186 men in coastal Trincomalee.

Informal in-depth interviews mapped the social networks and life histories (see Appendix II for network mapping and Appendix III for the individual question guide) of 20 men and women in the fisheries sector. (See Chapter 3 for an illustration of the kinship mapping of a female beach seine worker.) As an initial data collection exercise, to start conversations with the fishermen and to understand the different types of

fish, fishing methods and equipment that the fishermen often mentioned in their conversations with us, we drew up seasonal calendars (see Appendix IV for examples of these seasonal calendars). Participant observation covered religious festivals and rituals organised in the communities, fishing methods, types and quantities of fish being landed, marketing processes at the wholesale markets, fish weighing systems, and employee–employer and fishermen supplier–trader power relations. Further, a census of all of the coastal communities in Trincomalee was conducted to find out how many women engage in fishing-related livelihood activities, as well as the nature of their livelihoods.

Figure 5. Tamil Hindu devotees at Kali *kovil* in Trincomalee town and Keeri[15] *kovil* festivals

1.4.3   The field work sites

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[15] To ensure confidentiality, the name of this village has been changed.

As is the case with most ethnographic studies, the methodology set out in my research proposal changed as early as an initial scoping visit I conducted in August 2013, about two months before the start of my field work. My original aim was to study either one ethnically mixed coastal settlement or a cluster of settlements adjacent to each other including the three main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka—Muslim, Tamil and Sinhalese. However, during my scoping visit, I stopped at the wholesale fish market at the centre of Trincomalee town. Observing the interactions there, I soon discovered that the ethnic and other identity-based interactions that I was interested in studying were quite visible at the market itself. Hence, instead of making settlements the focus of my study, I started focusing on the main wholesale market in Trincomalee town and eventually made my way to the other wholesale and retail fish markets and fish landing sites.

Figure 6. Map of Trincomalee indicating the location of the research sites
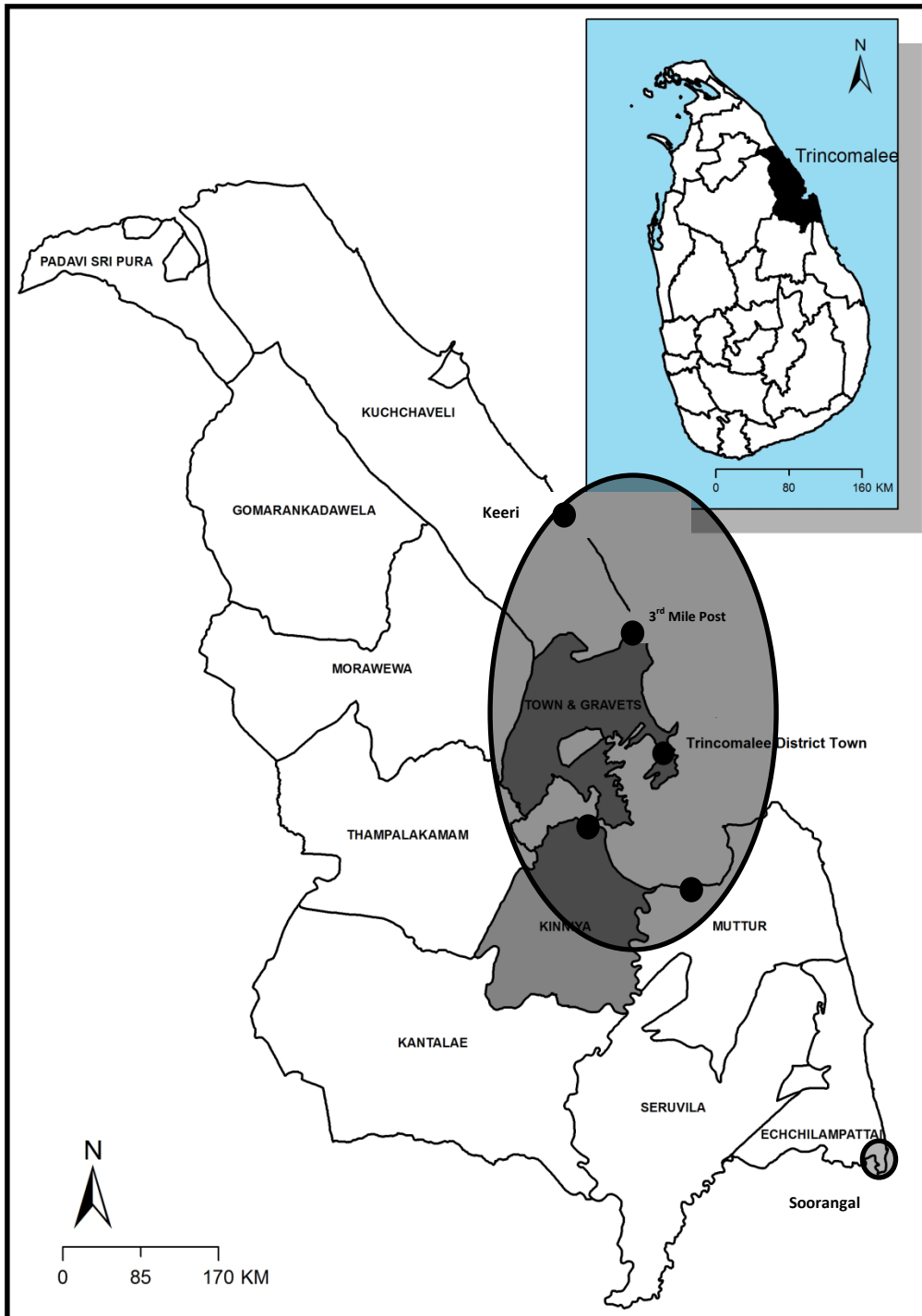
The bulk of my in-depth field work took place in the Town and Gravets and Kinniya Secretariat Divisions, as shown in Figure 6. Although the census I carried out on women's coastal livelihoods included all of the coastal communities, and I visited an indigenous community at the southern border of Trincomalee district quite often, most of my attention was focused on the two areas marked on the map, mainly because the wholesale fish markets were located within these areas. As a result, although I collected a few in-depth life histories of Sinhalese Catholic fishermen and women, Catholics who live in the fishing camps outside the Town and Gravets do not feature centrally in my analysis. I made frequent visits to the locations listed in Table 1—once a fortnight to once a month, except the *kovil* and one family in a migrant fishing camp.

Table 1 Field work sites, locations, respondents and data

Site	Location	Participants	Data collected
Five wholesale markets	Main wholesale fish market in Trincomalee town; Kinniya wholesale fish market; Keeri wholesale fish market; Third Mile Post fish market; Muttur fish market	Wholesale fish dealers; Retail fish buyers; Fishermen suppliers; Cleaners; Bookkeepers; Auctioneers; Hindu temple representatives; Market managers; CFC representatives; Fish cutters	**Observations** Prices Fish auctioning Fish weighing Fish packing Fish transport Fish cutting and cleaning Exchanges between wholesale traders and fishermen suppliers Exchanges between wholesale traders and retail buyers Payment systems **Semi-structured interviews** Social network maps of individual traders Seasonality calendars

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Three landing sites	Behind the main market; Inner harbour; Muttur old Jetty	Fishermen; Retail buyers	Fishing craft and fish being landed Sorting fish from the nets Cleaning and packing nets Fish weighing Fish transport Payments
One retail market	Keeri	Fish sellers; Consumers; Fish suppliers	Fish being supplied to the retail sellers Price setting and bargaining Cleaning the market **Semi-structured interviews** Market transaction recording Social network maps of individual traders
Three lagoons	Upparu; Kuringankerny; Sixth Mile Post	Gleaners; Prawn and crab catchers; Retail sellers	Collecting clams and mussels Canoes departing and landing Opening and extracting the meat from clams and mussels Prawn and clam retailing **Semi-structured interviews** Social network maps of gleaners
Two shallow sea areas	Vellamanal; Behind Kinniya market; Upparu	Gleaners; Seaweed collectors	Collecting clams and mussels Collecting seaweed Sorting and drying seaweed Canoes departing and landing **Semi-structured interviews** Social network maps of gleaners
Two beach seine *paadu*	Manayaweli; Sooranagar	Beach seine workers	Beach seine operations Sorting fish from the net

			Fish weighing and transport
			Semi-structured interviews
			Social network maps of gleaners
One migrant fishing camp	Salapiyaru	Fishermen; Wives of fishermen	Household activities Net mending Fish drying
Two Hindu temples	Keeri; Kali *kovil* in Trincomalee town		Religious rituals
30 coastal communities	Refer to Chapter 3 for a full list of these villages	Women engaged in fishing-related activities	Census of coastal communities to enumerate the number of women engaged in fishing-related activities
Government offices	Department of Fisheries district office; Trincomalee Urban Council; Ceylon Fisheries Corporation	District Director Fisheries; Fisheries Inspectors; Tax officer in charge of the wholesale fish market; Ceylon Fisheries Corporation Market Manager and Supervisors	Scientific and local names of fish types Fisheries governance laws and problems—illegal fishing Tax receipts of wholesale stall owners in the old market History of the market Fish wholesale price list

Fish markets

Starting from the main wholesale fish market in Trincomalee town, we eventually identified five wholesale markets that we followed closely over the course of the 13 months in the field; the other markets were those at Kinniya, Muttur, Keeri and Third Mile Post (see Appendix III for profiles and a comparison of these wholesale markets). We visited each market twice a month, often spending time at the markets around 6. a.m.–10 a.m.

Fish landing sites

Over time, I started identifying fishermen suppliers and retail buyers at the fish landing sites close to the wholesale markets or inside the wholesale markets for more frequent and in-depth interactions. We also frequently visited the Trincomalee Inner Harbour landing site, where a group of trap fishers (*Kattu valai* in Tamil) engaged in fishing. Following brief introductory conversations at the markets or landing sites, where all of these people were busy focusing on the sales, I started interacting with them frequently. Most of these in-depth discussions, including the life histories and network mappings, took place in their home environments.

Lagoons and shallow seas

Until about three months into the field work, our repeated attempts to find women who were engaged in fisheries-related livelihoods proved to be fruitless. Our frequent questions about women's involvement in the sector met with vague or negative answers. Then, while driving back from the Kinniya market one day, we saw a woman about knee-deep in the Kinniya lagoon, and we decided to get into the lagoon and find out what she was doing. This proved to be one of the crucial turning points in my research. This woman, who was from the nearby Vellamanal area, told us how she, along with a number of other (mostly Muslim) women from the area glean clams and mussels in the Kinniya lagoon for a living. Over time, we discovered more settlements along the Trincomalee lagoon system where women were engaging in similar activities combined with activities such as catching prawns and crabs. In a comparable fashion, we stumbled upon a group of about 25 indigenous (*Veder* in Tamil) women who were pulling beach seine nets at the southern border of Trincomalee district.

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Figure 7. Women engaged in different fisheries-related livelihoods in Trincomalee: gleaning for clams, catching prawns in the lagoons and pulling beach seine nets

1.5   Profile of respondents

My research primarily centred on a) the wholesale fish markets, which were dominated by men (Figure 8); and b) the lagoons and shallow areas where the women were, as well as these women's homes (Figure 9).

The 14 Tamil women with whom I spoke in the market spaces or linked to the markets included seven women who were engaged in retail fish selling in two locations and one woman who used to be a fish seller but had retired. As Figure 9 shows, I did not meet a single Sinhalese person working in the lagoons or in the shallow sea areas. The only Sinhalese women that I interacted with were the wives or relatives of the fishermen with whom I came into contact.

Figure 8 Fish markets
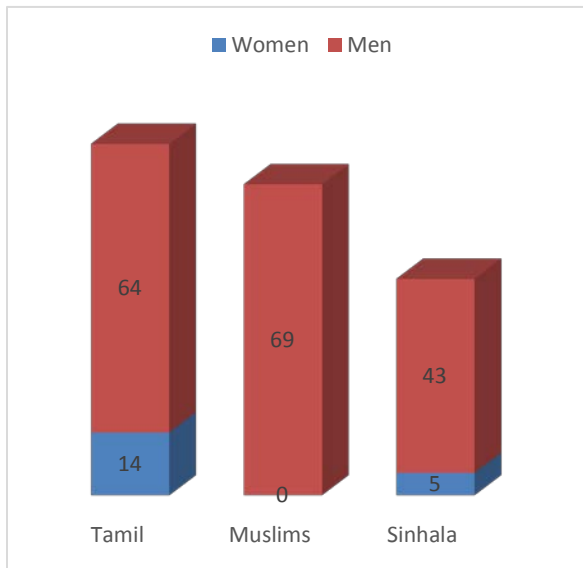
Figure 9 Lagoons and shallow seas
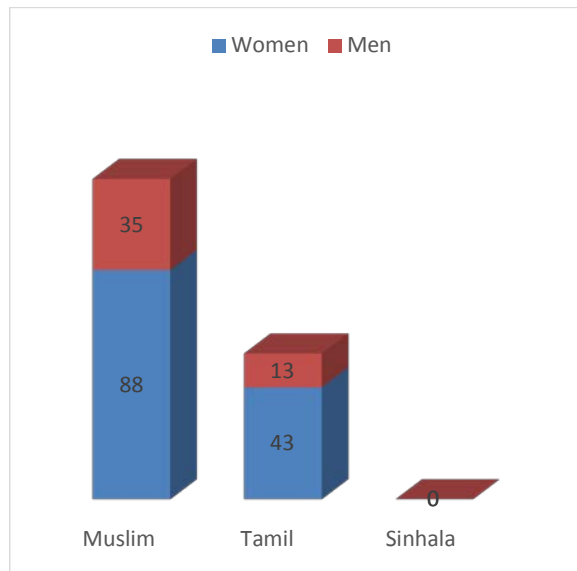
Another important site of study were the Hindu *kovil*, which were frequented by not only Tamil Hindu men and women, but also Sinhalese men and women. These religious rituals were an integral part of their lives and were repeatedly discussed in relation to fisheries livelihoods—in terms of the change of fishing seasons, changes in demand for fish and fisheries governance. Further, the fact that the research assistant from Trincomalee observed some of the fasting periods at the *kovil* dedicated to Goddess Kali in Trincomalee town also took me quite often to this temple, and the vivid colourful attire of the men and women at the *kovil* unsurprisingly drew my photographer's eye.

As Figures 8 and 9 show, the research participants belonged to three main categories: wholesale and retail fish dealers (all male) operating in five wholesale markets and one retail market (women and men), fishermen (all male) and gleaners, and seaweed collectors and those catching prawns and crabs in the lagoons (mainly women and a few men). All the women participating in the study worked in the lagoons or in coastal fishing, whereas only a few men were involved in these types of activities. In contrast, most men engaged in deep sea fishing activities, and no women were involved in these fishing activities.

Figure 10. Fishermen by type of gear
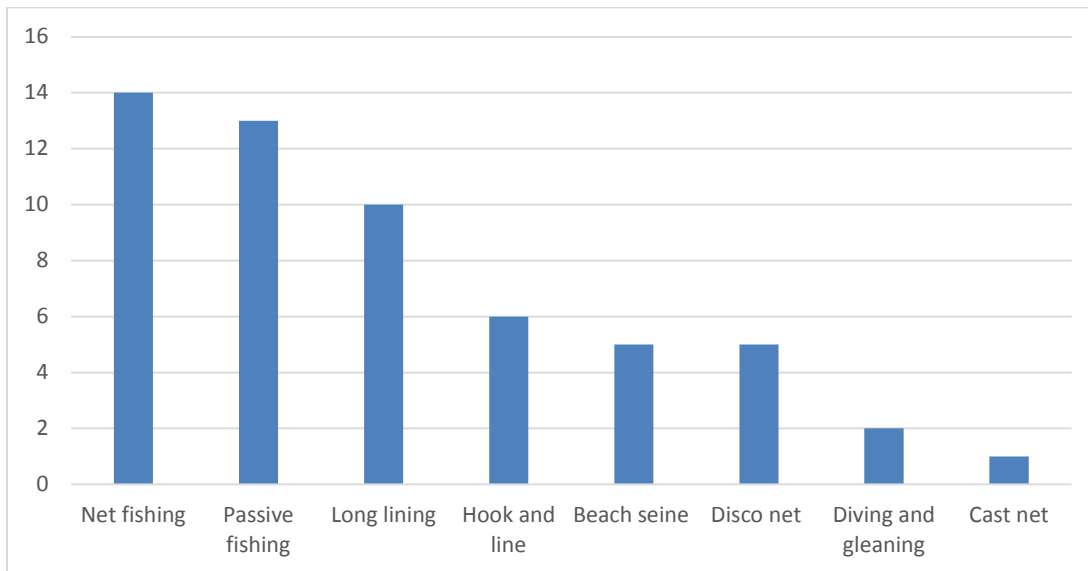
Figure 11. Women by type of fishing-related livelihood
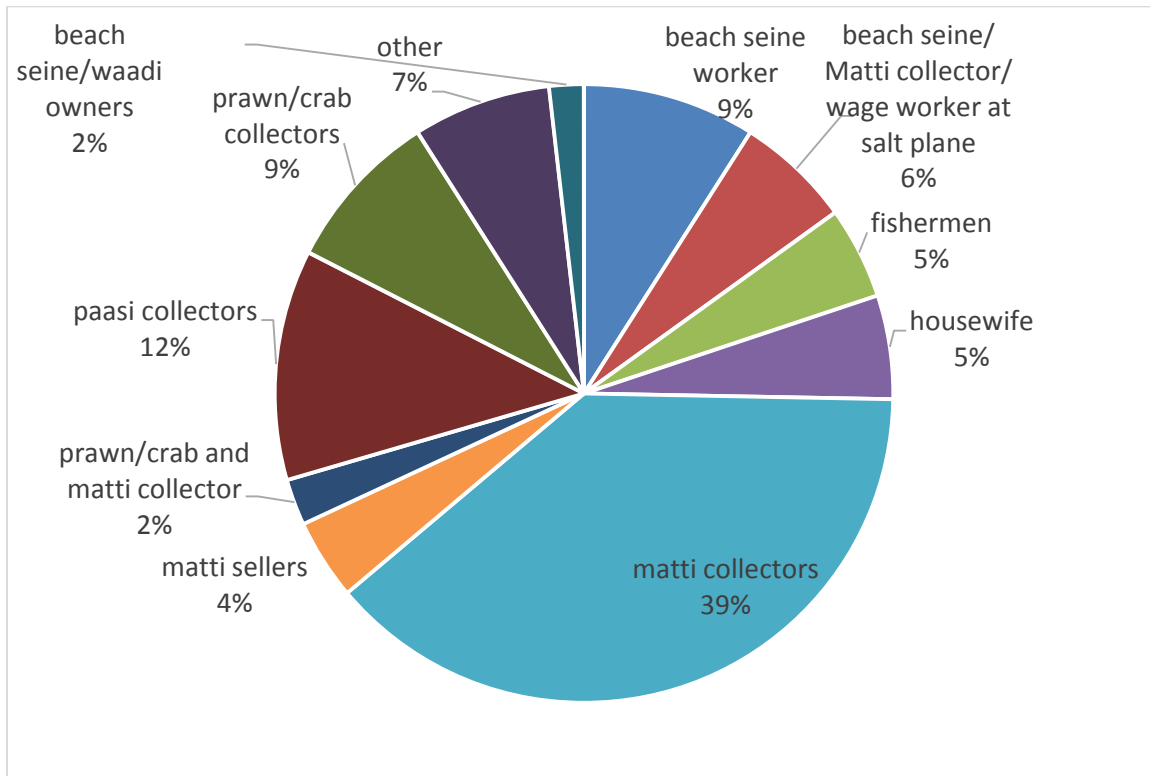
Note: *Waadi*: Small buildings on the beach, maintained by the wholesale fish dealers, often temporary, for storing or buying fish from the fishermen. *Matti*: clams and mussels. *Paasi*: seaweed

1.5.1   Data Analysis

The analytical approach used in this research was primarily inductive, with the topics for the analysis allowed to come out through the data in the form of themes. As described above, all of the data collected for the research were translated from Tamil or Sinhalese into English and typed up parallel to the field work. About halfway through the field work, the data collected to that point were entered into NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Upon a close reading of the transcripts and in discussion with my supervisors and colleagues at the Centre for Poverty Analysis, I developed a preliminary coding structure that I applied to a first round of coding for the themes of markets, buyers, suppliers, religion, identity, kinship networks, trust, fishing methods and conflict (see Appendix V for a full list of codes and sub-

codes used). Subsequently, after completing my field work, further coding and recoding was done on the same data for the specific analysis of the topics of the four chapters.

This inductive approach kept me open to new themes during the data collection process, as well as to applying different theoretical frames. For example, although the issue of illegal fishing was not in my original research plan, it became part of the thesis because of the insistence of the fishermen engaged in this method about talking to me about this issue, and because of my realisation of the significance of the issue to the fisheries sector in Trincomalee and to the broader debates on legitimacy in my initial analysis. This proved to be a valuable addition to this thesis.

1.5.2   Positionality and reflexivity

I situate myself in the style and school of ethnography that encourages the use of personal narrative, and the researcher's self-reflexivity in the form of taking into consideration my own thoughts, experiences and feelings in the way I engaged with the research participants. Rather than being 'an observer fixed on the edge of a space, looking in and/or down upon what is the other', I consider myself to have been in a 'position already within or down in the middle of things, looking and being looked at, talking and being talked at' (Pratt, 1986: 32, cited in Villaceran, 2012).

'[A] researcher's positionality and biography directly affect fieldwork and fieldwork is a dialogical process which is structured by the researcher and the participants' (England, 1994). There are power dynamics along ethnic and gender lines (Phoenix, 1994), and these dynamics play out in the shared space of ethnographic field work. Given the deep fissures and fragile trust among the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka following the civil war and related violence, power relations and concerns about who is who become even more pronounced. Further, because of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and mixed gender focus of my research field, the relationships and interactions between me, my research assistants and the people with whom we interacted were varied and multi-layered. As the main researcher, I am a woman from the Sinhalese Buddhist majority group in the country. I am originally from the Southern Province, and I was commonly seen as a student engaging in higher education. My two research assistants were both Tamil Hindus—one from Trincomalee and the other from the Central Province. We often engaged in data collection together, and this meant that our different identities resulted in varying degrees of 'insider–outsider-ness'.

In the wholesale market dominated by Sinhalese Buddhist men from the Southern Province and among the Sinhalese Buddhist fishermen and women, I was clearly able to gain a deeper level of trust once I managed to weave my way through the gendered norms of who to talk to, when and how. The men's motivations for talking to me were varied: Some humoured me as a young female student and wanted to educate me in a rather patronising way, some regarded me as an educated person with a wider knowledge of the world and solicited my opinion on what they were telling me, and for some I was an interested audience, listening to their frustrations and grievances. For the women, often irrespective of ethnicity, I was a younger woman who was mostly an interested and curious audience for their stories of grievances, but also of their daily adventures, independence and pride in making a living and supporting their families.

To maintain the relationships I established and my positionality within the market, I had to make a few decisions early on in my research. One incident has often made me wonder about my own social interactions, my accountability for these actions and how my actions contribute to perpetuating social relations (England, 1994: 81). Apart from the Sinhalese and Tamil women who are consumer buyers at the wholesale market, women are completely excluded from the market space and from the fish landing site just behind the market, except for two women I saw—almost like shadows—during my numerous visits to the market. The following extract is from my field diary, dated 14 October 2013, during the first month of my field work. It describes how I first encountered one of these women on the beach, the landing site behind the market.

> I saw a woman in a T-shirt, cap and shorts on the beach, sometimes with a beedi in her hand, walking around looking into the incoming boats and talking to the men. When I was told by our guide for the day that she used to be a prostitute, my instinct was not to go and speak to her then and there. I don't know how true this statement is, but I decided I didn't want to take the risk […] I felt that, although it would be very interesting to talk to her, I would be risking too much too soon at my principal field location by paying her too much attention. Am I being a coward here? Should have I approached her and talked to her? How would she have responded to me? What would the fishermen at the beach think of this incident if it had happened? By not speaking to her, was I inadvertently reinforcing the social stigma and marginalisation that she carries with her?

(Field diary extract, 14 October, 2013)

After seeing these women for the first time, every subsequent attempt to talk to them ended in the research team being called away by a male attached to the market, with the same story of how these

women's reputation would be associated with us if we spoke with them. Apart from being aware that interacting with these two women would jeopardise the fragile trust that I was building with the powerful, well-networked men at the market, as a single young woman, what stopped me from taking our conversations with them further was the fact that the two women in question clearly showed a reluctance to speak with us, even when we suggested meeting with them elsewhere.

In contrast to the sense of rapport I built with the Sinhalese Buddhists, I was clearly an outsider among the minority Tamil Hindu and Muslim people. My inability to speak the Tamil language exacerbated this. However, with the minority women, being of same gender, I felt that I was 'accepted'. As they became more familiar with us and as my grasp of the Tamil language improved, the interactions became smoother and more 'natural'. Women of all three ethnicities proved to be extremely curious about my personal circumstances, from why I do not wear any gold jewellery to why I was not married. In general, they posed questions about my family often. In contrast, the initial interactions with the minority men were particularly distant and, although having Tamil research assistants helped to a certain extent, there were a few men—especially powerful wholesale dealers from Keeri—who remained suspicious of our motives for being in their community. For the Muslim 'illegal' fishermen in Kinniya, I was an avenue to vent their frustration with the state authorities, with an underlying expectation that their side of the story would be heard at the decision-making levels and in wider fisheries circles, especially at the height of the problem. There were days when the only topic that they were interested in talking to us about was the illegal fishing issue, which is how I ended up selecting the issue of illegal fishing to study and illustrate how governance mechanisms either mitigate or exacerbate political tensions.

1.6   Thesis outline and zooming in on the four analytical chapters

This thesis is organised in six chapters. Chapter 2 concentrates on the coastal sea areas and Hindu temples, with a focus on discussing fishing as an economic activity embedded in the social, political and cultural life-worlds of men and women in Trincomalee. Chapter 3 focuses on the invisibility and marginality of coastal women in the fisheries, while also highlighting the different values they assign to fisheries-related livelihoods and their agentive power in subverting some of the structural inequalities that marginalise them. Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the multiple masculinities of fish dealers in the wholesale fish trade, specifically examining the main wholesale fish market in Trincomalee. Chapter 5 brings state and non-state actors and institutions into the discussion and analyses the role of the state and society in

fisheries governance and how these governance processes shape post-war economic and political lives. Finally, the concluding chapter summarises the thesis and brings the discussion back to the research questions, ending with some practical and policy insights. The section below provides an introduction to the four analytical chapters.

1.6.1 Chapter 2: The moral economy of fishing in Trincomalee

> This is God's area […] so things are not bad for the Trincomalee people. There are *kovil* everywhere here. Until milk is poured into the sea, the sea is rough. The Kali *kovil* pours milk into the sea. Then the sea becomes calm, and it becomes possible to put out to sea.
>
> (Sinhalese Buddhist male fish cutter, Trincomalee main market)
>
> After lighting the camphor, we will steer the boat in a circle in front of our temple in the sea, and then we will sprinkle some sea water on the boat. Similarly, we will do this in front of the Koneswaram temple. Even if they don't come near the temple, the Sinhalese will do it like us in front of the Konesawaram temple. The Koneswaram temple is the one that is in in front of the sea; that's why all of us do our prayers in front of that temple.
>
> (Tamil Hindu male fishermen, Pattanombar)
>
> They say *vas vadinava* [bad things will happen], so we don't keep [Buddha] statues. We never paste stickers with sayings like *Budusaranai* [May Lord Buddha bless us]. We paste stickers that just say, 'May God bless us' or *Koneswaram deviyo pihitai* [May god Koneswaram bless us]. People believe that if we display a sticker saying, 'May Lord Buddha bless us', things won't work out. If we have a sticker mentioning Lord Buddha in front of our eyes while fishing, we are unconsciously made to say 'May Lord Buddha bless us' over and over again […] but then that is not going to work with the catching of fish that we do.
>
> (Sinhalese Buddhist male fishermen, Trincomalee town)

During the field work, it soon became commonplace for me to hear Sinhalese Buddhist and Tamil Hindu fishermen and women referring to religious norms, beliefs, rituals and events, as well as the values that underlie these behaviours and beliefs, in discussing their fishing livelihoods. These references were

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usually in relation to changing fishing seasons, as the first extract above shows. They also related to seeking protection from the risks associated with fishing and seeking a bigger fish catch. The belief in 'higher powers' from which to seek protection for those who engage in fishing, where lives are pitched against the mighty sea, is observed in settings across the region. However, the war-related uncertainties and threats to lives and property lent an extra fervour to the devotion to these beliefs and rituals in coastal Trincomalee. Further, the close proximity of ethnically segregated 'other' settlements meant that, in Trincomalee, cultural diffusion in the form of shared religious beliefs and rituals was common. Therefore, it is quite common in Trincomalee for Buddhists to follow the rigorous fasting rituals of Hindus during specific religious celebrations and for Buddhist fishermen to break coconuts at a Hindu temple before each fishing trip.

Buddhists frequenting Hindu temples is not unique to Trincomalee, but the meaning-making process of men and women in coastal Trincomalee regarding their devotion to the Hindu Gods and Goddesses illustrates the different value systems that these people adhered to in relation to fishing as well as their spiritual beliefs. Therefore, I became interested in understanding how these processes shape the (religious) moral economy of fishing in Trincomalee.

1.6.2 Chapter 3: Intersectionality and inequality in fisheries in Trincomalee

> People from Periyappadu don't give me that much fish. They give the fish to those from Periyappadu. The reason for this is because they are from one caste and I am from another caste. It's their people who bring the fish, and they give the fish to their people.

> (Tamil female fish seller, North of Trincomalee town)

> From the men I met at the fish markets, landing sites and government departments, I kept hearing that women were not part of fishing-related activities. This was the case until I stumbled upon two women who were gleaning for clams and mussels in the lagoons in Kinniya and seventh mile post. These two women then led me to other groups of women working along the lagoon system of Trincomalee. They were engaging in gleaning[16], along with catching prawns and crab,

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[16] This refers to a person who collects clams and mussels, usually by hand or using small tools in lagoons or shallow sea areas.

working in beach seines and collecting seaweed in the shallow sea areas during the season. In general, Sinhalese women were not present in the fisheries-related livelihood spaces such as landing sites, lagoons or fish markets. The Sinhalese men declared that their wives do not even know the colour of their boats, with a certain sense of pride. Both Sinhalese men and the few women with whom I spoke were clearly of the opinion that the beach and the market were not spaces suitable for women.

While women of all ethnicities were excluded from fishing-related spaces, certain groups have found some room for manoeuvre or seem to capitalise on their very marginality. I met one such group of 'marginal' women near the southern border of Trincomalee district. They were a group of indigenous (*veder* in Tamil) women, who were working the beach seine net, side by side with the men. I was fascinated by this group of people and was quite certain that this practice of women setting the net and pulling the net was quite unique. The Muslim women who were following the paths of their mothers and grandmothers and engaging in collecting clams and mussels (*matti* in Tamil) in the lagoons were another such group. Additionally, within ethnic groups, other social identity categories such as caste seem to play an important role in further marginalising women, as the extract above shows. I came to realise that, although discussions of ethnicity and tensions based on ethnic interactions remain very important in post-war Trincomalee, these discourses are insufficient to explain the post-war social tensions or the inequalities that lead to these tensions. This observation led me to explore how ethnic identity is mediated at the intersection of other identity categories, such as gender, location and caste.

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1.6.3 Chapter 4: Masculinities and wholesale fish trading in Trincomalee

Earlier [in the old wholesale fish market], there were Tamil and Muslim people [traders] in the main market. There were three women from Pattanombar who did the fish business. I remember there was a woman called Pakiyamma[17]—she might be dead by now. There were 12 stalls for Tamils and three stalls for Muslims. After the war, they left from there. During the war, when Tamils or Muslims went to the market, the Sinhalese would cut them up. Because of that, we were scared to go there. Now all of them are Sinhalese; they don't allow Tamil people to do the business there.

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[17] The names of all individuals mentioned in this thesis have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

(Muslim fisherman, Seventh Mile Post)

During the initial stages of my field work in the wholesale fish market in Trincomalee town, apart from the fact that all the fish dealers (*mudalali*) were male, it was difficult for me to ascertain their identities, specifically in terms of their religious and ethnic identity. More than a few of them wear *thirunoor* (white powder given by the Hindu *kovil* as a form of blessing) on their foreheads, and they speak in both Sinhalese and Tamil with the buyers and suppliers. However, during my repeated visits and conversations with the fish dealers and government employees who manage the market, I learned that all the occupied stalls in the market are rented by Sinhalese Buddhist males, who are primarily originally from the Southern Province. I also learned that only a handful of these men belong to the fisher *Karawa* caste. In contrast, all three of Sri Lanka's main ethnicities are represented among the suppliers and buyers. In short, the wholesale fish trading in the main market in Trincomalee is dominated completely by Sinhalese Buddhist males, who are relative outsiders to the district, with suppliers and buyers being ethnically diverse. My many conversations with the wholesale dealers and workers at the market revealed that they take great pride in having protected the market from terrorist attacks during the war.

However, at present, the story of the wholesale market in Trincomalee is not solely one of Sinhalese Buddhist southern-origin male dominance. During my repeated visits, the frictions within the wholesale market became apparent. Although the collective seems to be based on ethnicity, religion and place of origin, fissures have begun to emerge around the practice of selling fish at retail prices, which was seen as going against the established code of ethics of wholesale trading. Further, for those traders who were opposed to retail selling, this practice went against the image of a wholesale fish seller.

1.6.4 Chapter 5: Illegal fishing and legitimacy

> We recently raided a purse seine net off Lanka Patuna [the southern border of Trincomalee district]. We were able to confiscate only 80 kg of fish, but it seems that there was about 1.5 million rupees worth of fish there! So will they stop doing something like that? It is mainly the Muslims who do these things […] because they want to make money quickly. They tell us that 'if you arrest us, we will continue doing this'. We have managed to control about 90% of disco net fishing, but it won't stop. I have told the Minister also. I have done my part, but now it needs to be maintained, and that is not going to be easy […] Anyone who loves the sea will not do this job. If they catch 1.5 million [rupees] worth of fish, they are destroying another amount like that in the sea.

(Sinhalese fisheries officer, Trincomalee)

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About six months into my field work in Trincomalee, during my visits to the markets and landing sites, discussions about a 'regulated' fishing method, called disco net fishing started to dominate the conversations. When the fishermen break the regulations that need to be followed to engage in this fishing method, the method becomes illegal, and the fishermen can be arrested and have the equipment used for fishing seized by the authorities. There were occasions when the only thing that the fishermen were interested in talking to me about were the issues and tensions around disco net fishing, albeit from different points of view. For example, by about May 2013, in Kinniya, the fishermen who engage in disco net fishing reached a point where they were voicing death threats to the officers at the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) for not issuing them the annual license allowing them to engage in disco net fishing. In contrast, my informal conversations with the officials at the DFAR in Trincomalee were full of frustration on their part about trying to 'manage' the illegal fishing situation. One of the strategies that the DFAR was using to 'manage' the 'problem' of illegal fishing was to delay the renewal of annual licenses. This delay caused tensions in areas where this particular type of fishing was popular. The fishermen in Trincomalee were fiercely divided on the issue of disco net fishing, and there were undertones of illegal fishing as an ethnicised activity, as it was primarily Muslims who were engaging in disco net fishing. Therefore, although illegal fishing was not a sub-theme in my original 'research plan', the recurrence of the topic during my field work as an issue that was fiercely contested among different fishing groups led me to look at illegal fishing to study how governance mechanisms interact with identity.

Parallel to my observations in Trincomalee, I was also paying close attention to what was happening in the rest of the country, especially close to my home town in the Southern Province. Although religious violence was not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka, in the immediate aftermath of the war, beginning in 2010, animosity towards religious minorities—especially Muslims and to a lesser extent Christians—was gaining momentum in the country, and this was backed by the national-level polity. In June 2014, nine months into my field work, a Sinhalese Buddhist mob, instigated by a group of extremist Buddhist priests, attacked the southern Muslim town of Aluthgama. Historically, political patronage has been pivotal in maintaining or escalating some of these tensions, and the Rajapaksa regime was seen as strongly linked with the incidents of religious unrest that took place from 2010 to 2014, specifically through ultra-nationalist Sinhalese Buddhist movements such as the *Bodu Bala Sena*. There was slight tension in

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Trincomalee during the immediate aftermath of this attack; however, the violence in the South did not spread to the rest of the country.

The combination of these incidents sparked my interest in attempting to understand the issue of illegal disco net fishing in Trincomalee from the perspective of the different stakeholders and their perceptions towards each other. This exploration led me to the realisation that the perception of the legitimacy of the actors involved in fisheries regulation was an important consideration in explaining the lack of compliance on the part of the fishermen engaging in this fishing activity. Further, these fishermen were seeking legitimisation for their fishing activity through multiple means and in other forums, using a diverse set of strategies. How and when these different processes of legitimisation were applied by fishermen forms the third sub-theme of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Risk, Reciprocity and Solidarity: The Moral Economy of Fishing in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

This chapter is a minor revision[18] of a book chapter accepted for publication.

Lokuge, G. and Munas, M. (forthcoming). Risk, reciprocity and solidarity: the moral economy of fishing in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. In Johnson, D., Acott, T., Stacey, N. and Urquhart, J. (eds.). *Social Wellbeing and the Values of Small Scale Fisheries*. Springer.

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[18] The sections on study context and general methods have been removed from this thesis chapter to avoid repetition. Refer to Sections 1.1 for study context and 1.4 for methods and data in Chapter 1.

2.1 Introduction

> *Interviewer*: Do you go to the *kovil* [Hindu temple]?
>
> *Respondent*: Yes. To the Kali *kovil* [temple of the Hindu goddess, Kali].
>
> *Interviewer*: Do Sinhalese [Buddhist] people also go to the *kovil*?
>
> *Respondent*: Yes, of course. Why, all those who fish donate thousands of rupees to the Kali *kovil*. They make offerings of fruits and break coconuts before they leave on fishing trips. They tell the *Kaliamma* [Mother Kali] before they set out in their boats.
>
> (Wife of a boat owner and operator, Sinhalese Buddhist)

The above conversation took place in Trincomalee, on the east coast of Sri Lanka, between one of the researchers and a Sinhalese Buddhist woman. This woman counts her family among the many Sinhalese Buddhist fishers who, she claimed, worship and offer coconuts, money, fruit, sweets and other items to the Hindu goddess, Kali, before their fishing trips. These fishers believe in a profound supernatural influence on their fishing livelihoods. However, their religious identities seem blurred and shifting: Buddhists borrow or accommodate Hindu deities in their spiritual practices, continuing an exchange between the religions that goes back centuries in Sri Lanka (Pfaffenberger, 1979). The post-war context adds new significance to this practice, where group identities, such as religion, are continuously shifting, clashing and forming alliances. Religious beliefs are often a strong cultural factor in people's decision making, and, as in other areas of life, these beliefs are frequently central to how people understand fisheries (Brown, 2008). Because of the risky and unpredictable nature of fishing, where people are at the mercy of the elements on the open seas (Acheson, 1981), fisher communities are deeply dependent on forces more powerful than themselves to ensure a successful venture.

In contrast to the shared religious practices between Hindus and Buddhists in Trincomalee, Muslims, the third largest religio-ethnic group in Sri Lanka, remain distinct and absent from shared religious spaces. Further, because Muslims in Trincomalee are closely linked with illegal fishing practices, they are often viewed with hostility by Tamils and Sinhalese people. During our research, a Muslim fisher not engaged in illegal fishing explained an incident that occurred between a group of Muslim illegal fishers and a Tamil fisher:

[Muslim illegal fishermen] use dynamite on big rocks in the sea to catch fish. Last week, there was a big incident. They had fought with another fisherman. Some of them were even injured and admitted to hospital. They fought with a boy from *Keeri*[19] [A Tamil community slightly north of Trincomalee town]. This is a place where about 25 boats gather to fish, but these people had gone there, and, by using dynamite, caught about 2,000 kg of fish in one day.

(Male, one-day boat fisher, Muslim)

Three decades of civil war in Sri Lanka ended in 2009, when the military brutally annihilated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Despite hopes of peace, 'new' forms of identity-based violence are taking shape, mainly along religious lines (The Asia Foundation, 2011; Gravers, 2015; Hasbullah and Korf, 2013; Stewart, 2014). One such line of tension culminated in June 2014, when a Sinhalese Buddhist mob, instigated by a group of extremist Buddhist priests, attacked the southern Muslim town of Aluthgama, causing damage to property. Although this incident (and similar ones in the past) had strong political motives, subsequent analysis revealed the underlying economic rivalry driving the violence: The commerce and trade sector in the country is historically perceived to be an area of Muslim domination (Stewart, 2014). Further, the 2011 National Values Survey found that Sri Lankan society is generally becoming more religious, with this trend being strongest among Buddhists (The Asia Foundation, 2011).

Most existing ethnographic studies of fisher communities have discussed their participants' religious affiliations, with some investigations focusing on the macro- or community-level influence of religion. However, extensive searches of the literature revealed no explorations of how religious beliefs shape the fishing occupation at the individual level. Previous research in Sri Lanka does extensively document the targeting of one religious group by others, based on economic rivalry in some instances and on opposition to religious and cultural beliefs in others. However, how these tensions play out or manifest in the lives of ordinary women and men is not captured in the academic literature. This chapter attempts to address these gaps by exploring how fishers reconcile their economic and moral values at an individual level. Further, the chapter endeavours to understand how religious ideology creates and sustains socio-political differences and relations based on those differences, which are at times also shaped by macro-level ideological discourses, through the case of Sinhalese Buddhist, Tamil Hindu and Muslim fishers in Trincomalee.

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[19] To ensure confidentiality, the name of this village has been changed.

2.2 Conceptual approach

Anthropologists 'are often interested in how the value systems, worldviews, and social organisations of different peoples may be related to their modes of production, their ways of making a living' (Gatewood and McCay, 1990: 15). Sayer (2004: 1) has argued that 'it is now commonplace to note the influence of rules, habits, norms, conventions and values on economic practices and institutions and to note how these vary across different societies'.

The terms 'morality' and 'value' figure prominently in our analysis. Morality, or ethics, concerns the (formal and informal) norms, values and dispositions regarding behaviour that affects others, implying certain conceptions of what is good or harmful (Sayer, 2004: 3). Further, morality may be understood as goals other than the mere accumulation of profit, including social status and prestige, social cohesion and the sustainability of an economic system (Näre, 2011: 400). Values refer broadly to underlying ideals (held values, such as bravery, fairness and happiness) and also the relative importance of things (assigned values, such as the monetary value of goods) (Brown, 1984). Values come into play when people depend on the specific ideas or understandings that arise from their experiences in choosing particular actions (Biggart and Beamish, 2003; Jentoft et al., 2010). Values may be the foundation from which cultural groups perceive and understand things (Chan et al., 2012), but it is also possible that values may have little effect on behaviour except when there is a conflict with opposing value systems (Swartz, 1996).This may be partially explained by the difficulty of making some values explicit because of their deeply subconscious nature.

2.2.1 Self, society and the moral economy

Early anthropological work on moral economy was closely linked to a number of discourses, including the gift economy (Cheal, 1988), which highlights reciprocal relationships; political economies concerned with maintaining social cohesion and solidarity (Meillassoux, 1981); reciprocity and the gift economy in relation to households (Silverstone et al., 1992); traditional views of social norms and obligations (Thompson, 1971); and economic justice and exploitation (Scott, 1976). This body of work has emphasised the moral economy as an alternative to the market economy (Näre, 2011).

However, as Sayer (2004: 3) has emphasised, non-market and non-economic processes cannot completely escape market forces. Contemporary sociologists have, therefore, included various economic fields (such

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as markets) in their analyses of specific moral economies (Booth, 1994; Näre, 2011; Sayer, 2004). The tradition of looking at the moral and economic spheres together goes back to the work of Adam Smith (1965), who held that all economic processes are embedded in the social world and cannot be understood independently of social morals and norms (Booth, 1994: 653; Hollingsworth, 2006: 103; Polanyi, 1957: 46; Sayer, 2004: 2).

Economic relationships are influenced by actors' moral sentiments and decisions (Sayer, 2004: 2). Economic behaviour itself involves and depends on people assigning values—most obviously use-values and exchange values, but also ethical or moral values—directly or indirectly, to economic activities. A fitting example is Stirrat's (1988) discussion of fishers in a rural north-western Sri Lankan village. In this Christian community, the fishers' aim was to maximise their profit, but their approach was also mediated by an ethic of hard work, which the church encouraged. It is always possible for economic values and ethical or moral values to come into tension during the decision-making process (Sayer, 2004: 4). For example, there may be instances where the greater public good is compromised in favour of self-interest. However, this discussion of tension may be taken forward by acknowledging that, rather than representing a simple dichotomy between egoism and altruism, these values exist on a spectrum, with a range of shades and complex combinations found between those two poles.

Just as economic activities may be influenced and structured by moral dispositions and norms, these moral norms may be compromised, overridden or reinforced by economic pressures (Sayer, 2004: 2). In this chapter, we analyse how one such moral dimension—religion—influences the economic activity of livelihoods and how the economic pressures of the need to maximise profit override or reinforce moral/religious convictions.

2.2.2   Religious values and fishing

For the purposes of this study, we define religion as a cultural system encompassing a series of characteristics, as documented by Southwold (1978: 36–37). Several characteristics of religion that are salient to our analysis are as follows: (1) a central concern with god-like beings and human beings' relations with them; (2) a dichotomisation of elements in the world into sacred and profane, as well as a central concern with the sacred; (3) ritual practices and beliefs that are neither logically nor empirically demonstrable or highly probable but must be held on the basis of faith; and (4) An ethical code supported by such beliefs, with supernatural sanctions on infringements of that code. The relational aspect with

deities, which could take the form of negotiation, reciprocity or submission, is a central theme in our analysis. Moreover, because ritual plays a strong role in the religious interactions of the coastal people in Trincomalee, fear or respect of the supernatural is another important dimension of our analysis.

Trincomalee hosts people from each of the four main religions practiced in Sri Lanka: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Catholicism/Christianity. Certain religions, including Hinduism, encompass all of the above characteristics, whereas others, such as Buddhism, encompass fewer. The main difference between Islam and Hinduism, on the one hand, and Buddhism, on the other, is that adherents of the former believe in only one god, whereas adherents of the latter believe in a pantheon of gods and goddesses.

Although the differences are not completely clear-cut, a distinction should be made between the religion of religious texts and scripture, and popular religion. Culture plays a role in creating deviations in actual practice from what is laid out in religious texts. Especially in multi-religious societies, such as Trincomalee, these transgressions are commonly practised and accepted. An example can be found among the Sri Lankan Buddhists; the *Therawadha* Buddhism practiced does not attribute a power of granting wishes to the gods, but in 'practical Buddhism', as Nash (1966) and Southwold (1978) have called it, Buddhists make offerings to gods and goddesses that are primarily Hindu in exchange for the fulfilment of material wishes.

In actual fishing practice, despite modern technological advances, fishers pit themselves daily against the forces of nature. Consequently, fishers look to the role of chance in fishing and the unpredictable nature of the catch to legitimise their dependence on the supernatural, as well as related rituals and beliefs (Kurien, 1995; Ram, 1991). This leads to a stronger sense of religiosity, with a vigour and depth of belief (Gupta, 2003). However, in Buddhism, the power of the divine, closely linked to the supernatural in general, is arguably different from that of deities in other religions. While statues of both Hindu and non-Hindu gods are quite closely associated with Buddhist temples, the *stated* purpose of these statues is to transfer merit (a transferable energy generated by the wholesomeness of the devotee) to these gods, not to ask them for any material benefits. However, in practice, people do deviate from this stated purpose (Southwold, 1978).

There is little research on how religion has affected natural resource management in contemporary societies (Brown, 2008; Collet, 2002). Religion is part of the culture of fishing societies the world over (Kurien, 1995). One of the few studies discussing religion and fisheries (Brown, 2008) has claimed that fishers' understanding of how fisheries works is based on 'powerful and sincerely held' religious beliefs (Brown, 2008). However, we contend that these religious beliefs are neither fixed nor static, but change based on the context or the need of the day. Thus, rather than sole devotion to one religion (or the basic premises of a particular religion), fishers attach meanings to, adopt and adapt basic religious tenets and ideologies that provide meaning and justification for their livelihood activities. This process can only be understood within a multi-religious environment.

Religious beliefs are very diverse, changing from person to person, and they are difficult to articulate. Religious values are also difficult to quantify. People may be categorised by 'their religious texts and their mythologies', but how individuals understand religion (Brown, 2008: 7), or how they attach meaning to different religious tenets, is difficult to pin down. How they behave based on these meanings is even more difficult to understand. One could also question whether fishers (or people in general) use religious values to justify economically profitable decisions. Brown (2008) has argued that they do not. We wish to shed some light on this matter in our analysis.

We focused on the religious value systems attached to fisheries for several reasons. First, the studies that focus on religious values and fisheries in Sri Lanka and in the South Asian region, focused on the influence of religion on one particular fishing community (Bavinck, 2015; Houtart and Nayak, 1988; Kurien, 1995). These studies. In contrast, our study examined different religious groups and communities interacting and borrowing from each other to show the blurring and crossing of boundaries among different religious practices and beliefs. Notably, there is a complete lack of previous work on Buddhism and fishing, which we also aim to begin to address through this chapter.

Second, it was our intention to study the valuation process, rather than value as an outcome or static product. To this end, an analysis of the inherently contradictory and complementary nature of religious/ideological values in the daily lives of the fisher communities of Trincomalee can add more depth and nuance to our argument. Rather than performing a descriptive analysis of how different values driven by religious/ideological beliefs impact fishing livelihoods, our aim was to bring out the complexities of the diverse value systems—or moral standpoints—at play in the everyday lives of coastal

fishing communities in Trincomalee and to explore how people are able to reconcile these different value systems.

2.3   Study context and methods

McGilvray (2008), who has done extensive anthropological research in Batticaloa District, which is also in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province, has described the eastern coastal strip as a closely interwoven mix of Tamil and Muslim cultures. Historical sociocultural interactions between these groups included household visits, food exchanges and gift-giving. Thus, eastern Muslims and Tamils, particularly in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts, have deep and longstanding cultural ties (McGilvray, 1998). However, partly because of targeted violence, general mistrust increased among Muslim, Tamil and Sinhalese people in the east during the protracted war, and their ethnic identities have heightened. Elite involvement facilitated the creation of polarised ethnic identities (Frerks and Klem, 2005). McGilvray (2008) has argued that an important characteristic of the eastern communities is the explicit Muslim interest in establishing a non-Tamil identity, or an identity based on Islam, which shapes their ideas and beliefs, lifestyles and cultural norms.

The pattern of settlements in Trincomalee, with ethnic enclaves in relatively close proximity to each other, has contributed to cultural sharing through common norms and rituals. Different people living in the same location are likely to have interrelations with each other (Leach, 1954). Muslim (loosely referred to here as those who follow Islam) and Tamil intermarriage has diffused cultural practices, except perhaps for the caste structures in eastern Trincomalee (McGilvray, 1998). The overwhelming presence of Sinhalese Buddhist fisher-folk—both women and men—at Hindu *kovil* (temple) festivals, fulfilling vows in the Hindu tradition, is another example of this diffusion. However, there is evidence of attempts to 'purify' certain areas in the east, such as Kattankudy (a Muslim town in the Batticaloa district), from 'un-Islamic' cultural elements. An example of this has been seen in the destruction of a Sufi mosque (Hasbullah and Korf, 2013). Resistance to cultural diffusion can sometimes take a violent form.

Historically, religious tensions in Sri Lanka have been particularly acute between Buddhists and Muslims, Catholics and Buddhists, and Hindus and Muslims, the latter especially on the east coast (The Asia Foundation, 2016; McGilvray, 1998). These tensions tend to simmer for a long time and often fluctuate in response to local, national and international developments. Additionally, the tensions can manifest as violence when manipulated by political forces for electoral gains. The 1915 Muslim–Buddhist riots in the

central part of the country were a major incident of this nature. The violence lasted more than a week and resulted in the loss of lives and damage to residential and commercial properties (Government of Sri Lanka, 2009). Although thought to be rooted in Buddhist nationalism, economic causes such as the desire to eliminate Muslim business competitors may also have inflamed the riots (De Silva, 2005; Jayawardena, 1970). Sri Lankan history post-independence is rife with such religious tensions, and this includes all four major religions in the country. More recently, the 2001 riots between Muslims and Buddhists in Mawanella and Kegalle, although primarily driven by economic rivalry, were exacerbated by tensions between two political parties, the Muslim Congress and the *Jathika Hela Urumaya*, over land distribution in the east. Numerous internal and external factors fuelled these tensions: The 2001 destruction of the Bamiyan statues in Afghanistan, for instance, created a tense environment locally. Similarly, Sri Lanka shared the accelerated Islamophobia that followed the 9/11 attacks in New York (LankaNewspapers, 2013).

An escalation of tensions against Muslims is clear in post-war Sri Lanka, especially over the past three years; for instance, the Buddhist *Bodhu Bala Sena* (BBS) has spearheaded and incited anti-Muslim fervour, including a massive nationwide campaign against the Halal certification of food. Economic issues are clearly at the forefront of the most recent violence, as demonstrated by the BBS-led boycott of Muslim business establishments. However, although it was initially started for economic reasons, the BBS offensive then proceeded to denounce Islamic social, cultural and religious practices. Campaigns against cattle slaughtering, which were significant in accelerating the tensions, are closely tied to Hindu and Buddhist religious or cultural beliefs regarding the consumption of beef. Fuelled by political patronage, these tensions culminated in the Aluthgama riots between Muslims and Sinhalese people in June 2014, where three people were killed and 78 were injured (Bastians and Harris, 2014).

2.3.1   Methods and data[20]

The analysis presented in this chapter draws upon narratives of men engaged in beach seining—both owners and crew members, one-day boat operators and wives of fishermen. They were Muslim, Tamil and Sinhalese individuals, following Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. We selected these groups to understand their religious values and the way they enact religion or spirituality in their livelihoods as

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[20] For an overview of the overall study methods, refer to the methods section of Chapter 1. This section only discusses the data used for the present chapter.

fishers. Moreover, we used data gathered from members and committee members of fisheries and religious institutions (such as fisheries societies/cooperatives, Muslim and Hindu places of worship) to understand their perspectives on and roles in fisheries-related activities. The main researcher (Lokuge) is a Sinhalese Buddhist woman, who worked with two Tamil-speaking female assistants during the data collection process. The co-author of this paper (Munas) is a Muslim man. All of the data collected for the larger research project were coded using NVivo qualitative data analysis software, and the thematic nodes of religion, norms and rituals, societies and identity were used to build the arguments presented in this chapter.

The geographic location of the study sites meant that the Christians/Catholics, who are mainly long-term migrant fishers in Trincomalee, were not a central part of this analysis[21]. This is because the in-depth data collection focused on a radius of about 12 km from Trincomalee town, and the migrant Christian/Catholic fisher settlements are predominantly in the North of Trincomalee, beyond this radius.

2.4   The role of religion in the fishing communities of Trincomalee

At the individual level, religion takes a central place in a fisher's life, irrespective of their specific faith. Every activity in fisher communities—buying new boats, going to sea in the morning, going to market, opening a new shop—is performed after a religious ritual. For fishers and their families, these practices provide a sense of shared risk, and an acknowledgement of divine powers. Further, for Hindus and Buddhists, the deities are seen such that protection, prosperity and success are expected in a reciprocal relationship based on offerings and a sense of fear of, or subservience to, these divine powers. A Muslim fisher explained the rituals accompanying the launching of a new boat:

> Tamil and Sinhalese people will place a banana tree[22] in the boat and light firecrackers[23] when they launch a new boat, but we don't do that. Instead, sometimes we give dates, banana, candy and biscuits to the children.

> (Male, one-day boat fisher, Muslim)

The adoption of Hindu rituals by Buddhists is neither new nor limited to coastal communities. This practice goes as far back as the times of the Buddhist Kandyan kings, who married Indian Hindu

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[21] See the methods section of Chapter 1 for more information.
[22] Primarily for prosperity
[23] To ward off evil spirits

princesses (Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1988). We observed that, faced with a real need for protection and endowments from powers greater than human beings, Buddhist fishers turn to Hindu gods, goddesses and rituals. The strong belief in the supernatural is most explicit in reference to changes in weather sought through the enactment of religious ritual:

> This is god's area … so things are not bad for the Trincomalee people. There are *kovil* everywhere here. Until milk is poured into the sea, the sea is rough. The Kali *kovil* pours milk into the sea. Then the sea becomes calm, and it becomes possible to put out to sea.

> (Male, one-day boat fisher, Sinhalese Buddhist)

In a community where beach seine fishing is still a main form of livelihood, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious fisheries society has supported the annual Hindu *kovil* festival, symbolically if not financially, for generations. Currently, this festival costs about 80,000 LKR (560 USD), with costs covered by funds collected from the beach seine operations, as well as individual donations of cash and labour from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Catholic villagers. A Sinhalese Catholic beach seine owner, one of the community's pioneers, described the preparations, planning and financing for the *kovil* festival, and how these festivals bring the community together, irrespective of religion:

> On the 30th of every month, we can set the beach seine as many times as we like, and anyone can set the net. Half of the income goes to the crew members and the other half to a fund for the *kovil* festival. The owners don't take anything from the income [on that particular day].

> (Male, beach seine fisher, Sinhalese Catholic)

At a broader, inter-community level, the Hindu–Buddhist sharing of rituals is most clearly visible at the main *kovil* festivals, where we saw people of both faiths fast, worship and fulfil various vows. Muslims are group that is clearly excluded from these religious performances. The strong emerging trend of Muslim exclusion from the fishing areas is at least partially explained by their separation or exclusion from cultural practices. This exclusion manifests mainly in tensions over illegal fishing, with vehement Sinhalese Buddhist allegations that it is the Muslims who mostly engage in this practice.

The centrality of religion in a fisher's life is not static; sometimes it needs to be negotiated through opposing value systems. In fact, religiosity does not always translate into strict adherence to religious practice and ritual. Although the performance of these practices is one indication of religiosity among fishers, individual and communal struggles to decide between contradictory religious and the economic

values are ever present. These internal negotiation processes take place through accommodating certain values at a given point of time and rationalising the decisions made, as part of the meaning making attached to daily activities.

2.5   The impact of conflict on fisher livelihoods: Shared religious experiences

The pervasive feeling of insecurity during the war undoubtedly strengthened people's need to seek divine protection. During the war years, fishers not only pitted themselves against nature; they faced risks to life and equipment at the hands of the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE alike. As one woman explained, Hindu–Buddhist boundary markers seemed to blur in the face of war violence:

> Nothing wrong has happened to those people who go to the Kali *kovil* and *Koneswaram kovil* [the temple dedicated to the god Shivan]. Even during the war, those people stayed safe. A lot of people who didn't worship died. Sinhalese [Buddhist] people who also went against these things [i.e. didn't worship the gods] were punished. Those who destroyed *kovil* were punished. They died. They were killed by the LTTE.

> (Housewife, Sinhalese Buddhist)

While making and fulfilling vows for the menfolk's success and safety at sea are an important part of the responsibilities of a woman from a fishing family, some of the Buddhist women's faith in Hindu divinity goes beyond these factors. Illness in the family or the desire for material benefits become occasions to seek divine intercession. The belief that these requests have been granted deepens faith as well. Such religious and cultural mixing and ambiguity also appear to be common among Indian fishers (Ram, 1991). However, the woman quoted above seemed conflicted about her cultural mixing. Although she was devoted to the Hindu gods and goddesses and followed the rituals more strictly than some Tamil Hindus, she had very limited interactions with the Tamil women at the Hindu *kovil.* She communicated with others in the *kovil* in Sinhalese, distinctly reluctant to interact with Tamil women. She explained her faith as follows:

> When my family first arrived here, we didn't have a house to live in. So I made a vow to the Kali goddess: 'Please give me a house'. Within a week, one of our aunts here said, 'Take my land and build a house'. From that day onwards, I didn't stop believing in Kali. Since my son joined the Navy during the war, I have been taking the *Kaapu* thread [a ritual 20-day fast prior to receiving a red thread from the *kovil* meant to protect the wearer]. Because of this, he has been with the navy

up to now without any problems. Even though a bomb exploded just in front of him, he didn't receive even a scratch on his body. I have faith in the *kaapu* thread.

(Housewife, Sinhalese Buddhist)

The shared experience of the war and its aftermath is likely to have produced new shared religious practices (Spencer et al., 2014). For instance, Lawrence's (1997) ethnographic accounts of local *Amman* temples in Batticaloa provide vivid insight into how women, especially, found solace through worshipping the goddess *Amman* at the height of the war. Coastal Trincomalee shows similar patterns to those in Lawrence's account, specifically in the Buddhist accommodation of Hindu rituals and practices as explained above. Additionally, in certain instances, shared religious rituals in the same physical space led to a feeling of solidarity.

2.6   The religious moral economy of fishing

In this section we discuss how religion shapes the moral economy of fishing in the fishing communities of Trincomalee through reciprocity, or negotiation between deities and mortals. These negotiations are based on offerings and sacrifices made in exchange for the divine protection of lives and equipment, as well as prosperity through fishing livelihoods. These practices also contribute to a sense of social solidarity within the community and a sense of sharing across religions or communities, with Buddhist adoption of Hindu rituals (to the exclusion of Muslims). The case of the Muslim fishers highlights a negotiation to reconcile contradictory economic and religious obligations.

2.6.1   Hindus and fishing: Reciprocity and social solidarity

The photograph below, taken during the annual Hindu *kovil* festival in a community called Keeri just north of Trincomalee town, shows fishermen performing the temple rituals for the 10-day festival (Figure 12). A fish dealer, with his own multi-day boat employing three men in his fish-buying outlet (*waadi*), was the person in charge of issuing tickets at the car park. The Hindu fishers depicted, show that the dichotomisation of elements in the world into sacred and profane, mentioned earlier as a characteristic of religion, is far from simple and clear cut. In daily rituals, the sacred is dragged into the profane by establishing a relationship with the deity through offerings of fruit, flowers, incense and money. During the festival, however, there is an effort to embrace the sacred. At this time, the whole fishing community turns vegetarian. In return for their offerings to the gods and compliance with religious and cultural norms, these fishermen expect the protection of their lives and livelihoods.

Figure 12. Hindu *kovil* festival in Keeri, a community north of Trincomalee town

The temple festivals have a major impact on fisheries livelihoods and related activities. For example, in Tamil Hindu communities, the entire village may stay away from fishing activities during *kovil* festivals, which last 5–10 days. The local demand and prices for fish decline, as many Hindu and some Buddhist villagers stop consuming fish and other non-vegetarian foods for spiritual reasons. Some people are even compelled to undertake alternative livelihoods during these lean periods in the local fishery. For a specific period, the fishermen in Keeri sacrifice their income and embrace a lifestyle in accordance with religious ritual. In other words, they embrace a moral economy defined by religion in this community during the *kovil* festival.

> Every year during the Kali *kovil Kaappu* [Hindu temple festival to give out the blessed thread], our business will be very slow, because people don't eat non-vegetarian food during that time.

> (Male, retail fish seller, Tamil Hindu)

This community illustrates that the salience, or importance, of religious identity predicts time spent on religious activities (Stryker and Serpe, 1982). Although these activities cause economic loss to the fishers, they consider it an investment in protecting and improving their livelihoods in the future: a reciprocal relation with the deities in return for the fishers' devotion.

However, this is not their sole motivation. The *kovil* and the fish market in this community are so closely entangled that, to be a member of one, you have to be a member of the other. This is also seen as a way of showing community cohesion, solidarity and collective action. Thus, a lack of commitment to one's role of *kovil* patron during the festival may result in the loss of meaningful relations to others, given that one's religious identity is forfeit (Stryker and Burke, 2000). This will lead to far greater and more long-term setbacks than would the loss of profit during the festival season.

2.6.2 Buddhism and fishing: To kill or not to kill?

Irrespective of the Buddhist standpoint on consuming animal flesh, the taking of life is against its fundamentals. The first of Buddhism's five basic precepts states, 'I take upon myself the rule of training to abstain from taking the life of living beings' (Dahlke et al., 1963: 3). These precepts are self-governing rules of conduct and, in contrast to the Christian commandments, no pleasing of the divine is implied. This has implications for the fishers' status in the wider social fabric, especially in contrast to agricultural communities.

Gupta (2003), in her review of maritime ethnographies in South Asia, has claimed that fishing is despised as an occupation in Sri Lanka because it is fundamentally contrary to Buddhist ethics. However, Buddhists continue to engage in fishing, mainly along the southern coastline and in certain areas of the Trincomalee coast. One way Buddhist fishermen reconcile the ethical/moral dilemma in the need to kill for their livelihood on a daily basis is by turning to Hindu deities. This is particularly easy given that Trincomalee's multi-ethnic, multi-religious communities live in close proximity to each other. A fisherman interviewed explained this point:

> We don't keep a Buddha statue in the boat. It is not good. We usually keep statues of the Kali and Paththini goddesses and the gods Shivan and Murugan. They say *vas vadinava* [bad things will happen], so we don't keep [Buddha] statues.
>
> We never paste stickers with sayings like *Budusaranai* [May Lord Buddha bless us]. We paste stickers that just say, 'May God bless us' or *Koneswaram deviyo pihitai* [May god *Koneswaram*

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bless us]. People believe that if we display a sticker saying, 'May Lord Buddha bless us', things won't work out. If we have a sticker mentioning Lord Buddha in front of our eyes while fishing, we are unconsciously made to say 'May Lord Buddha bless us' over and over again … but then that is not going to work with the catching of fish that we do.

(Male, one-day boat fisher, Sinhalese Buddhist)

Buddhist fishers further legitimise their belief in Hindu gods through the historic context of Trincomalee. There is a widespread belief among them that Trincomalee is a Hindu god's domain and under divine protection. One could argue that history lends itself to this belief. The word Trincomalee translates in Tamil as 'Sacred Hill of the Three Temples' (although there are also other interpretations of the name). The majority of Buddhist, as well as almost all Hindu, fishers (regardless of the scale of their investment) make vows and worship the Hindu god Shivan and goddess Kali before setting out in their boats. The size of the offering, the type of ritual and the amount of money offered differs: The multi-day boat owners, who are seen to have more to lose and, consequently, at more risk, tend to be more devout. A mix of fear, awe, respect and affection colours people's attitudes towards these deities.

All the multi-day boat owners go there [to the Shivan *kovil*].

You go to the Shivan temple by boat, break coconuts and go fishing. Even if a small problem comes up, they go to the *Koneswaram* temple [Shivan *kovil*], place a *pandhura* [make a vow by tying a coin in a piece of cloth] and make a vow. The Kali *kovil* has a bigger income. Everyone who goes fishing, even the small-scale fisher, goes to Kali *kovil*.

(Male, one-day boat fisher, Sinhalese Buddhist)

This practice appears quite common among fishing communities, whether Hindu or Buddhist, given fishing's added risk of life on a daily basis and the resulting need for protection. These shared religious practices have also contributed to a sense of collectivity among Buddhists and Hindus, to the exclusion of Muslims. Still, suggesting overly simplistic notions of social cohesion and solidarity among the two former groups would be incorrect. Unrepaired ruptures resulting from decades of violence and tensions remain between Hindus and Buddhists in Trincomalee.

2.6.3 Muslims and fishing: Our families will engage in fasting for us

The case of Muslim fishers and *zakat*[24] practices also reveals a process of negotiation and rationalisation in decision making. Some Muslim fishers value donating a portion of their income to the mosque over earning the highest possible price for their fish. These fishers anticipate that their contributions will be used for collective *zakat* giving, although the mosque may utilise these funds for non-*zakat* purposes, such as the maintenance and payment of employees' salaries. A respondent explained:

> You know there is something called *zakat*. We have to give something to the mosque. It is an opportunity to collect some merit. That's why the mosque also takes up a collection. It is an income for the mosque, through which they carry out maintenance or pay the salaries of whoever is working there.

> (Male, non-motorised boat fisher, Muslim)

Those who cannot or do not contribute regularly to the mosque funds try to fulfil their *zakat* obligation indirectly by selling their fish at an open auction on the beach managed by the mosque in a predominantly Muslim community south of Trincomalee. This market has fewer retail buyers, and the prices are sometimes lower than the wholesale prices in the main fish market. These fishers value their contribution to the mosque over earning profit in a market with higher demand and more competitive prices for their fish.

In other instances, Muslim fishers choose to compromise their religious obligations for economic activities. Our interactions with Muslim fishers revealed a strong awareness of their religious obligations (for example praying five times a day, attending Friday prayers, fasting annually during Ramadan for 30 days and providing *zakat* for the poor in their communities). A constructed discourse is that the difficulties and hardships of fishing impede Muslim fishers' attempts to carry out these religious duties. Nonetheless, Muslim fishers reconcile their inability to perform these duties through various strategies. For instance, some fishing activities are practiced in line with traditional religious obligations; for example, Muslim fishers avoid fishing on Fridays because of Friday prayers. However, when it comes to fasting during Ramadan, religious and economic values conflict, because skipping fishing for 30 days at a stretch is economically disadvantageous:

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[24] *Zakat* is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a tithe paid by eligible Muslims to provide for the most vulnerable groups of society.

Fishing is a difficult activity. So while fishing, we can't fast. Islam says that you should work 11 months and save for the twelfth month of Ramadan. But we are small-scale fishers. We can't save. So we don't fast. All the others at home are fasting.

(Male, one-day boat fisher, Muslim)

Muslim fishers perceive a choice between fasting and fishing. Hence, various rationalisations and justifications lead to a compromise. Some fishers who skip fasting hold that their livelihood enables other family members (who don't go out to sea) to observe the fast. The fishers themselves believe that the demanding physical labour and the heat out at sea preclude them from fasting, but they retain value and respect when other members of their households and communities fast. The fact that the fishermen who do not fast buy their lunch from the shops is an indication of this. Consequently, the usual response when Muslim fishermen are questioned about whether they observe the Ramadan fast is, 'I don't, but my people at home do'. The implication here seems to be that family members fast on behalf of the non-fasting, fishing, income-earning men. Such a justification accommodates and absorbs the obligation and value to perform religious rites within the family, as a unit.

2.7   Solidarity and economic justice

Following the war, trust among the three ethnic communities in Trincomalee District is still fragile, especially between Tamils and Sinhalese people. Nonetheless, Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhists share common space and rituals in certain religious observances. In contrast, Muslims are almost completely absent from these shared religious spaces, ritual behaviours and beliefs. Although sharing has not led to broader communal solidarity between Tamils and Sinhalese people, it does create a sense of cohesion and a shared understanding of what is moral, good or bad, specifically in relation to their livelihoods. Moreover, national anti-Muslim discourses influence feelings of solidarity among Buddhists and Hindus in coastal Trincomalee, to the exclusion of Muslims.

For multiple reasons, a strong anti-Muslim movement is taking shape in Trincomalee, as reported by Tamils and Sinhalese people. This is part of increasing anti-Muslim racist tendencies witnessed throughout the country in the past few years (The Asia Foundation, 2011; Heslop, 2014). Opposition has coalesced against Muslim cultural aspects (e.g. beef consumption), partly as a consequence of economic rivalry. In Trincomalee, the perception—and reality, based on Muslim admissions—that the majority of those using illegal and destructive fishing methods are Muslims has also contributed to simmering

tensions. This is not to discount the fact that there are Muslim fishermen in Trincomalee who do not endorse or engage in these fishing practices.

The most common illegal fishing method is the use of the disco net. Called a *hembilidala* (in Sinhalese) and *surukkuvalai* (in Tamil), this is a trammel net meant for use in deep seas. Its use within seven kilometres of the shore is prohibited, and the mesh size cannot be less than one and a half inches. Other illegal fishing methods that are used are a powerful light at night to attract fish towards a purse seine net and the use of dynamite.

Illegal fishing was a cause of persistent tension in Trincomalee, mainly between Muslim and Sinhalese fishers, during our field work. This is neither to imply that illegal fishing is the exclusive domain of Muslims in Trincomalee, nor that tensions do not exist among all three communities with regard to illegal fishing. However, as reported by fishers of all three ethnicities and fisheries authorities, and based on our own observations, an overwhelming majority of those engaging in illegal fishing—particularly using the disco net—were Muslims.

In 2013, over 300 cases were filed against Sri Lankan fishermen for using illegal vessels and equipment. Of these cases, 109 were from Trincomalee (Daily News, 2014). According to our primary data, in October 2013, 113 disco net fishers were arrested in Trincomalee: 89 were from Kinniya, where 96% of the population is Muslim (Kinniya Divisional Secretariat, 2013). Tensions between those who engage in illegal fishing and those who do not are clear. In fact, as recently as August 2015, a Tamil fisherman went missing at sea, allegedly as a result of an attack by a group of illegal fishers (Santiago, 2015). A Sinhalese fish trader elaborated on this point:

> Disco nets are mostly used by Muslims, but they have powerful support and escape prosecution. It is the main practice in Kinniya, Irakkakandy, Pudavaikattu and Pulmodai [areas where a sizable Muslim population engages in fishing]. Rules should apply to all of us. They can't differentiate from person to person. It is a banned method. Everyone should respect the law. How will there be reproduction [of fish] if we catch within one and a half months the fish that needs one and a half years to grow?

> (Male, wholesale fish dealer, Sinhalese Buddhist)

Muslim fishers, conversely, demonstrated a certain sense of pride and bravado about engaging in illegal fishing. One disco net fisher interviewed compared their type of fishing with the small-scale fishing engaged in by others:

> *Naanga ellarum alli edukura party, ondu rendu pidika virupamillai* [We are people who catch things in one scoop. We don't like catching one or two.]

> (Male, disco net fisher, Muslim)

It was clearly in the Muslim fishers' interest to continue employing illegal fishing methods, not simply because of the profits, but also because of their sense of pride in being considered 'large-scale fishermen' among their peers and within their communities. Their moral universe did not categorise disco net fishing as ethically immoral.

There was an acceptance of this fishing method among numerous Muslim fishermen and in society, including the mosque leaders, at least in Muslim-dominated areas like Kinniya. In fact, these fishers had the support of the mosques in the area, something that became apparent when we asked how they continued to use the disco net when it is against the law. The mosque leaders had spoken to the DFAR officers in Trincomalee on behalf of the fishers.

Those who opposed the practice viewed it through a lens of economic injustice, as over-exploitation of a resource that should not only be shared among the present generation of fishers but sustained for future generations as well. There is a clear clash of moral values in this instance. Attempts at regulation will be futile if the authorities fail to consider the moral position of Muslim illegal fishers and the support that the fishing activity has gathered at the local community level.

The powerful discourse that it is Muslims who engage in illegal fishing generates a sense of exclusion towards them and a corresponding cohesiveness among Tamil and Sinhalese fishers (similar to effect of shared religious beliefs and rituals between the latter). This claim is strengthened by the discourse about consuming beef. In Sri Lanka, for religious reasons, a majority of Hindus and Buddhists choose to abstain from consuming beef. In the recent past, there has been a strong anti-beef consumption movement, spearheaded by a group of extremist Buddhist monks in the south. The tensions in Trincomalee reflect anti-Muslim sentiments seen throughout Sri Lanka—but especially in the South—that have resulted in a sense of isolation and oppression felt by Muslims in coastal communities. Further, the tendency of

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Muslims in eastern Sri Lanka to establish an exclusive identity based on Islam, clearly disconnected from Hindu practices (Hasbullah and Korf, 2013; McGilvray, 1998), partially explains the group identity dynamics developing in coastal Trincomalee.

2.8 Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to build understanding regarding the different value systems that apply to fishermen in their day-to-day practices and interactions with individuals belonging to other identity groups and within their own community. We were especially interested in understanding how these processes shape the moral economy of fishing in Trincomalee. At the individual level, religion takes a central place in a fisher's life, irrespective of their specific faith. Given the constant dangers to assets and lives, fishing as an occupation is profoundly shaped by religious beliefs and religious morality at the individual and family levels. This sense of risk was heightened during the civil war, when fishers not only pitted themselves against nature; they faced risks to life and equipment at the hands of both the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE. In light of these threats, turning towards the supernatural was common. However, individual and communal struggles to decide between contradictory economic and religious values were also an ever-present aspect of the fishermen's religiosity. We found this process to be marked by rationalising and meaning making, embodied through the daily living experiences of these fishermen.

At the community level, although there are complex, historical tensions between all of the religious groups in Trincomalee, Hindus and Buddhists share considerable religious complementarity despite heightened tension and violence during the war years. Muslims are increasingly marked as separate—in spaces of religious ritual, such as the Hindu temples, and likewise in fishing livelihoods. Most Muslims also see themselves as separate.

At the individual level, there are interesting patterns of meaning making carried out by fishers that are shaped by their religious values. For Hindu fishermen, even though their role commitments as patrons of the Hindu *kovil* comes at a financial cost, they see this as compensated by the boost to their subjective religious identity and status within their community, as well as the protection it provides. Certain religious or philosophical doctrines, such as Buddhism, do not readily lend themselves to fishers' need to seek divine sources of protection or material benefits. Consequently, Buddhists borrow from Hinduism when they feel that the primary religious teachings they follow are inadequate to serve their needs. Nevertheless, this borrowing does not imply the abandonment of their own religious or ethnic identity to

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embrace the alternative religious doctrine in its totality. Rather, people take advantage of the malleable nature of seemingly static religious doctrine to mix, match and choose what suits the need and the occasion. Like Hindus, Muslim fisher-folk sometimes seem willing to compromise economic gain for religious values: They sell fish at lower rates in the small auction managed by the mosque rather than earning greater profits in the larger nearby wholesale market with higher demand and more competitive prices. However, in other instances, Muslim fishers choose to compromise their religious obligations for economic activities. An example of this is foregoing Ramadan fasting in the interest of generating an income by continuing to engage in fishing, rationalising this practice on the basis that they enable their families to fast by providing for them financially. In sum, fishermen engage in a form of forum shopping, borrowing from different economic and religious value systems and providing justifications for their decisions.

However, religious beliefs and ideology also create and sustain socio-political differences, which are further constructed by macro-level political discourses. Our analysis of the daily lived experiences of fisher communities in coastal Trincomalee has revealed the potential imprint that national-level discourses can have at the individual and community levels. The moral economy of fishing, therefore, is not only about how fishers seek to reconcile their economic activities with their moral values, but also how religious ideology generates socio-political differences and relations based on those differences.

In terms of fisheries governance, managers need to recognise and understand the role of religion and value systems in shaping the moral economy of fishing, as well as the processes by which religious beliefs and ideology can create and sustain social cleavages. Fisheries managers' interventions to reduce illegal fishing, for example, will be more effective if they recognise that illegal fishing is motivated not only by the interest in short-term profit, but also by the sense of pride, value and identity that fishers attribute to it. A phasing out plan for disco net fishing, therefore, would necessitate greater sensitivity to the diverse values that underpin this practice. A lack of understanding or ignorance of these micro-and macro-level processes may result in fisheries regulatory policies that deepen existing social cleavages. This outcome would be detrimental not only to the fisheries as a livelihood, but also to the broader issues of social cohesion and the resolution of community tensions. Given that Sri Lankan society is still emerging from tensions and mistrust created by the three-decade civil war, directing attention towards rules and processes that fuel instead of contain such issues is of paramount importance.

Chapter Three: Outside the Net: Intersectionality and Inequality in Fisheries in Trincomalee District, Sri Lanka

This chapter is a minor revision[25] of a paper submitted for review to the *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*[26]

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[25] Background information on ethnicity, settlement patterns and cultural diffusion in Trincomalee has been removed to avoid repetition. Refer to Sections 1.1 for study context and 1.4 for methods and data in Chapter 1.

3.1   Introduction

Most discourses on conflict in Sri Lanka have emphasised ethnicity (Frerks and Bart, 2004), masking social inequalities emerging at the intersection of gender, caste and class (Silva, Sivapragasam and Thanges, 2009). Writing in the post-war Sri Lankan context, Rajasingham-Senanayaka (2009) drew attention to the need to 'look beyond the culturalism or "ethnic" narrative, and understand the embedded social and economic inequalities' (as cited in Arambewela and Arambewela, 2010: 373). The present study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of power structures that marginalise coastal women in Trincomalee District, Sri Lanka, at the intersection of caste, ethnicity and location, and of how women experience, reproduce and resist these power structures in their daily lives.

The fisheries sector is at the centre of post-war reconstruction discussions in Sri Lanka. During times of heightened violence, the fishing industry in the Northern and Eastern Provinces was crippled by the loss of equipment, lives and infrastructure, as well as heavy restrictions (Siluvaithasan and Stokke, 2006). Prior to the violent conflict, the then combined Northern and Eastern Provinces contributed 64% of the total Sri Lankan fish catch in 1980. This dropped dramatically to 20% by 2000, before rising to 38.2% in 2010. More significant than the monetary value, the fisheries sector is a major provider of regional employment: In 2012, the three districts of the Eastern Province employed 38% of all fishers in the country's 15 fishing districts, with Trincomalee District alone accounting for 14% (Department of Fisheries, 2013).

In Trincomalee District, fishing is associated with men; women are seen to play an ancillary role. Thus, fisheries officials, community leaders and fishermen (all men) dismiss women's involvement in fisheries livelihoods. Mostly ignored by policy makers and community leaders, coastal women in Trincomalee engage in marine and lagoon-based fishing livelihoods, supporting their families—in some cases single-handedly.

This article focuses predominantly on fisher women from low socioeconomic classes, who were engaging in marginal livelihoods, working hard, smelling of the lagoon and fish, and earning a lower income in comparison with men. These women belonged to the Muslim, Tamil and *Veder* (indigenous) communities. They used their incomes for daily survival, to buffer lean periods and for longer-term

socioeconomic stability, irrespective of whether there was a male presence in the household. Their income sometimes went towards their own expenses. They also invested in their children's and grandchildren's futures:

> *Iral Amumma* [literal translation: 'prawn grandmother'] bought more jewellery for me than anyone else… She also bought necklaces for all the other [12] grandchildren. She has even bought jewellery for our children [her great-granddaughters].
>
> (Granddaughter of a female prawn catcher, Muslim)

However, women like *Iral Amumma,* who support themselves and their families through fisheries, are not recognised by the fisher community or the local fisheries management.

On Kinniya beach in eastern Trincomalee, around 50 women collect seaweed for sale to biscuit and jelly manufacturers outside the district. During seaweed season, they earn about 1,000 LKR per day. Most wade into the shallow water with a hand net to collect the seaweed; others source the seaweed from the men pulling beach (purse) seine nets from the beach:

> The woman that we just talked to walked to the other side of the beach seine[27], sat down on the sand and started making a pile of the seaweed that the men were taking out and dumping by the side of the net […] The woman didn't touch the seaweed till it was laid on the beach, sorted by the men.
>
> (Observational field note, 14 November 2013, Kinniya beach)

As my interactions with these women lengthened, I was left with questions such as why do these women not touch the seaweed, a waste product of beach seines, until it is placed outside the net? How do custom and tradition stand in their way? Would they be allowed 'inside the net' if the men who operate the beach seines acknowledged the women's significant contribution to the family income? These questions drove my analysis.

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[27] A beach seine is a fishing net deployed from the beach that hangs vertically in the water with its bottom edge held down by weights and its top edge buoyed by floats. A group of fishermen sets and pulls the net. The number of fishermen required varies.

3.2   Background

3.2.1   Women's roles and livelihoods in post-war Sri Lanka

An emerging body of literature discusses women's identities during and after the war in Sri Lanka. Past work has recognised that ethnicity mediates the formation and coping of households headed by women (Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004). Other studies have gone beyond ethnic categorisation, bringing in class and geographical location as important elements for gender identity (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004). Conflict affects women differently depending on their religion, caste, class, ethnicity, location, political affiliation and a variety of other overlapping factors (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2004: 149). Correspondingly, regarding women's recovery after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Perera-Mubarak (2012) has stated that the ability to cope with disasters is shaped by gender, ethnicity and location.

The discussion on women's post-war agency in Sri Lanka takes two angles. First, some work has asked whether these women took on non-traditional roles (such as household head and principal breadwinner) during conflict that they may have lost after the conflict, as has often been the case historically (Enloe, 1983; Jayawardena, 1986). Second, as argued by Rajasingham-Senanayake (2004), women's agency and the spaces they carved out for themselves may continue after the war.

These discussions on women's agency rarely consider caste, and examinations on caste in Sri Lanka generally have not focused on women; if women are considered at all, they are described as passive victims rather than active agents seeking change (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2004). However, caste may play a role in what happens to women's agency following conflict. Bremner (2013) has reported the transformation of caste following the breakdown of social ties and spatial practices caused by war and displacement in eastern Sri Lanka.

In general, little is known about women's livelihoods during the war in Sri Lanka. Korf (2004) found evidence of changing gender roles during the conflict in eastern Sri Lanka, reporting that women took on the role of marketing agriculture produce in areas controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, which challenged the state for a separate Tamil homeland and suffered a comprehensive military defeat in 2009). However, to the best of my knowledge, there are no studies examining women in fisher communities during the war. Perera-Mubarak's (2012) work on coastal women in the South is a rare contribution in the post-war period.

3.2.2   Women in fisheries

As a broad generalisation, in South Asia, fish capture at sea is dominated by men, whereas the handling, processing and marketing are done by women (Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], 1980; Gupta, 2003; Hapke, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Srinath, 1987). Similar patterns are seen on the north-western and northern Sri Lankan coasts, where female relatives of fish producers are historically responsible for the fish marketing (Bavinck, 1984; Stirrat, 1988): 'Once the fish was out of the net, it became the responsibility of the women to transport it to the market and sell it' (Stirrat, 1988: 73). However, this practice is looked down upon by middle class Sinhalese women (Stirrat, 1988).

Globally, the attention of state fisheries management is on off-shore and near-shore fishing by men (Jentoft, 2000; Weeratunge et al., 2010; Yodanis, 2000). Fisheries management is a relationship between a government and a rights holder, who is an individual and usually male (Jentoft, 2000). However, a strong body of work has explored women's contribution to the sector, worldwide (Weeratunge et al., 2010; Yodanis 2000). Jentoft (2000) has claimed that women's relatively low participation is one reason for the overwhelming focus on men. Yodanis (2000: 268), however, has argued that women's social position is affected by the fact that they are not 'fisher*men*', and the gendered socialisation process in fishing villages results in women identifying themselves as doing non-fishing work; to be a woman is not to be a fisher(man). The lack of women in fisheries management positions is another reason for the low recognition of women in the sector.

In South Asia, women's lack of involvement in fish capture is linked to the notion of 'pollution' (Gupta, 2003; Thompson, 1985). In Kerala, India, past work has reported that, in Hindu, Christian and Muslim fisher communities, women are socially stigmatised as 'impure' and 'untouchable' (Gupta, 2003). Within the Sri Lankan Tamil caste system, in contrast to the Sinhalese one, women are strongly associated with notions of ritual purity/impurity (Silva et al., 2009). However, in the present study, this idea was prevalent among all three main ethnic groups in Trincomalee.

Questions regarding evidence and data become crucial in relation to the low recognition of women in fisheries. The primary focus on men's fishing activities across the world means that women's engagement in gleaning[28] and near-shore work often goes unnoticed. Similarly, pre-and post-harvest activities carried

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[28] Collecting clams or mussels in the lagoon areas, usually using their hands.

out by women, such as net mending, providing food, fish processing and marketing, are often not enumerated or are underestimated as a source of employment (Weeratunge et al., 2010). Despite an awareness of the need to generate better gender-disaggregated data, there is still a gap, which constrains the formulation of more sustainable and efficient decisions and policies (Choo, Novak, Kusakabe and Williams, 2008; Weeratunge et al., 2010). In Sri Lanka, active fisher data for the marine fishing sector is not disaggregated by gender, leading to policies targeted exclusively at men.

3.3   Intersectionality and inequality

The interrelatedness of social divisions, in terms of the production of social relations and their impact on people's lives, has been analysed for at least two decades (Anthias and Yuval-Davies, 1992; Collins, 1998). Growing out of Black feminist work criticising the treatment of gender and race as two separate dimensions of discrimination, intersectionality refers to 'the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power' (Davis, 2008: 68). The concept has been used to highlight how certain groups are marginalised (Staunæs, 2003) and to understand how race, class, ethnicity and regional disparities intersect with gender to produce social difference (Bilge, 2010; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

Theoretically, the concept of intersectionality integrates macro and micro sociological analyses. At the macro or structural level, 'it questions the ways in which multiple systems of power are involved within the production, organisation and maintenance of inequalities' (Bilge, 2010: 60). At the micro level, it involves the interaction between social categories and sources of power and privilege, as well as how structural inequalities affect individual lives to create unique configurations (Henderson and Tickamayer, 2009). However, most of the intersectionality literature stresses macro processes (Bilge, 2010; Collins, 2000; Staunæs, 2003), and an overemphasis on structural inequalities has compromised the subjective dimensions and the understanding of individual agency and identity formation at the individual level (Staunæs, 2003: 103; Long, 2001).

A growing body of literature focuses on the impacts of intersectionality on labour or livelihood trajectories (Beneria and Roldan, 1987; Collins, 2000; Glenn, 1985; Hapke, 2010). Hapke (2001) has used the concept of social location to illustrate the role of what she calls structural contexts (i.e. geographic

region and political context) and identity traits (e.g. class, caste, religion, gender, age and family ideology) in shaping the division of labour within two fisher communities in India.

Drawing on the narratives of Sinhalese (Buddhist), Tamil (Hindu), Muslim and *Veder* women in the Trincomalee District in Sri Lanka, this article attempts to analyse how women experience structural inequalities at the intersection of ethnicity, caste and location. Given that all of the participants included in this analysis represent economically and socially marginal classes, we have chosen to focus on identity categories other than class, unlike most existing empirical work on intersectionality and labour/livelihoods.[29] The present study aimed to understand how women resist and reproduce structural inequalities using their own agency.

3.4   Methods[30]

The data were collected using participant observation and informal conversations with approximately 100 women in the lagoon, on the beach, in the market and at home. I also developed in-depth narratives of eight women (three Muslim women, two Tamil women, two Sinhalese women and one *Veder* woman) using ethnographic social network analysis tools, which required repeated visits to the women's work and home environments and informal conversations with their family members and co-workers. Additionally, I conducted a census of 32 coastal villages along the coastal brackish waters of the district (see Figure 13), profiling women engaged in gleaning, fish selling, prawn and crab catching, and other beach seine-related activities.

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[29] See, for example, Glenn, 1985; Beneria and Roldon, 1987; Zavella, 1991 and Hapke, 2001.

[30] For an overview of the overall study methods, refer to the methods section in Chapter 1. This section only discusses the data used for the present chapter.

Figure 13. Distribution of communities where women engage in gleaning, catching prawns, collecting seaweed and other beach seine activities in Trincomalee District.

According to the state Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, the women participating in this study belong to the marine fishing sector, which includes lagoons and brackish water bodies. My specific focus was on groups of women working as gleaners catching prawns and crabs by hand or using basic fishing gear in the lagoons; engaging in sea food retail marketing; and working on beach seines in the shallow seas.

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Table 2. Profile of women engaged in fisheries-related livelihoods in Trincomalee District

Name of the community	Ethnicity	Number of women	Livelihood activities
Sampaltheeve	Tamil	4	Fish retail
Thirukadaloor	Tamil and Sinhalese	3	Fish retail
Verugal	Tamil	25	Pulling beach seine nets
Vellamanal	Muslim	8	Gleaning
Karadifoul	Tamil	4	Gleaning
Periyaththumunai	Muslim	75	Gleaning
Maahaththungar	Muslim	50	Gleaning, catching prawns
Naduththeevu	Muslim	20	Gleaning, catching prawns
Soorangal	Muslim	13	Gleaning, collecting firewood
Sinnakuda	Muslim	12	Gleaning
Irakkakandy	Muslim	10	Gleaning, catching prawns
Pudawakattu	Muslim	40	Gleaning, collecting firewood,
Mathurankuda	Tamil	15	Gleaning, catching prawns, catching crabs, collecting firewood, performing wage work,
Salaipaiyaru	Tamil	50	Gleaning, sorting fish from beach seine, catching prawns
Periyakulam	Tamil	6	Catching prawns
Thuvarankadu	Tamil	10	Catching prawns
Konesapuri	Tamil	6	Catching prawns

Name of the community	Ethnicity	Number of women	Livelihood activities
Kappalthurai	Tamil and Muslim	60	Gleaning, catching prawns, catching fish, catching crabs
Muttu Nagar	Muslim	7	Gleaning, catching prawns
Meera Nagar	Muslim	14	Gleaning, catching prawns
Kokkilai	Tamil	30	Gleaning, catching prawns
Solaiyadi	Tamil	15	Gleaning, catching prawns, catching crabs, catching fish
Yaan Oya	Muslim	20	Gleaning
Thambalagama-Barathipuram	Tamil	15	Gleaning, catching crabs, catching prawns
Koviladi	Tamil	5	Gleaning, catching prawns
99th Mile Post	Muslim	20	Gleaning
Upparu	Muslim	8	Gleaning, catching prawns, collecting seaweed, collecting firewood
Jitta Nagar	Muslim	20	Gleaning, catching prawn, collecting seaweed, collecting firewood
Thaamaravillu	Muslim	10	Gleaning
Bharathipuram	Tamil	10	Gleaning
Sinnakuda	Tamil	10	Gleaning

Source: Primary data collected through a census of coastal communities in Trincomalee District

As Table 3 illustrates, most of the women engaged in gleaning were Muslims. This group also reported collecting seaweed and catching seasonal prawns in the lagoon. All of the women engaged in beach seine activities were Tamils, either of Indian origin or belonging to the indigenous (*Veder*) communities. The *Veder* women pulled the seine nets throughout the process, whereas the Indian Tamil women only helped in sorting the fish from the cod-end—the central part of the net. The fish retailers participating in this research traced their roots back to Jaffna and indicated that they are Sri Lankan Tamils. Another group of sellers encountered were of Indian origin. Except for the fish sellers, none of these women belonged to the fisher caste, and, with the exception of two fish retailers, there were no other Sinhalese Buddhist or Catholic women engaged in any of these livelihood activities.

3.5 Women's participation in fishing-related activities in coastal Trincomalee

3.5.1 Use of historical livelihood traditions: the case of Muslim coastal women

Gleaning for clams and mussels (*matti* in Tamil) is traditionally associated with lower-income Muslim women in Trincomalee. The majority of these women stand in the lagoons, collecting the clams and mussels by hand. The catch is sold locally by the women themselves or through mobile sellers. The women have developed rowing and diving skills to glean in areas of the lagoon too deep to be accessed on foot. These women also collect seaweed to sell outside the district and catch prawns and sometimes crabs for local sale when they are in season.

In gleaning, these women use skills and knowledge passed down through generations. They use their historical association with the livelihood through their maternal ancestry to continue to access this physical and social space:

> As this is our grandmother's job, [traditional job] we continue it. If we feel like it, we go to work, otherwise don't need to go. Also, we don't have any expenditure when we do this job. We are collectors and also sellers, so we get the full income.

> (Female gleaner, Muslim)

Although daily subsistence needs drive the women into the lagoons, they choose the location and pace that suits them. They exploit the flexibility provided by the informal sector and its lack of formal structure, making space for themselves in a sector where space is traditionally denied to most women.

They are, more or less, in control of their decision to take on work, although the need to meet daily subsistence needs is pivotal in this decision.

These women have also capitalised on market demand for clams and mussels, which comes primarily from Muslim communities in and around Trincomalee town. The clam and mussel retailers—Muslim women and men—have clearly established a space for themselves in marketing these products. As a result, production and marketing activities related to gleaning have become strongly centred on Muslims in Trincomalee, especially women, with a sizable group of Tamil women also engaging in the production only.

Still, the sense of social stigma and marginalisation attached to gleaning in lagoons and marshy areas suggests class associations at play in wider Muslim society:

> People look down upon those who are doing the *matti* [clam and mussels] collection, as they collect the *matti* in the mud area. Others say that there will be a mud smell coming from the *matti* collectors. As we are the poorest people; rich people don't respect us.

> (Female gleaner, Muslim)

While these women take a sense of pride in continuing their traditional livelihood, those who feel they have achieved a higher socioeconomic status prefer to stop getting into the lagoon. In one Muslim community close to Kinniya traditionally associated with gleaning, labour migration to Persian Gulf countries has become common among women. Upon their return, these women tend not to glean in the lagoon. Sulehaumma, one such woman, had managed a certain level of social mobility after meeting her second partner while she was working in Oman. Through his benevolence, she was supporting an extended family of six sisters who were also gleaners:

> My husband sends me money to help my people here. I explained to him about the people here who survive by *matti* collection, that they are very poor, so he sends me money to help others. When we die, we are not going to take anything with us. He bought me this land, and I have built this basic house. I am going to build another two-storey house nearby to stay with him when he comes here.

> (Female gleaner, Muslim)

Mobility and employment opportunities for Tamil women are markedly different from those for Muslim women (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004: 540), and Sinhalese women generally have greater freedom of

movement and engagement in the public sphere, compared with Muslim women (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004). Muslim women tend to work (for pay or not) within the family home. However, McGilvray (1998) has claimed that poor Muslim women perform weeding or threshing in the paddy fields, bringing home either cash or in-kind payments. The findings from the present study are consistent with McGilvray's analysis, showing that those with lower socioeconomic status engage in livelihood activities outside the home.

3.5.2   Inclusion based on caste-mediated kinship patterns: the case of Tamil women

This section focuses on Tamil women's fish marketing activities by Tamil women. About three months into my field work, I stumbled upon a small retail market at the edge of the traditional fishing community of Periyappadu[31]. This market is at the end of a road dividing agricultural-*Vellala* and fisher-*Karaiyar* communities. Repeated attempts to understand women's role in the fishing activities in Periyappadu yielded little information about direct involvement (e.g. 'Women help with keeping accounts at home'), until, one day, a fish dealer from the community casually mentioned that a few women from the community sell fish at a retail market at the *edge* of the village. Periyappadu also has a medium-scale wholesale fish market, but the norm is that only men trade in that market. I learned that three of the four women selling fish at the small retail market are from the fisher community, and the other is from the agricultural community. Both of these communities share historical roots linked to the Northern Province, as well as a complex war history. The fisher community claims to be '*sudda thamil*' (pure Tamil), tracing their roots back to Valvettithurai in the Northern Province. Valvettithurai is the birthplace of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader who belonged to the *Karaiyar* caste.

In subsequent visits to the market, I met Rani, a woman in her thirties from the fishing community, who was caring for her 12-year-old daughter alone. Rani had started selling fish only six months earlier, whereas the other two women from the fisher community had been selling fish for over 10 years. Like the Muslim gleaners, Rani's story illustrates how poorer women make a living through fisheries-related activities. For Rani, selling fish is much more than just a livelihood:

> That is Raaki's cooler [ice truck] on the beach. It's my brother who drives it… If I go that way, they will ask me if I want fish to cook. Even if I don't have anything to cook, I will say

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[31] Names of villages have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

no. Why should I ask anything from anyone? I want to live with dignity. Even if I am poor, I want to live with dignity.

(Female fish seller, Tamil)

The ability to support herself and her family through her income gave Rani the space to decline support from others, if she wished to do so. This choice to decline support contributed to her self-esteem and self-image, following separation from her husband and then her partner, the war and related displacements, the tsunami and having sole responsibility for her daughter. Her siblings lived close by, but she was not on very good terms with them. Her support system consisted of relatives outside her extended family, fellow traders at the market and others related to her business, such as customers, to whom she turned for financial and emotional support.

The fish supply to the four retail sellers at this market was based on community/kinship networks; the suppliers were male relatives and friends who brought small amounts of fish for the women to sell at the market. The buyers were all consumers from the agriculture community. The women received a commission of 10 LKR per 100 LKR of their fish sales. The suppliers sometimes left the fish with the women to sell, so a certain amount of trust was required between the suppliers and the women. Table 4 illustrates the market transactions on a typical day in this market. The general trend in terms of suppliers was that Vani attracts the highest number of suppliers while Rani attracts the lowest.

Table 3. Number of suppliers and buyers by dealer/seller, 9:30–11:00 a.m. on 6 February 2014

	Rani	Padma	Vani	Selvi
Suppliers	8	7	2	4
Buyers/consumers	23	25	9	16

Source: Primary data

Vani, the retailer from the agriculture community and caste, had begun selling fish at this market only one year before the start of the research. She started selling fish because she did not have anyone to support her, and she was living in a small room adjacent to the market building. Generally, Vani had few suppliers. She explained this:

People from Periyappadu don't give me that much fish. They give the fish to those from Periyappadu. The reason for this is because they are from one caste and I am from another caste. It's their people who bring the fish and they give the fish to their people.

(Female fish seller, Tamil)

From Vani's point of view, her fish supply was determined by the mismatch between the suppliers' caste affiliation and her caste identity. Vani's exclusion was even more marked during the lean fish season, when whatever was available would go to the three Periyappadu women. Irrespective of ethnicity or caste, women are left out of the wholesale fish markets. However, structural inequality further manifests through the caste axis, affecting women's opportunity to obtain a steady supply of fish to be sold at the retail market.

3.5.3   Inequalities resisted and reproduced: the case of the *Veder* women

At the southern border of Trincomalee District, I met a group of around 25 *Veder* women working on beach seines. My search for instances of women pulling beach seine nets in other parts of the country turned up no such cases. Consequently, I followed these women closely. In the general context of coastal Trincomalee, where most people consider a woman's touch on a boat to bring misfortune, I was keenly interested in how the *Veder* women worked alongside the men. These women dragged in the beach seine net, side-by-side with men. Men always set the net using a canoe. One woman mended the net just as men usually did.

The uniqueness of this group of women is their involvement from the point the net is set until the catch is landed ashore, working side-by-side with men, a phenomenon unreported elsewhere in Sri Lanka. Women commonly help to pull in only the last part of the beach seine (cod-end or *madiya*) in parts of Trincomalee and on the north-western coast of Sri Lanka. However, there is no documented or anecdotal evidence of women pulling in the complete beach seine, as these *Veder* women do, anywhere else in the country. They also engage in forest-based livelihoods, such as cutting rattan, collecting wild fruits, fishing in ponds and cultivating *chena*[32] and paddy.

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[32] *Chena* cultivation is also known as shifting cultivation, and it involves the clearing of either primeval or second growth of jungle land every year for the cultivation of dry-land products, such as grains or certain types of vegetables, for consumption and commercial purposes.

Dart (1990) has argued that coastal *Veder* people can be primarily defined by their marginality, in terms of both socioeconomic conditions and geographic location. *Veder* people consider themselves a separate caste group (a perception shared by those outside the community), but their position within the Hindu Tamil or Sinhalese caste systems is blurred (Dart, 1990). This contributes to their marginality. Nevertheless, their distinctive cultural practices and 'marginality' have provided them with certain opportunities.

Beach seines are governed by rules and regulations in Gazette 337/48 of 21 February 1985, which specifies the type of craft to be used, as well as the usage of the beach and the adjacent sea area. Beach seine licenses must be renewed annually, and the craft used to set the net must be licensed. However, the beach seines that employ women are not licensed. The owners have acquired 'permission' from the Divisional Secretariat and the local fishing authorities to operate the beach seine, on the condition that that they refrain from using motorised boats to set the net. In a sense, the beach seines where these *Veder* (indigenous) women work are marginal to Trincomalee's fisheries sector.

Further, these women are outside the caste hierarchies prevalent in the area. They denied having any caste affiliation, referring to themselves first as '*Veder*', then Tamil. Not identifying themselves as primarily Tamil/Hindu and being outside the caste systems mean that these indigenous people do not adhere to the notions of 'pollution' associated with women. In fact, they seemed completely oblivious of it:

> *Interviewer*: In some places, people say that women touching the net is not good. Is there anything like that here?
>
> *Respondent*: There isn't any problem like that here, because all of us are related.
>
> (Female beach seine worker, *Veder*)

As intimated above, one of the *Veder* women's main strategies for accessing livelihoods is the use of kinship networks. The relative isolation and distinct culture of this indigenous community have led to close or loose kinship patterns. Ponnachchi, a female worker around whom Figure 14 is based, is a typical middle-aged woman; her position among her co-workers in the beach seine clearly illustrates the link between her livelihood and kinship patterns. As Figure 14 illustrates, all six women are related to each other and to the men working in the beach seine.

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Figure 14. Kinship network mapping of a female worker (Ponnachchi) in her beach seine
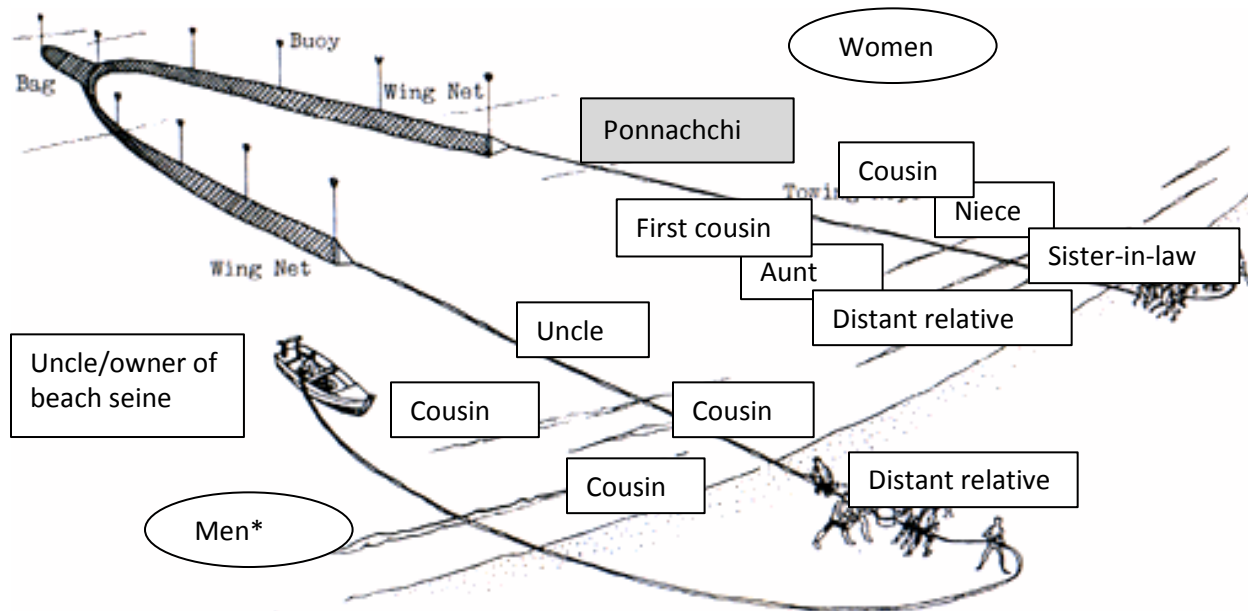
*The women are all on one side, because the men are usually in the boat setting the net before they start pulling it in. The women hold onto the ropes on the right side of the net, the end that is set first, and leave the left side for the men to pull. We also witnessed women pulling the net together with men on occasions when there was a smaller number of women to pull in the net.

However, women face certain costs in being part of this kinship network. To ensure inclusion in the beach seine activities, women take on expected gendered roles. The overlap of their kinship and occupation networks means that the gendered roles associated with the private/family sphere are taken into the public/work sphere. It is always the women who cook at the beach seine *waadi* (hut), fetch water and collect firewood. It is always the men who row the canoe. If no men are present, the beach seine does not operate. The women expressed fear of getting into the canoes, and all of them denied ever having been in a canoe.

The *Veder* women, despite transcending certain boundaries, were still acutely conscious of the gendered expectations of their male kin and sought to avoid the retribution resulting from failing to meet these expectations. The following discussion took place on a day when the beach seine net was not set because of the temporary labour migration of the men. Adjacent to their beach seine *waadi* was a beach seine operated by a group of Sinhalese migrant fishers from the north-western coast. When asked whether they would consider working there, the *Veder* women responded as follows:

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As we are women, while we work in this [*Veder* beach seine] *waadi*, if we go to that [Sinhalese migrant beach seine] *waadi*, what will this *waadi* people [*Veder* kin] say […]

(Female beach seine worker, *Veder*)

They were also bound by their responsibilities in the care economy, which sometimes included obligations to extended family. As one woman explained, they cannot travel far outside the community, for example to Kuchchaveli to work in the Tamil-owned beach seines that allow women to sort fish from the net, because that would mean going too far from the family.

Structural inequalities continued to be reproduced in this setting. Payments were made on a share-based system, with the women working in the beach seines being paid less than the men. If the men were paid 1,300 LKR, the women received 1,000 LKR. Research participants justified this difference based on the different levels of skill and physical labour required.

However, the *Veder* women drew upon their historic livelihoods used as a strategy to ensure income generation without jeopardising their community/kinship allegiances. When the beach seine net was not set, rather than working on the neighbouring beach seine, they sought alternative work close by, such as fishing, agriculture work or forest-based work.

3.5.4 Exclusion based on norms, location and lack of traditional livelihood history: the case of Sinhalese coastal women

Research from the early 1980s has reported Sinhalese women engaged in beach seine activities in the northwest of Sri Lanka (FAO, 1980). Sinhalese women also owned beach seine shares in certain southern coastal areas, although the Sinhalese *Karawa* caste women seldom actively engaged in fishing activities, instead handing over de facto ownership to a male relative (Alexander, 1977). However, the present study's analysis of coastal women in eastern Trincomalee has revealed a complete lack of involvement by Sinhalese women in fisheries-related activities in the past and at present. Given that the permanent settlement of Sinhalese people in coastal Trincomalee can be traced back only one generation, the term 'past' means a maximum of about 50 years.

Sinhalese women and men in Trincomalee looked down on women (both Sinhalese and of other ethnicities) who go to the *wella* (beach) on the northwest coast. Sinhalese men in Trincomalee felt the need to guard women's virtue, which is tied to men's individual standing and the family reputation. This

sentiment resulted in the need to control women's dealings with men engaged in fishing. Consequently, the division of labour in most of the studied Sinhalese fisher households was one where the men were fully responsible for all of the fishing-related work and the women took care of the household. This yielded a case of clear separation between the private and public spheres. The sentiments expressed in the following extract were echoed by many Sinhalese men met during the research:

> In Negombo, there are women who are involved in fishing. But not here. My wife doesn't even know what colour my boat is. We finish settling the money here and go home. I don't leave any dealings with the men to her. I keep some money for my own expenses and give her all the money. She manages all the household expenses. I manage this business.

> (Male fisher, Sinhalese)

Sinhalese coastal women's lack of access to fisher livelihoods was marked by social norms influenced by historical and demographic factors. Because of the relatively short history of Sinhalese permanent settlers in coastal Trincomalee, along with the fact that they are not the clear majority in an ethnically heterogeneous context, Sinhalese women in the area do not have historical cultural norms upon which they can draw. Coupled with the security threats faced during the war, a need to guard women against 'enemy invasion' may have contributed to the practice of maintaining distinct private and public spheres.

Some authors have argued that, although women are systematically more marginalised than men, irrespective of ethnicity, in certain instances Sinhalese women are better off in terms of mobility and less prone to displacement, compared with working class men from minority groups (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004). However, my analysis indicates that the case of Sinhalese women in coastal Trincomalee is different. The lack of a deep cultural history in Trincomalee influences the involvement of Sinhalese women in fishing-related activities. The 'guardianship' of Sinhalese women has a strong resonance with work on ethno-nationalist discourses by feminist scholars, who describe women as the bearers of tradition or cultural representatives (Chatterjee, 1989; Jayawardena and de Alwis, 1996).

3.6   Cultural melting pot and shared inequalities

Although the caste system and the Hindu notion of 'impurity' are not part of her religious traditions, a young Muslim woman succinctly summarised her lack of motivation to get involved in the fisheries sector:

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Interviewer: Have you been to sea by boat?

Respondent: People will not take the girls in the beach seine *vallam* [boat]. They don't allow the women to touch the boat even. They say that there won't be a fish catch. They say it will bring '*tharthiriyam*' [misfortune]. Small girls are allowed to touch the boats but not young and married women. Once my elder brother scolded me when I touched the boat and after that I don't touch the boat.

(Daughter of female gleaner, Muslim)

Women are not only considered impure; they are associated with misfortune. Because fishing is an activity highly dependent on chance, social norms and beliefs about fortune play a critical role. Although other people did not express this opinion so overtly, their undertones suggested a similar line of thinking. The exception was the indigenous women, who were part of a community does not consider women impure or linked to misfortune.

In sum, although structural inequalities are manifested at the intersection of gender, location, caste and ethnicity, certain inequalities cut across these categories in Trincomalee, aided by the cultural diffusion resulting from generations of co-existence. Therefore, while women experience varying degrees and types of inequalities at the intersection of multiple identity categories, in certain instances, the sharing of cultural norms has meant that, irrespective of other identity categories, inequalities based on their gender become the decisive factor in accessing livelihood resources and opportunities.

3.7   Fisheries-related institutions and coastal women's experiences of inequality

In Sri Lanka, the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) is responsible for fisheries management at the district level and for collating data. The latest data on inland fisheries are presented with disaggregation by gender. However, marine sector-related data are shown with a single category for 'active fishermen and women'. Additionally, pre- and post-harvest activities are not considered part of the fisheries sector by the state management bodies. A possible explanation for the lack of disaggregation in the presentation of active marine fisher data in Sri Lanka is the relatively low number of women engaged in these activities, compared with men. The difficulty in categorising these women as fishers also relates to the fact that they engage in multiple livelihoods (gleaning and catching prawns, crabs and fish in the lagoons) as a strategy to weather seasonality shocks. This makes it difficult to capture them within an

institutional definition of fish producers, which results in women being left out of the official statistics and typologies.

Moreover, neither the community nor the women themselves acknowledge women's role in catching fish. Most of the women studied identified themselves as gleaners or collectors, and none of the women identified themselves explicitly as *fisherwomen*. Largely, these women lack representation at decision-making levels. For example, women from a few coastal communities mentioned that they were members of the fisheries societies, but they lacked the identity cards issued to male members.

The military is another institution playing an important role in fishing in coastal Trincomalee. The Navy continues to regulate illegal fishing and maintains military outposts in coastal and lagoon locations deemed important for strategic security. The findings from the present study revealed that Muslim, Tamil and Sinhalese fishermen negotiate for space to fish in certain areas by providing Navy representatives with a proportion of the catch. Both Muslim and Tamil women expressed the need to negotiate with the military to access certain forest areas and lagoons. Especially the Muslims participating in this study reported feeling apprehensive about engaging in their livelihoods with the military nearby:

> Since last Friday we haven't gone to the forest for any purpose, because the Navy has come to the forest. We don't know the reason why they are there. We are scared to go now. They are bad people, and women can't trust them.

> (Female gleaner, Muslim)

The lack of official recognition of women as part of the fisheries sector presents a disadvantage in their negotiations with the military and police. After a young man drowned in the adjacent seas, the Navy banned a group of about nine Muslim women who collected clams in the shallow seas off Trincomalee from using their *vallam* (non-mechanised craft) for gleaning. Women, who are not part of a fisheries society, must negotiate with the Navy at the naval base, speaking Sinhalese, which is not their first language. They negotiate as a group and through their male kin, but their lack of institutional recognition/representation deepens the power imbalance in these negotiations. A group of Tamil gleaning women close to Thambalaguwa explained how they were arrested by the police for damaging of the mangroves, which they felt could have been prevented if they had an identification document that stated they were engaging in fisheries-related activities. Being recognised as part of a community-level, state-

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recognised body such as a fisheries society would have provided these women with the social and political capital to negotiate with the Navy and police.

The lack of gender-disaggregated data makes women invisible to state fisheries management institutions, excludes them from receiving state assistance and leads to inefficient fisheries management. The state-sponsored revolving micro-credit programmes that target women in fishing communities, for example, target the wives of active fishermen registered with the fisheries societies and with the DFAR , excluding women who engage in gleaning or post-harvest activities. Further, awareness programmes on coastal conservation will not include the gleaning women, although they are important actors in the lagoons in Trincomalee.

3.8   Conclusions

The coastal women in Trincomalee present a bricolage of stories of agency, power and negotiation related to experiencing, resisting and reproducing structural inequalities. Their experiences are cyclic, constantly shifting over time and space. Historic factors, such as population movements and war, have shaped the current realities and positions of women. Although a clear case can be made for the disadvantage of certain groups of women at the intersection of ethnicity, caste and livelihood location, the sharing of cultural norms about gender across ethnic lines means that the inequalities facing women may overshadow other identities.

Certain historical associations linked to ethnicity exclude women from participation in fishing livelihoods. However, there are counterexamples: Norms and tradition enable poor Muslim women to continue gleaning, precisely because they have done so for generations. Women are not merely passive recipients of inequalities. Rather, they exercise their own agency. While certain groups of women are at times disadvantaged at the intersection of ethnicity, location and caste, these same categories can provide them with more or less agency.

Kinship networks clearly enable women's negotiations with the military, as in the case of the Muslim gleaners, and with social norms, as in the case of the *Veder* women. At times, certain groups, such as the *Veder* women, drew power from their very marginality in the established caste systems to transcend gendered labour boundaries. In other instances, Muslim women negotiated for their space in the lagoon by forming groups or by negotiating through their male kin.

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Despite end of the war, the military remains a part of the institutional landscape of coastal Trincomalee. The continued military presence and the need to interact with military authorities to access livelihood resources marks a continuing war trajectory. This context conditions power asymmetries, which women use different strategies to navigate. In designing reconstruction initiatives, decision makers would do well to acknowledge these asymmetries and the lingering effects of the war.

Women engaged in fishing in Trincomalee District employ a diverse livelihood portfolio to manage their daily subsistence and longer-term financial stability. However, the very multiplicity of their livelihood portfolio and their unremunerated contribution to pre- and post-harvest activities begs the question of what is recognised as 'livelihood' or 'employment' by policy and decision makers. The nature of women's engagement in fisheries activities in Trincomalee generally does not require registration of fishing equipment or craft. Therefore, women have no contractual agreements with state fisheries management mechanisms and are invisible to the state authorities. This means that they are not part of the various livelihood support programmes that target coastal women, nor are they part of the fisheries conservations programmes. Moreover, these women lack evidence of membership in community fisheries societies. Especially given that these women are from the lower socioeconomic classes, their lack of state or other institutional recognition renders them even more vulnerable to losing their access to livelihood resources. Registering women engaged in coastal livelihoods would provide them with a first measure of recognition and representation and open up a more even playing field in negotiating access to livelihood resources.

Chapter Four: Multiple Masculinities and Hegemonising: The Story of Wholesale Fish Marketing and Traders in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

This chapter is a minor revision[33] of a paper currently being prepared for submission to the journal *Human Organization*. The paper is co-authored by Dorothea Hilhorst.

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[33] The sections on study context and general methods have been removed from this thesis chapter to avoid repetition. Refer to Sections 1.1 for study context and 1.4 for methods and data in Chapter 1.

4.1 Introduction

> Earlier [in the old wholesale fish market], there were Tamil and Muslim people [traders] in the main market. There were three women from Pattanombar who did the fish business. I remember there was a woman called Pakiyakka—she might be dead by now. There were 12 stalls for Tamils and three stalls for Muslims. After the war, they left from there. During the war, when Tamils or Muslims went to the market, the Sinhalese would cut them up. Because of that, we were scared to go there. Now all of them are Sinhalese; they don't allow Tamil people to do the business there.

The wholesale fish market in Trincomalee is located in the centre of Trincomalee town, on the east coast of Sri Lanka. Trincomalee is a district that was directly affected by the three-decade-long civil war, which ended in 2009. The above excerpt is from a Muslim fishermen describing a time when the threat of violence at the everyday level in Sri Lanka was very real, especially for those who lived in the North or East, where the war had a direct effect. In such a context, change has taken place in the Trincomalee wholesale fish market in terms of the market structure and governance, as well as the number and kinds of people inside the market. With the construction of a new market building in 2012, the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC) of the central government took over the market's management, side-lining the local authority, which is held by a Tamil political party, the Tamil National Alliance. The old market housed both wholesale and retail fish sellers, but the new market is an exclusively wholesale market. Through this process of change, a marketplace that was multi-ethnic and mixed gender has become controlled by Sinhalese Buddhist men. However, there are signs of the foundation of this ethnic dominance disintegrating.

This chapter focuses on the wholesale fish traders (*mudalali*) in this market. At first glance, it seems that the Sinhalese Buddhist male dealers have created a hegemonic position for themselves in the market, aided by the central state. Hegemonic masculinity means the domination of one group of men over women as well as other groups of men. However, a deeper analysis of the case of Trincomalee wholesale market and its wholesale traders suggests a nuanced complexity to this hegemony. On the one hand, the traders in the market embody multiple masculinities. By creating and using room for manoeuvre (Hilhorst, 2003) to renegotiate these different masculinities in relation to the dominant masculinity at the market, the traders reveal the dynamic nature of hegemony. However, on the other hand, the traders subscribe to, embody and maintain the dominant ethnicised masculinity narrative for political and economic motivations, ascribing power to the hegemonic identity dominant at the market and also drawing power from this hegemony.

This chapter aims to provide a nuanced analysis of what we call the hegemonising process of the wholesale fish market in Trincomalee. The chapter includes a historical analysis of the mechanisms that led to the consolidation of Sinhalese Buddhist male power, the forces that came together to create it and how this hegemony is constantly renegotiated at the everyday level. By focusing on the gendered power relations of men—the wholesale traders—this chapter adds nuance to the ethnicised discourse on war and livelihoods in Sri Lanka and globally. Further, the chapter also brings a masculinities framework to the study of contemporary maritime anthropology.

Why study a fish market in Trincomalee? Trincomalee wholesale fish market is at the heart of Trincomalee town and Trincomalee district, which have strategic military and political importance. Trincomalee district divides the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka, the two areas that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fought for as their homeland. Therefore, it was of strategic political importance for the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) to strengthen the military as well as a supportive civilian base in Trincomalee. Further, Trincomalee is one of the few districts in Sri Lanka where the country's three main ethnic groups are represented relatively equally.

To shift to a more theoretical line, in times of war, a rather militarised form of masculinity is created, which deeply marginalises not only women, but also certain groups of men (Bouta et al., 2005: 148). However, in global literature, the representation of men in war and politics is not as explicit as that of women (Dudink et al., 2004). Likewise, in Sri Lanka, a growing body of literature explores the interlinkages between feminism, gender, war and nationalism (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2007; Marecek, 2000), but this body of work lacks an explicit focus on men. For example, focusing on the everyday experiences of women, Hyndman and de Alwis (2007) argue that a feminist approach is crucial for understanding gender identities and relations in contexts of conflict, which are shaped by competing and militarised ethno-nationalist discourses. The few studies in Sri Lanka that do focus on men and masculinities primarily concentrate on different forms of violence (armed violence, domestic violence, the link between violence and alcoholism, militarisation, and torture) (Bremner, 2004; de Alwis, 2016; de Mel, 2008; de Silva, 2005; Gamburd, 2004; Jeganathan, 2000) or sexualities (Miller, 2011; Nichols, 2010). As a result, there has been no attention devoted to how seemingly hegemonic masculine discourses have been lived and socially negotiated by men in non-violent spaces.

Positioned at the local level of everyday wholesale fish selling, this study introduces multiple masculine discourses that are all found to play a role in wholesale fish selling. These comprise the discourses of enterprising masculinities and nationalist masculinities. Through a focus on wholesale fish traders, the chapter aims to understand a) the historical and contextual nature of the political and economic hegemonising process of the wholesale fish market; b) how, within this hegemonising process, the dealers embody and negotiate between the overlapping ethno-nationalist and enterprising masculinities; and c) how these diverse masculinities ultimately may contribute to the collapse of the hegemonising project. Situated within the economically dynamic and politically charged Trincomalee, this chapter emphasises that market transactions are embedded in socio-political processes, not only at the local level, but also at the national level. Further, understanding the constantly negotiated power dynamics and mechanisms that enable hegemonising projects will underscore the messy reality with which post-war political, social and economic rebuilding processes are required to engage. The chapter draws on 13 months of ethnographic field work conducted in coastal Trincomalee.

4.2   Theoretical thinking

4.2.1   Masculinities and hegemony

Hegemonic masculinity is defined as both the institutionalisation of men's dominance over women and the social ascendancy of one group of men over other men (Connell, 1995). In practice, hegemonic masculinity translates into a context- and time-specific 'winning style' among a variety of ways of being masculine (Wetherell, 1999: 336). Within the growing body of global literature studying masculinities, we draw from the several premises in our analysis. There are multiple and competing masculinities within the same setting. Certain forms of masculinities are associated with more social power than others in a given context, and, therefore, there are subordinate and marginalised masculinities. This describes systems of power incorporating sets of practices that are both individually embodied and institutionally embedded (Kimmel, 2002: ix–x). However, power relations between different masculinities change over time; they are time- and context-specific. Further, masculinities and hegemonic masculinities are shaped by cross-cutting axes of class, race and age (Cuvelier 2014). We draw on two sub-fields within masculinities studies to understand the multiple and negotiated nature of the masculine performance of the wholesale traders in the market: These are the fields of nationalist masculinities and entrepreneurial masculinities.

4.2.2   Masculinity, nationalism and conflict

Nagel (1998: 243), referring to Connell (1995), claims that nationalism, state, democracy and political violence are perhaps 'best understood as masculine projects, involving masculine institutions, masculine processes and masculine activities'. Further, nationalism is built on exclusivity, internal homogeneity, and a shared belief of a common past and a shared future (Enloe, 2014), and men are called upon to take up arms and protect these borders, as well as women, while women are tasked with reproducing the nation biologically and symbolically (Byrne, 1996; Mayer, 2000: 16).

'When any nationalist movement becomes militarised […] male privilege in the community is likely to become even more entrenched' (Enloe, 2014: 112). Militarised environments usually provide men with 'new opportunities to prove their manhood' (Enloe, 2014: 113). However, the form of masculinity demanded during war is deliberately constructed at the state level as an aggressive form of masculinity that is linked to misogyny. This sense of misogyny is characterised by both homophobia and racism; women, homosexuals and men belonging to minority groups are not tolerated (Byrne, 1996: 34). This constricted definition of masculinity as necessarily aggressive constrains the space available for non-aggressive forms of masculinities, such as those of older men, and may lead those who do not conform to this model of masculinity to lose their power and authority (Byrne, 1996). Therefore, it is not only women and men of minority groups who are marginalised and made to lose power and authority; it is also those who subscribe to other, non-aggressive forms of masculinities.

Globally, gender and nationalism discussions generally focus on women and their changing roles, to the exclusion of an explicit focus on men. The literature on Sri Lanka seems to follow this trend, resulting in a gap in the understanding of the men's experiences and the changes in their roles in relation to nationalism. For example, Nagel (1998) claims that the feminist critique of nationalism and national politics has tended to conflate gender with women and to focus almost exclusively on documenting women's exclusion from these processes by documenting women's contributions (or lack of contributions) to nationalist projects. The discourse on the construction of gendered national identities in Sri Lanka follows a similar path, with a strong focus on the positions and roles of women in state-building and nationalising projects. Women of the three main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are framed as 'reproducers, nurturers and disseminators of "tradition", "culture", "community" and "nation"' (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2007: 541). At the intersection of war, violence and gender, women are seen as victims,

survivors and 'heroes'—for example, for taking on responsibilities outside the private sphere and providing for the family during times of emergency (Korf, 2004)—as well as perpetrators, especially in discussions on female LTTE cadres (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2007).

The question of how the nationalist discourse has marginalised non-hegemonic forms of masculinity—both marginalising men who fall outside of the dominant image and invisibilising patterns of behaviour that do not correspond with this image, such as practices of caretaking and breadwinning—has not been addressed. As a result, the existing literature seems to recognise the diversity in women's roles while entrenching men in a single masculinity. As Marecek (2000: 140) has stated, 'It remains for future researchers to probe representations of manhood and masculinity […] in Sri Lankan discourses on national identity'.

Given the protracted war and experience of violence, the few Sri Lankan studies that focus on masculinities have a strong emphasis on violence in general, war militarism, violence against women or sexuality (Bremner, 2004; de Alwis, 2016; de Mel et al., 2013; de Silva, 2005; Gunawardana, 2010; Jeganathan, 1998). Some of these studies analyse the role of the state and structural forces in 'militarising their masculinities', specifically through their focus on urban, lower-class Sinhalese Buddhist men (Bremner, 2004), ex-LTTE cadre or para-military Tamil youth (de Silva, 2009) or rural Sinhalese youth (de Silva, 2005). Jeganathan (2000: 51) has framed 'fearlessness', which is closely associated with violence, as 'an important practice of Sinhala masculinity'. Further, in a quantitative study, de Mel et al. (2013) found that a majority of men 'related manhood to dominance and violence' with regard to their wives in the private sphere, as well as in the public sphere outside the home. However, a theoretically supported empirical analysis of different context-specific masculine configurations in the non-violent sphere Sri Lanka is lacking. A rare contribution to the literature on such a non-violent sphere is Näre's (2010) study on Sri Lankan men working as care workers in Italy. This study analysed how these care workers' masculinities are constructed in relation to their race and ethnicity.

4.2.3   Entrepreneurial masculinity

Ahl (2004), in an extensive literature review on entrepreneurship from a feminist point of view, concluded that, although research on entrepreneurship generally seems to be gender-neutral, entrepreneurship is a highly male-gendered activity. Recent work, including studies focusing on women and entrepreneurship, has inadvertently contributed to the 'othering' of the non-male by making

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masculinity invisible (Bruni et al., 2004). Schumpeter (1934/1983) claimed that an entrepreneur is motivated by three factors: 'the will to found a private kingdom'; 'the impulse to fight, to prove oneself superior to others'; and 'the joy of creating […] seeks out difficulties, changes in order to change and delights in ventures'. An entrepreneur is also seen as a 'heroic figure' who carries out functions that are necessary for the economic development of society (Ahl, 2004: 44). Although Schumpeter's work has subsequently been criticised for its focus on traits rather than on how entrepreneurs differ from each other or how they work, most of Schumpeter's original characteristics of an entrepreneur still seem to hold strong in the literature (see Ahl, 2004; Bruni et al., 2004). 'Hegemonic masculinity is also embodied in the figure of the entrepreneur' (Connell, 1995, cited in Bruni et al., 2004: 408).

Similar to the trends in the global literature studying entrepreneurs, work on Sri Lanka appears to treat entrepreneurs and, more specifically, traders, in a gender-neutral manner. However, this body of work focuses almost exclusively on men, although this has not been documented under the theoretical discipline of masculinities studies. Weeratunga (2010) and Southwold-Llewellyn (1994) have studied entrepreneurs and traders, the morality and ethics of trade and traders, and the myth of traders as outsiders to particular communities and to the moral economy of these communities. A recent ethnography on the Dambulla wholesale vegetable market (Heslop, 2015) studied the making of the merchant middle class, as well as identity and belonging among merchants. More specific to the fisheries sector, two ethnographies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s in the South and North-west areas describe fish marketing and the *mudalali*. (Alexander, 1982; Stirrat, 1988). The threat and use of violence by the *mudalali*, combined with allegations of exploitative buying practices, are central to both of these studies—a theme that I will come back to later in this chapter.

4.2.4 Maritime masculinities

An English-language search for academic publications on 'masculinities and fisheries' or 'maritime masculinities' yields very little, with the implicit understanding that the domain of fisheries is intensely masculine. A handful of studies on Newfoundland and the Philippines document different formations of masculine identities in relation to concepts and practices such as illegal fishing, mobilities, risk behaviour and modernity (Power, 2007, 2008; Turgo, 2014). These studies frame fish harvesters as liking 'being their own boss', working outdoors and independently (Power, 2008: 575). The same body of work presents the fisheries sector as framed by patriarchal structures such as patrilineal inheritance patterns and

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patriarchal state policies (Neis, 1993; Neis and Williams, 1997, cited in Power, 2007). For example, in Newfoundland, state policies promote career advancement for male entrepreneurs, who are not burdened by reproductive and care labour (Power, 2008). From a South Asian perspective, Kalpana Ram (1991) in her work with the coastal Mukkuvar women in the Southern tip of India, identified 'independence, individualism, bravery and resourcefulness' as masculine ideologies. These studies share a focus on the hegemony of men over women; they do not address the hegemonies that subordinate or marginalise 'other' masculinities.

In terms of ethnicity and gender, we intend to treat dominance as a result of hegemonising processes. Men shape these processes by embodying and enacting discursively constructed narratives of hegemony. They also resist these hegemonies and negotiate; hegemonising and dehegemonising simultaneously occur. Women also play a central role in shaping masculinities—as mothers, girlfriends and daughters in men's lives (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). We focus on understanding the forms of structural violence that have marginalised women and minority ethnic groups in the state-sponsored hegemonising project of the wholesale market. Further, through the concepts of nationalism and masculinities and of enterprising masculinities, we study the different subject constructions of the wholesale dealers within the narrative of the hegemonising process, also exploring how these different subject constructions co-exist or come into opposition with each other. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to the sparse discussions on maritime masculinities and masculinities studies in Sri Lanka, focusing especially on the sphere of work.

4.3   Background

At present, fish trading in Trincomalee is organised in three main levels: a) large-scale wholesale trade, with a fish supply from more than 200 fishing vessels/crafts and with more than 150 wholesale and retail buyers; b) smaller-scale wholesale trade, with a 30–100 craft and beach seine fish supply and 30–150 retail buyers; and c) retail sale at the main retail market, smaller markets and selling points at crossroads (*Handiya* in Sinhalese and *Sandi* in Tamil). In total, there are five markets engaged in wholesale fish selling in Trincomalee. The wholesale market located in the town centre falls into the first category (large-scale wholesale trade). There were about 40 wholesale dealers operating in this market at the time of data collection in 2012–2013. All of these dealers were Sinhalese men who were originally from the Southern Province of the country. These men were primarily Buddhists of non-fisher castes. The suppliers and the buyers in this market were of all three of the main ethnicities. Three marketplaces fall into the

second category (smaller-scale wholesale trade): two frequented by predominantly Muslim suppliers and buyers (Muttur and Kinniya) and one frequented by predominantly Tamil suppliers and buyers (Keeri). A fifth market is the smallest in Trincomalee and is used by both Muslim and Tamil retail buyers and fish suppliers. Retail sales are made mainly at the central retail market in Trincomalee town, with a few sellers also conducting business on the side of the road at the town's main crossroads.

The wholesale markets in Trincomalee differ in their scale of operations, volume of production, and governance. At present, the main wholesale market in town is managed by the CFC, under the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (MFAR) at central government level. The wholesale dealers pay rent for the stalls to the CFC. The markets in Kinniya and Muttur are managed by the local government authorities, who solicit bids annually to run the markets in exchange for a rent fee. In contrast, the market in Keeri is maintained by the Hindu temple committee of the village, which collects fees for the upkeep of the market building and the village temple from the wholesale traders, retail buyers and fishermen suppliers.

In conflict-affected Trincomalee, this chapter examines a) how, and by whom, the ethnicised and gendered hegemony at the wholesale fish market has been created and maintained; b) the different masculinities that the male dealers at the market embody; and c) how these different masculinities overlap and compete, and how the dealers embody them and negotiate their different masculinities.

4.4   Data and methods

This chapter draws primarily on data from the main wholesale fish market in Trincomalee town. The present chapter focuses on the main wholesale market in Trincomalee for several reasons. This market was one of the few public spaces in coastal Trincomalee where inter-ethnic interactions among the three main ethnic groups could be observed at length and in-depth (among the Sinhalese wholesale traders and suppliers and buyers, who were of all three ethnicities). Further, there were far more types of actors (in terms of their power positions) and a far greater number of actors associated with each role at the market, from state authorities to manual labourers who carry the fish baskets, in the main wholesale market than in the smaller markets. This led to richer and more nuanced data and analyses. Finally, the first author is of the same ethnic identity, speaks the same language and is from roughly the same location of origin as the dealers at the main wholesale market. This enabled a greater level of access to and acceptance from the dealers, in comparison with the other markets included in the broader study.

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The analysis presented in this chapter draws upon the narratives of Sinhalese Buddhist men working as dealers (*mudalali*) at the main wholesale fish market, fishermen (of all three ethnicities) who supply fish to the main wholesale market, bookkeepers for the market stalls and representatives of the CFC. We selected these groups to understand their different subjective, relative and power positions in the market, as well as how power is negotiated through daily interactions and relationships. The families of the fish dealers and the fishermen reside in Trincomalee, and both groups mentioned their wives in relation to child care duties, cooking and the performance of religious rituals (see Lokuge and Munas, forthcoming). Although including an analysis of gendered relations in the household and how the male fish dealers navigate their masculine roles in the family sphere would potentially have added another layer to this study, the results presented here are limited to the public sphere and to business and the market.

The data were collected by the first author (Lokuge, a Sinhalese Buddhist woman) and two Tamil-speaking female assistants. We worked as a team, speaking both of the local languages, depending on the context. However, the majority of the data used in this chapter were collected by the first author, because the dealers at the wholesale market spoke Sinhalese. As three women, working in a public space dominated exclusively by powerful men required a delicate balance between friendliness/openness and maintaining an appropriate 'distance' from the dealers. In retrospect, it is likely that the first author being a PhD student who shared multiple characteristics with the dealers (ethnicity, religion, province of origin and language) opened up a great deal of trust with them. The depth and quality of the narratives that the first author was able to gather at the market were directly influenced by this trust.

This chapter is also a result of the classic ethnographic case of a 'deliberate attempt to generate more data than the researcher is aware of at the time of collection' (Strathern, 2004: 5–6). The original research questions were not formed through a masculinities approach. Rather, the themes and sub-themes that relate to the masculinities framework emerged through the data and the subsequent analysis that we present here. The open-ended data collection and the open-minded approach that followed from the researchers' ethnographic sensibilities (McGranahan, 2014: 24) enabled the formulation of the analytical threads in this paper.

All of the data collected for the larger research project were coded using NVivo qualitative data analysis software, and the thematic nodes of market transactions, war, trust and identities of the dealers were used to build the arguments presented in this chapter.

4.5   Fish economy in Trincomalee through the Trincomalee town wholesale market

The biggest wholesale fish market in one of the main fish-producing districts of Sri Lanka—Trincomalee—can be found next to the central bus station, opposite the clock tower in the town centre. The third side of the market building is bordered by the open sea, and a fishing community living in houses that appear temporary, but that are actually permanent, is on the fourth side of the market. The fish that are landed on the beach behind the market by boat owners of all three ethnic groups (Muslim[34], Sinhalese and Tamil), can be sold only through dealers in the wholesale market (*mudalali*), who are all Sinhalese.

Wholesale[35] fish trading takes place on the ground floor of a new two-story market building, which was opened in mid-2012. The upper floor houses the fish traders' offices, with an attached toilet in each and the CFC offices. The ground floor comprises 56 'stalls', of which about 40 were occupied at the time of the research in 2013–2014. On average, about 800,000 LKR (around 5,256 USD) of fish is traded at the market daily. However, this figure was difficult to verify through the traders, and the CFC did not have records of the amount of fish being traded at the market.

The dealers operating inside the market were formerly organised through a Rural Fisheries Society (*Grameeya Dheevara Samithiya*). However, the society became defunct by 2014. At first glance, one would think that the stalls are not demarcated in anyway. During peak early morning business hours, there are rows and rows of all types of fish laid out on the floor, on platforms raised about six inches above the walking section of the market. However, the dealers and their workers seem to have come to some arrangement regarding the boundaries of their stalls, as there are rarely disputes over who owns certain fish. Often, the fish spills into the walking sections of the market as well. The pungent smell of fish coming from the market permeates the entire neighbourhood.

The main difference between wholesale dealing and retail dealing is the need for wholesalers to have well-established connections outside the district, specifically with Colombo and other interior areas of the country. Additionally, in wholesale dealing, payment may occur on the same day as the purchase or on

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[34] For the purpose of this chapter, I consider Muslims as an ethnic group and Islam as the religion that the Muslims practice.
[35] Although supposedly a wholesale market, fish being sold at retail prices and quantities was a quite common and controversial issue, as explained in later sections of this chapter.

the following day, and this necessitates a sound financial base and the ability to keep the cash flow going. Wholesale dealing is also usually based on pre-agreed orders for fish, necessitating a steady and reliable supply of fish. This means that the wholesale dealers need a network of fishermen on whom they can rely for a committed supply.

4.5.1   Being a *mudalali* at the market

The *mudalali*[36] are wholesale fish dealers who buy fish either directly from fishermen suppliers in Trincomalee or through middlemen in other parts of the country, such as the Southern Province. The *mudalali* then sell these fish in Trincomalee district or outside the district, including at the country's biggest fish market, which is located in Colombo, and in interior areas of the island. Each *mudalali* employs one or two bookkeepers and a few workers in his stall and storage shed (*waadi*). Most contemporary *mudalali* do not belong to the fisher caste[37]; therefore, they do not possess the networked linkages to facilitate successfully starting up a business that would come with generations of associations and exchange. However, a common characteristic among this group is that most of them are linked to the older generation of *mudalali*, usually as former employees. This provides them with access to the connections, knowledge and skills needed for the trade when they chose to enter the trade themselves. In the following extract, Rathna *mudalali* illustrates his ties to the older generation of *mudalali* through his father:

> I was 17 years old when I came into this and now I am 44 years old. My father used to work as a bookkeeper at Simon Silva *mudalali*'s shop. They used to be the biggest dealers of fish in those days. Now they are no more. You can still see the shop building over there [opposite the clock tower]. The *mudalali* gave me his Kandy transport[38]. He said you bring a lorry and come and I will give you the transport. That is how I started the business. He did that transport line with a lot of respect [*gauravayen kara*], and I also did the same. I still do this transport line. I have

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[36] Alexander (1979) uses the term *maalu mudalali* (Sinhalese for fish trader) in his analysis of a southern coastal community. We do not use the adjective '*maalu*', which translates into 'fish' in Sinhalese, mainly because in the space where this research was conducted, the generic term '*mudalali*' was applied only to the wholesale fish dealers, and the Sinhalese fishers and traders did not use the term '*maalu*' as an adjective. Likewise, the Tamils did not use '*meen*' (Tamil translation of 'fish') in our discussions on fish dealers.

[37] From what the first author could gather, only about four of the 56 stalls were rented by *mudalali* from the fisher caste.

[38] A transport or transport line usually means the business of transporting fish in a lorry outside the district, primarily to the central Colombo fish market and to the urban/semi-urban interior areas of the country such as Kandy and Dambulla.

employed five people only for that section of the business: two drivers, two helpers and one accountant.

The behaviour and the public expectations of *mudalali* are not limited to only the economic arena; they are socially and politically embedded, as the following extract from Rathna *mudalali* illustrates:

> A wholesale businessman should be a strong person. A wholesale businessman has a big role in here. From the side of business and social work, they can do a lot of things. There is a lot of respect from society. That is not created automatically […] When you say you are a stall owner at a wholesale fish market, you are given that, because everyone can't get a stall there. A person who has a three-wheeler[39] can't own a stall in here, right? A person at the vegetable market can't own a stall in here.

The idea of a moral economy where the *mudalali* gives back or supports the wider society has long been a strong part of the *mudalali* identity. This is most clearly visible during the annual customary mass meal that the *mudalali* provide to the general public during the full moon (*Poya*) day in June, called the *dansala*. The conversations with the traders who organised the *dansala* made clear references to the high quality of food that is expected at these events, including good-quality, expensive fish.

The *mudalali* discussed in this chapter differ significantly from the *mudalali* of the southern coastal village of Gahawella described in Alexander's (1979) work. The main differences are related to social ascendancy and social location. Whereas the Gahawella *mudalali* belonged to wealthy fishing families, a majority of the current generation of *mudalali* in Trincomalee are not from fishing families and did not use family wealth to start up their businesses. Although the two groups of *mudalali* seem to have a lot in common in terms of behavioural characteristics such as the use of violence, the threat of violence and the ability to maximise profits, often through exploitative practices, a dare-devil attitude and a role as protectors of the national border clearly distinguished the *mudalali* of Trincomalee wholesale market. These distinctions are partly because of context-related factors such as the geographic location of the wholesale market and war-related influences, as discussed in detail below.

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[39] A three-wheeler costs roughly about 2,500 USD and is considered, in general, in Sri Lankan culture to be a symbol of the lower working classes. Therefore, the reference to the three-wheeler here implies not only their financial status, but also their social location, in comparison with the *mudalali* who own stalls in the wholesale market.

4.5.2 The emergence of a 'new' generation of *mudalali* in the Trincomalee wholesale fish business

Until the late 1980s, wholesale fish trading in Trincomalee was in the hands of about five to eight *mudalali*. These men were Sinhalese and originally from the Southern Province. Fishermen of all ethnicities and the current generation of *mudalali* speak highly of this older generation. Siridasa *mudalali*, one of the few remaining men from the first generation of traders, referring to a *mudalali* called Sammy, who was one of his predecessors, said that 'trains used to stop for him', denoting the power, respect and influence held by *mudalali* in the area before the 1980s.

However, with the escalation of violence against Sinhalese people in Trincomalee following the interventions of the Indian Peace Keeping Force starting in 1987, the older generation of *mudalali* fled into interior areas of the country, where they had invested in property. This fleeing opened up space for a new generation of traders, who were able to adapt themselves and exploit the new political-economic conditions that the war created to their advantage. As a result, this new group of 'risk-taking entrepreneurs' took over the wholesale fish trade in Trincomalee, as Siridasa *mudalali* summed up succinctly: 'Those who had things lost everything, and those who didn't have anything sprang up [*aththo nathi una, naththo athi una*]'.

While it is true that historical processes such as war created a space for this new group of *mudalali* to enter the field, it was their strategic thinking and calculated risk taking combined with their insider knowledge of the business as former employees of the older generation of *mudalali* that allowed them to succeed. As Sunil *aiya*, a traditional fishermen originally from the Southern Province, sums up, these new traders stood out during the war by finding ways to smuggle fish to sell in Colombo:

> They were selling seashells to foreigners. Only after the war troubles they became *mudalali*. During the troubled period, fish didn't go to Colombo. People went fishing, but there was no one to buy it. What did these people do? They somehow got together, went to Anuradhapura from here and then got to Colombo somehow. They did that business.

While the main focus of this chapter is the *mudalali*, it is important to understand how they are situated in the market structure, the changes that have taken place within this structure (especially in relation to the war), and the socio-political forces shaping both the market and the dealers.

4.6 The 'new' wholesale fish market

Based on what the first author could gather from the *mudalali* and the fishermen, for about 40 years, a 'temporary hut' (a structure with mud floors and no electricity or water facilities) served as the wholesale marketplace. Local fishermen, especially a Muslim fisherman named Akbar, who has supplied fish to the market for decades, described the layout and the stall ownership of the old marketplace. This market was managed by the local authority—the Urban Council—which required the dealers to pay an annual tax. Akbar and the other fishermen described this earlier market as multi-ethnic in terms of stall occupation, and also noted that women traded inside the market. In contrast, in the new market building, all of the stalls were owned by Sinhalese Buddhist men, primarily those who were originally from the Southern Province. Men from minority ethnic groups and women had completely disappeared from this space. As noted above, the management of the new market has been taken over by the central government, or the MFAR, via the CFC.

> The old market [building] was like the new market; there were entrances on both sides. All the stalls in front were owned by Tamils, three stalls were owned by Muslims on the other side and two stalls on this side were [also owned by] Tamils. All the stalls were given to Sinhalese people in the [new] market […] The first one [first stall in the older market building] was Paakkiyam *mama* and two stalls next to him were also owned by Tamils and there was a woman called Sellaamma. On the other side, there were three Muslims […] There were about eight or nine Sinhalese *mudalali*. At that time […] there weren't many *mudalali* at the market.

An important distinction between the two market buildings is that the older building also housed retail fish sellers. Official records such as tax receipts of the older market confirm that the wholesale fish dealers were historically Sinhalese Buddhist men from the Southern Province. Conversations with tax collectors at the Urban Council, who are Tamil, also confirmed this. With the shift to the new market, which was officially opened in June 2012, the space was transformed into an exclusively wholesale market, and stalls were only given to Sinhalese Buddhist men.

The complete exclusion of women following the changes in the market space most strongly affected Tamil Hindu women, who used to sell fish in the older marketplace. Historically in Trincomalee, in sharp contrast to the west and north coasts (Stirrat, 1988), no Sinhalese women and only a few Tamil women have participated in (retail) fish marketing. At present, there are two groups of women (making up a total of seven women) engaging in retail fish selling in two locations north of Trincomalee town. (For a

detailed analysis of these women and exclusion from the fishing-related spaces, refer to Chapter 3.) Several forces at local and the national levels, as well as actions of both state actors and the wholesale dealers worked to create the transformation seen with the move to the new market building.

4.7 The wholesale market as a politically strategic 'border'

The *mudalali* in the market constructed it to be a politically and economically strategic space in a strategic district of the Eastern Province. In these dealers' view, the market being a 'Sinhalese space' enabled the GoSL military to consolidate their power in the area around Trincomalee in 2006. Rathne *mudalali*, the president of the Rural Fisheries Society of the market dealers, was pivotal in the construction of the new market. He is an economically and a politically powerful figure inside and outside the market. The extract below presents Rathne's explanation of the 'border'. His direct reference to the 'Mavil Aru incident', which is considered the turning point in the war in the Eastern Province, strengthens his construction of the market as a strategic border of the state.

> You see, there is a strategic importance of this market for the country. No one really thinks of this or realises this. It is because this market existed the way it did that the military could consolidate around Trincomalee town. The course of the war changed because of Trincomalee. They drew a line starting from Trincomalee towards the interior and consolidated the bases and started clearing out the area towards the south of Trincomalee. This started after the Mavil Aru incident […] Yes, we need to give equal opportunities to everyone [all ethnic groups], but when the need arises for actions like these [the concentration of Sinhalese dealers at the market], we have to do them.

The Mavil Aru incident involved the LTTE closing a sluice gate in Mavil Aru that supplied irrigation water to an area south of Trincomalee. The GoSL military launched an offensive to recapture the sluice gate and reopen it on 'humanitarian' grounds. From that point onwards, the military began to consolidate power in the Eastern Province, until the LTTE was completely defeated and the GoSL declared the province 'cleared' in 2006. The *mudalali*'s claim that the market is a politically strategic space is enhanced by understanding the role of the state in governing the market, as the next section explains.

4.7.1 The state and the 'new' wholesale market

The creation of Sinhalese hegemony in the market was clearly supported by the state at the district level. The minority political party, the Tamil National Alliance, holds the Urban Council of Trincomalee. However, the then Deputy Minister of Fisheries, Susantha Punchinilame, a Sinhalese politician originally

from the central part of the country, contested and won a seat in the parliament from Trincomalee. Patronage networks empowered by this politician played a crucial role in the fisheries sector in Trincomalee at the time of the data collection. As an extension of his powerful reach, with the agreement of paying 30% of the market's profit to the Urban Council, the Ministry of Fisheries took over the market management functions with the opening of the new market 2012.

The state support for the hegemonising project did not stop at the district level; it went all the way up to the national level. The President at that time, Mahinda Rajapaksa, was the guest of honour at the market's opening ceremony, as is described in the extract below. The complex influence of the state's political power in the political economy of the market is evident from the fact that one of the senior office bearers of the CFC in Trincomalee, who manages the market, was also the district coordinating secretary to the then Deputy Minister of Fisheries.

> The President came for the opening ceremony […] He didn't have a driving need to come here. The Minister of Fisheries could have opened this. We are the ones who brought him [the President] over, at least for 15 minutes; it was a big honour for us.

The 'consolidation of power of the Sinhalese *mudalali*' in the wholesale market was created strategically by the decision makers at that time. Applicants for stalls had to provide proof of their tax payments for the use of the old market stalls to the interview board. However, many traders had defaulted on their tax payments and, in these cases, proof of membership in the Rural Fisheries Society, which was made up of Sinhalese wholesale dealers, was mandatory. Hence, membership in the Society became the boundary that any trader who wished to take over a stall in the new market had to cross. This criterion was used by key figures at the market like Rathne *mudalali* to deflect questions on minority ethnicities not being given a stall in the market, as the following extract shows:

> Once, one of the Urban Council members—I know him well; he is Tamil—asked me, 'Rathne *aiya*, why can't we get a stall in there?' He is from the fisheries sector. His family members have boats. 'Can't we get a stall in there?' he asked me. I said, 'You are not in our Society, right? Since you are not a member, you are not going to get the approval from the Society, understand?' I finished it then and there, bringing in the Society.

Hegemony is not exclusively about overt violence. It also concerns structural forms of violence that are embedded in culture and institutions (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). As the above analysis shows, Sinhalese Buddhist male hegemony at the market is supported by the state and mainly rests on exclusion

based on power that is loosely nested in authority. Overt violence played a role only in certain instances. The state's role as 'an embodied institution reproduced through discourses of masculinity and nationalism and through practices of violence and control' (Anand, 2007: 257) illustrates the close ties between nationalism and the re/construction of masculinities, especially in post-colonial states such as Sri Lanka.

4.7.2 The *mudalali* as 'border guards': Masculinity and ethno-nationalism

In the discourse of the market, as a politically and economically strategic space, the *mudalali* have had to play the pivotal role of 'border guards'. The identity construction and embodiment of border guards, located at and protecting the Sinhalese border, was echoed by all of the Sinhalese *mudalali* with whom I spoke inside the market. As the following extract from Rathna *mudalali* shows, some openly claimed that they had carried weapons when necessary. At a very practical level, the shared sense of the threat of bombs planted by the LTTE going off inside the market, damaging the elite economic and political centre of the Sinhalese population—the fish market and the *mudalali*—united the *mudalali*.

> There were quite a few bombs targeting this market. They [the LTTE] were always after this market. A bomb went off inside a shop on that corner [pointing towards the retail market] and behind the market, and that shop was flattened to the ground. Then, in the tea shop that was on the corner of the block of dried fish shops […] But nothing happened to the market. A bomb inside a pumpkin went off over there [pointing towards the clock tower]. But they were never able to get inside the market. We were carefully watching the people who came in in those days. If an unknown person or someone came in with a parcel, then we were on the alert. No matter how busy we were with the business, we always kept an eye out for these things. This is the market that we built with so much hardship; we weren't going to give that up.

Tamils were not only excluded from the market space; their engagement in wholesale fish selling outside the market was also systematically sabotaged during the war, as the following extract from Akbar shows:

> There was a Tamil *mudalali* called K.R. *mudalali*. He was transporting fish to Colombo [the main fish wholesale market in the capital city] using a Sinhalese lorry. Once, Sinhalese people put pesticides on his fish to damage the fish. After that, he stopped sending fish to Colombo. The same thing is still happening, because all the lorries that transport fish to Colombo are owned by Sinhalese people.

This exclusion carried economic connotations, such as maintaining a market monopoly, as well as the political connotations of excluding minorities from market transactions, consolidating the nationalising project of the majority. Many of the Tamil fishermen shared experiences of violence at the hands of

Sinhalese people that were centred on the fish market targeting Tamils, especially as backlash to sporadic bomb detonations[40].

In an era when physical movement to and from the North and East of the country were strictly controlled and under close surveillance by the GoSL military and the LTTE, mobility was restricted for both men and women, to varying degrees, depending on the person's ethnic identity and location, as well as military battles. During the war, agricultural Sinhalese settlements in Trincomalee were able to strengthen their political connections with the military, the administration and the Buddhist clergy and to use these connections to their advantage. For example, Sinhalese entrepreneurs controlled the bulk of the trading in Trincomalee, using their ties to the military to get through the military check points. As a result, the fish trade remained in the hands of the Sinhalese (Weeratunge and de Silva, 2001). From the point of view of the state, it was beneficial to provide these clientilistic opportunities so that the Sinhalese people would remain in the area, which was crucial to sustaining the state's interest in maintaining the 'Sinhala nation' claim in the area (Korf, 2004). The present analysis confirms this state strategy in the coastal areas of Trincomalee as well.

In nationalist conflicts, the dominant masculinity is that of defenders of freedom, honour, homeland and women (Enloe, 1990, cited in Nagel, 1998). The Sinhalese men working as traders performed these tasks by heroically protecting multiple borders, often as part of the state-sponsored political project, and sometimes also for their individual interests. The economic and political hub of the market had to be protected against the 'enemy', in a symbolic and real sense. Women, who bear the responsibility of protecting the 'pure national culture', had to be protected and restricted from entering fishery spaces. Only those men who could perform these masculinities were able to survive inside the market. In other words, one's business acumen and decades of networked contacts were not sufficient, given the demands of nationalism at that time, particularly its militarised style. Further, linking with the section above on the role of the state, the role played by the state as 'an embodied institution reproduced through discourses of masculinity and nationalism and through practices of violence and control' (Anand, 2007: 257) illustrates the close linkages between nationalism and the re/construction of masculinities, especially in post-colonial states such as Sri Lanka and India.

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[40] As stated in the background section, at present, there are quite a few Tamil *mudalali* who conduct fish wholesale businesses from locations outside the wholesale market, and most of them also have linkages with the wholesale fish market in Trincomalee town.

The discourse of the *mudalali* as border guards is only one part in a more complex and nuanced story of being a *mudalali* in the wholesale market. The sections below explore the micro-culture of masculinities that were in demand during the war and the different 'masculine roles' that the *mudalali* continue to play in the market.

4.8   *Horu Hathaliha* (the forty thieves): Mafia-like nature of the *mudalali*

The metaphor of '*horu hathaliha*' (the forty thieves[41]) is seen in the 'mafia'-like qualities of the dealers at the market, as the extract below from a fishermen supplier named Sunil illustrates. For example, the informal rule that all the fish landed on the beach behind the market should be sold through a *mudalali* at the wholesale market shows the hold the *mudalali* have over the fishermen suppliers. In general, most fishermen are indebted to one of the *mudalali* at the market and are therefore bound to sell the fish to him to gradually repay the loan over time. As Ravi *mudalali*, a stall owner at the market, explained, '[I]f a *mudalali* tries to buy fish from a boat that is not his for a higher price, then of course there is violence'. An ever-present tension between the fishermen and the *mudalali* based on these credit obligations and commissions for fish sales can be observed in Trincomalee, with exploitative undertones, adding to the metaphor of the forty thieves.

> Now look at them [traders]! They are earning hundreds of thousands of rupees […] All that these people [*mudalali*] do is strangle the life out of the people [fishermen]. Those who go fishing tell them off using filthy language sometimes. Yes […] they are called the 40 thieves!

Further, going against informal rules is difficult, given that the fishing sector is so closely knit and that information channels are numerous and deep. If a fisherman who is bound to sell fish to a certain *mudalali* because of credit obligations sells the fish to another *mudalali*, even secretly, this news invariably finds its way to the other *mudalali*. However, a relatively successful strategy used by the fishermen to evade the ever-present gaze of the *mudalali* is to occasionally sell about half of their fish catch to the Muslim *mudalali* located just north of Trincomalee town before coming to the market. This allows them to avoid the deductions from their profits that is made by the *mudalali* at the market. However, these Muslim *mudalali* purchase the fish at a lower price than the market price, because they also know that they are making a deal under the table. Therefore, although both the fishermen and the

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[41] This refers to the 40 thieves from the *One Thousand and One Nights* folk story featuring Ali Baba

mudalali perceive the omnipotent presence and power of the *mudalali* to be pervasive, the fishermen sometimes manage to evade the *mudalali's* gaze.

The *mudalali* use elaborate strategies to maximise their profit margin. These tactics are often mentioned with disdain by fishermen of all ethnicities. The strategies used include using elaborate systems of body language, which one of the *mudalali* aptly termed 'a game of mime' where the *mudalali* fix the price and expect a payment from the retail buyers for controlling the price. *Mudalali* signal retail buyers to stop bidding beyond a certain price limit so that, instead of the customary 10 LKR per kilogram that is deducted from the supplier, the *mudalali* can collect a further 10 LKR per kilogram from the retail buyers. Sometimes, buyers are asked not to bid in the auctions, and the *mudalali* ask the supplying fishermen to leave, retaining the fish catch. After the fishermen leave, the fish are sold at a higher price with a bigger profit margin to the *mudalali*. These price-adjusting practices could not happen without a certain level of understanding or shared knowledge among the *mudalali* operating at the market. In the first author's frequent visits to the market, she often observed the *mudalali* slowly moving through the market, observing the other stalls. The idea that the *mudalali* are all united together in their exploitative behaviour has further contributed to the notion that they are a group of bandits.

4.9   The *mudalali* as a group of immorals

The masculine project of the market also has sexual connotations, which are closely interwoven with morality as defined in broader Sri Lankan society. In Sunil *aiya*'s characterisation of the *mudalali* in the extract below, there is a subtle warning to the first author, as a female researcher, to not associate too closely with them, hinting at unethical moral behaviour:

> They are a *Sakkili* crowd [rascals]. Don't talk to them too much. They are a strange bunch. Even though I give them fish, I don't have much connection with them […] We have known the reality of those people for years now.

The first author heard comments of this kind repeatedly from many other fishermen with whom she interacted. Siridasa *mudalali*, who had been engaged in the fish selling business for over 65 years, once told the first author, 'It [the market] is full of drunkards and filth! Our fathers never used to drink alcohol; now I am the only one at the market who doesn't drink'.

Further, the reputation of the *mudalali* as being prone to violence, in most cases under the influence of alcohol, is entrenched, and this is not limited to subtle threats to women. Potential targets extended to the whole market mechanism, including the management body, the state and its different apparatuses. There are constantly two police officers posted in the market to 'control' any tense situations. However, the CFC representative admitted that the *mudalali* are a 'difficult crowd to control' for them as managers of the market, adding that the two police officers would be helpless if any tension did flare up. Further, the few men from minority ethnic groups working at the market were acutely aware of their vulnerability and 'outsider' status. This position can prove life threatening at times of violence, which are still not uncommon in the market, especially after business hours. The following extract is from a Muslim bookkeeper/cleaner who works at a stall in the market. This man has a very close relationship with his employer, which gave him the confidence to work at the Sinhalese-dominated market, but he admits how vulnerable he is to overt violence:

> These people get drunk in the afternoon and become rowdy. They also fight. Now the fights are fewer. In those days, they always had big knives and swords with them. When these fights break out, there is a room upstairs; I go and stay there. As long as I hear the fighting downstairs, I don't come down. I have the key to that room with me. Even now I have it [indicating his pocket]. I stay upstairs then.

In discussions of the moral economy of trade in Sri Lanka, the discursive construction of the *mudalali* as outsiders to the community where they operate—and therefore outside the moral norms of that community—has been widely acknowledged (Weeratunge, 2010). However, this has also been disputed as a myth (Southwold-Llewellyn, 1994). The present findings are somewhat similar to Southwold-Llewellyn's (1994), in that the subject construction of the *mudalali* as outsiders to moral norms has been used by both the public (in this case the fishermen) and the *mudalali* for their own advantage.

The use of violence by fish dealers, especially in its overt or physical form, is clearly not limited to contemporary Trincomalee. Further, the *mudalali* use their reputation of immorality and violent demeanour to maintain their social distance and power over marginalised groups, such as the ethnic minorities, women and the fishermen suppliers of all ethnicities. This trend can be closely associated with Alexander's (1982) description of the *Malu Mudalali* (fish dealers) from the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. Alexander concluded that violence or the threat of violence is important in maintaining the power position of the *mudalali* against both competitors and fishermen. Through a portfolio of politically violent

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and entrepreneurially adventurous strategies and performances, the Sinhalese Buddhist male hegemony in the market has thus been created and maintained to this point. However, these very strategies may, in the near future, lead to fissures within the hegemony and make space for other ethnic groups, as the last section of this paper elaborates.

4.10   The looming collapse of hegemony in the market: The break-up of the Rural Fisheries Society

The Sinhalese Buddhist hegemony of the market in Trincomalee is not as absolute as it seems at first glance. Economic interests have created divisions within the Rural Fisheries Society, which has been the main face of the hegemonising process. Beginning with the laying of the foundation for the new market building, the main point of disagreement within the Rural Fisheries Society has been about the monthly rent and the deposit amount to charge per stall. Siridasa *mudalali*, one of the oldest dealers at the market, claims that they paid only 15 LKR per year in taxes for a stall in the old market. The government valuation of a stall in the new market came to 400,000 LKR, but this was eventually negotiated down to 120,000 LKR for a small stall and 150,000 LKR for a larger stall. Monthly rent is 10,000 LKR for a small stall and 15,000 LKR for a larger stall. About half of the stall owners claim that these fees are too high for them and that they are making a loss because of this. This group delay the rent payment so that the CFC is made to devise strategies such as weekly or daily instalments to collect the money. The other half, who support the former Rural Fisheries Society and its norms, continue to pay the rent as agreed. At the opening of the new market building, only about 17 traders had come forward to take up stalls because of the issue surrounding the amount of rent to be paid. As a result, since the early days of the construction of the market building, there have been divisions within the Rural Fisheries Society. By the time of the data collection for this study, the Society was completely defunct. However, ironically, people like Rathna *mudalali* were still using the Society as a point of reference for the continuing exclusion of minority groups.

After the market was closed for six months following its official opening, the rest of the traders finally took up stalls in the market. However, the divisions among them continued. At the time of the data collection, the issue of selling fish in retail quantities with a price cut from the retail fish price was another divisive factor. Rathne *mudalali* claimed that the Rural Fisheries Society had decided that no retail selling would happen inside the wholesale market and that this decision had been communicated to

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the higher fisheries authorities and to the senior police officers in the area. The sellers at the nearby retail market are severely affected by price cuts from selling retail quantities of fish for wholesale prices. As a result, the retail sellers lodge complaints with the police. However, despite opposition from a group of wholesale dealers in the same market, a group of about 10–15 dealers engage in retail selling at the wholesale market. Unsurprisingly, this is the same group that had refused to pay the deposit money at the market's opening and continue to complain about the high rent charged for the stalls. At one point, this faction also formed a separate society, but the president of this 'alternate' society was arrested by the police for transporting migrants illegally to Australia. Consequently, the existence of this society was short lived. The justification for selling fish at retail price and quantities, as explained by those dealers who engage in this practice, was the pressure to pay the monthly rent of 10,000 LKR for their stalls.

The ruptures within the society, combined with some *mudalali* going against the established norms and regulations by engaging in retail fish selling and defaulting on rent payments to the CFC for their stalls, have resulted in predictions of the demise of the Sinhalese Buddhist male hegemony in the market. Rathne *mudalali* makes such a prediction in the following extract:

> It is a big tragedy, but they [the other faction, who engage in retail selling] don't understand it, and it is difficult to make them understand it, too. They will understand when they lose all of this one day […] They are not allowing this building to be protected […] because this is government property; to maintain these properties, the government will have to get the involvement of someone else. On that day, this person could be a Tamil person, could be a Muslim person. Imagine a Muslim person getting into this […] If a Muslim man somehow gets a stall, what does he do? He will take over the whole area. That streak of lightening has still not hit this […] but we can't say how far we can go like this […] There were traitors like these in the ancient times of kings also in this country.

'Real men, thus, are seen as warriors—as guardians and heroes of the nation. Conversely, men who reject the roles of warriors and guardians are seen not only as traitors, but also as lesser men. Just as their loyalty has to be doubted, their masculinity also has to be questioned' (Milicevic, 2006: 268). Interestingly, in the current analysis, the same men who were seen as heroes protecting the border during the times of war-related violence are now seen by part of the same group as traitors. This notion of betrayal is to the political cause of maintaining a Sinhalese Buddhist hegemony in the market. The betrayal has come about because the competitive enterprising self of those who engage in retail selling is being prioritised above their dedication to the nationalist self. In sum, while it was extremely profitable

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and opportunistic to be part of the state-sponsored hegemonic project, a competitive nature and individual drive for higher profits ultimately led some of the traders to violate the common norms that hold the hegemonic project together. In doing so, a potential outcome is a redrawing of the boundaries of the hegemonising project, likely in terms of ethnicity; the market will then change from mono-ethnic to multi-ethnic. A re-grouping across the divisions among the dealers and a 'rehegemosing' is another possible outcome. However, the absence of the strong patronage networks centred on the former Deputy Minister of Fisheries weakens this possibility.

While presenting the popular ideology of what contributes to the making of a certain type of hegemonic masculinity, nuanced research should also attempt to understand the 'tensions, mismatches and the resistances' to these ideologies (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 841). The present analysis provided this nuance by first exploring how the new generation of dealers embodied and enacted masculinities driven by a combination of ethno-nationalist and high-risk entrepreneurial dimensions during the war. Second, the analysis explored the tensions, mismatches and resistances to the Sinhalese Buddhist male hegemony through opposition to the same types of masculinities that the male dealers embraced during the war: ethno-nationalist and entrepreneurial.

The findings revealed the differentiated and sometimes competing masculine identities of the wholesale dealers: the daredevil who is heroically protecting the Sinhalese nation-state by being part of the hegemonising project, but who is also a strategic entrepreneur who uses his own agentive power to maximise his profit margins and become a leader in the society economically, politically and socially. Tensions arise when one of these masculine behaviours comes into opposition with the other. In other words, when finding or maintaining the 'private kingdom' (Schumpeter, 1934/1983) is in direct opposition with the ideal of a collective kingdom of nationalism, the latter starts to collapse.

4.11   Conclusions

In this chapter, we have attempted to shift the discussion on conflict in Sri Lanka away from focusing exclusively on ethnic subject constructions and towards understanding ethnicity as a dynamic concept. Ethnicity is indeed socially constructed and mediated by other forms of identity such as gender—in this analysis, through masculinities, more specifically—to be powerful enough to dominate men and women of other identity groups. This analysis confirms that, to understand everyday politics in relation to livelihoods affected by conflict more comprehensively, one needs to move away from seemingly obvious

ethnicised power relations and hegemonies in Sri Lankan discourses and actively look for alternative power dynamics. Focusing on masculinities and the different subject positionalities of men—a dimension that has been largely missing to this point in Sri Lankan discourses on post-war livelihoods and identity—can provide a nuanced analysis of how hegemonies are made and how they may fail.

The story of the fish wholesale business in Trincomalee is not just a story of Sinhalese Buddhist male hegemony. It is a story of how different forms of masculinities show complicity and resistance to hegemony at a given point. Initially, ethnicity and religion appeared to be the politically motivating bonding factors allowing the *mudalali*, who were bound by their membership in the Rural Fisheries Society, to gain access to the stalls in the new market space. However, with time, other subject constructions materialised, leading to different levels of embeddedness and disembeddedness among the group of 'wholesale fish dealers' in Trincomalee. In other words, the hegemonising project at the wholesale market was created with political and economic motivations that were supported by the state as part of the Sinhalese nationalising project, and the dealers, as border guards, were complicit in this project. Nonetheless, these dealers' individual agentive power as entrepreneurs eventually emerged, resulting in their resisting some of the very structures and norms that created the hegemonic project. These actors started up fish retail businesses in the wholesale market and later defaulted on stall rent payments; this ultimately led to the collapse of the hegemonising mechanism—the Rural Fisheries Society. Predictions of the collapse of the whole hegemonising project may very well be a reality. However, given the existing economic and political mechanisms in Sri Lanka, which are still controlled by the central state, a change in these power structures is likely to take some time, and the outcomes are not predictable.

Despite the war ending in 2009, legacies of war continue in Sri Lanka, especially in the areas that were directly affected by the war, such as Trincomalee. Market transactions in the economic domain are clearly embedded in and influenced by local-level social and political dynamics. However, everyday local-level politics are strongly mediated by national-level political discourses, as seen in the direct involvement of the central government through the Ministry of Fisheries in the market governance, as well as the political agenda behind this involvement.

The analysis presented in this chapter did not attempt to provide a comprehensive list of necessary attributes for an entrepreneur operating during violent social and political cleavages, such as war.

However, an element that stands out in contrast to the dominant discussions on entrepreneurs and masculinities is the wholesale dealers' lack of adherence to the moral codes of society. As explained above, based on local literature on entrepreneurs, one could surmise that being outside the prevalent moral codes could be a strategy employed by the traders to justify their exploitative behaviour, to exert power over the suppliers and buyers, and to exclude 'others' from the closed business space.

Finally, in post-war contexts such as Sri Lanka, where the importance and demand for 'border-guard masculinity' against the threat of terrorism has receded, the potential consequences of in terms of power configurations at the society level as well as the household level is a potential future study area. Another potentially fruitful area for further research to contribute to the scarce body of work on maritime masculinities, we propose future work seeking a nuanced understanding of the influence of the practices of women in shaping masculinities—the 'historical interplay between masculinities and femininities'—especially through a life histories approach (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 848). Such an analysis could provide better clarity on how new forms of masculinities may or may not emerge in relation to women, especially among the younger generations.

Chapter Five: Legitimacies and Moralities: Illegal Fishing in Trincomalee-Sri Lanka

This chapter is a minor revision[42] of a paper that will be submitted shortly to the journal *Society and Natural Resources*.

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[42] Background information on context and the general methods have been removed to avoid repetition. Refer to Sections 1.1 for study context and 1.4 for methods and data in Chapter 1.

5.1   Introduction

During Sri Lanka's emergence from a three-decade-long war, along with hopes for 'peace', new forms of identity-based violence—both overt and latent—are taking shape, mainly along religious lines. Trincomalee, a coastal district in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, was directly affected by the war, which ended in 2009. The district comprises a mixed population that includes all three of Sri Lanka's main ethnicities, and therefore also religions. These groups share violent war-related histories, with divisions mainly along ethnic fault lines. Although religious violence has a long history in Sri Lanka, the immediate post-war years saw an escalation of such tensions—particularly anti-Muslim sentiments—allegedly with the sponsorship of the former regime headed by President Rajapaksa. During times of war and emergency, livelihood spaces become theatres where group tensions play out in the form of rights and abilities to access resources. Among other things, state regulation and governance of fisheries form a space where the state and society interact in close and sometimes volatile ways based on different norms, values and interpretations of formal laws and the implementation of these laws. This chapter sought to understand the nature of these state–society interactions, the norms—both formal and informal—that condition these interactions, and finally how natural resources or livelihoods governance problems can escalate into ethnicised livelihoods and identity-based contestations. Trincomalee district boasts the highest number of people engaged in the coastal fishing subsector in all of Sri Lanka, and the fishing effort in Trincomalee has steeply increased in the recent past. The active fisher population has increased dramatically, from 16,100 in 2004 to 34,540 in 2014, more than doubling in the course of a decade. Fishing craft show an even a larger increase, from 2,308 in 2014 to 5,232 in 2015—doubling in just one year (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, 2016). Against this backdrop, complaints about the depletion of fish stocks, judged by the size and variety of the fish catch, were very clearly on the rise in Trincomalee, based on the experiences and perceptions of the fishers as well as the regulating authorities.

Closely linked to discussions on depleting fish stocks, disco net fishing, a type of purse seine fishing method, emerged. This fishing method requires an annual license from the Department of Fisheries. To obtain a license, restrictions on the net's distance from the shoreline, the mesh size, and the net's length and height must be followed, and it is not permitted to use oxygen tanks or more than one boat. During the 2014 fishing season in Trincomalee, the state authorities made a determined effort not to issue these licenses, causing a deep sense of frustration among the disco net fishers. In the previous year (2013), over

300 cases were filed against Sri Lankan fishermen for using illegal vessels or equipment, leading to approximately 109 arrests in Trincomalee (Daily News, 10 January 2014). Interestingly, according to primary data collected in October 2013, over a few months, 113 disco net fishers were arrested in Trincomalee, of whom 89 fishermen were from Kinniya, where 96% of the population is Muslim (Kinniya DS office, 2013). Apart from these statistics, arguably of more importance is that, among the fisheries stakeholders in Trincomalee, disco net fishing is also closely linked with Muslims, although it is not true that only Muslims engage in this practice.

Despite repeated efforts, fines, arrests, harassment and delays in issuing the annual licenses by the state fisheries authorities, the 'illegal'[43] method of disco net fishing continues. A critical body of work at the global scale shows that successful solutions to the problem of illegal fishing include increased governance and the rule of law, increased surveillance and increased port control. However, some of these solutions do not seem to work in the case of Trincomalee. The analysis presented in this chapter explores why these solutions are ineffective in this context and how this fishing practice continues. This opportunity to study the how fisheries governance processes and actors shape post-war state–society economic and political interactions arose during the height of the fishing season (May–July) in 2014. The delay in renewing the annual fishing licenses of those engaging in disco net fishing was highly significant, and this topic began to dominate the conversations I had on fishing livelihoods. This chapter draws primarily on material collected during the height of this 'crisis'.

Historically, fisheries compliance theory and practice have been based on a predominantly economic perspective that sees fishers as profit-maximisers (Nielsen, 2003). However, management failures have led researchers and practitioners to consider that compliance behaviour is too complex to be understood through a purely instrumentalist approach (Jentoft et al., 1998; Kuperan and Sutinen, 1998). For example, an emerging body of literature discusses the important role that legitimacy plays in influencing compliance behaviour (Nielsen, 2003). Legitimacy is based on people's acceptance of an institution or actor, and different social groups will view the legitimacy of the state in different ways, based on specific normative frames, the time context and the surrounding circumstances.

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[43] The requirements for issuing the annual license for disco net fishing in Trincomalee mean that it is almost invariable for boats that engage in one-day fishing operations to engage in this fishing method illegally. As an official representative of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources explained, because of the location of the natural harbour, the sea area in Trincomalee becomes deep very close to the shoreline, and it is therefore almost impossible for one-day boat operations to take place 7 km or further from the shoreline, as the licensing stipulates.

Fisheries governance in Sri Lanka has generally been studied using a co-management or legal pluralist approach, and the geographical focus has been the country's ethnically homogeneous Southern and Northern Provinces (Bavinck et al., 2015; Wickramasinghe and Bavinck, 2015). A few studies have explored issues of livelihood entitlements and competition over resources, ethnic discourses and changing legitimacies during the war in Sri Lanka (Korf, 2005). However, the link between fisheries governance and legitimacy has not been studied in a multi-ethnic district such as Trincomalee in post-war in Sri Lanka, and there is a need for studies of governance in such an environment. Contexts shaped by divisions along identity fault lines, as is the case in post-war Trincomalee, are characterised by competing normative frameworks and actors, and legal pluralism and the interface between the state and the society become competitive and complex in co-management arrangements.

Using ethnographic field material collected over 13 months in Trincomalee, this chapter aims to map the different stakeholders in relation to illegal disco net fishing and the normative systems that guide them, while also seeking to understand how state–society relations through community relations and moral systems influence fisheries governance processes. At the global level, this chapter contributes to the thinking on the importance of legitimacy in fisheries governance by focusing on the dynamic nature of perceptions of legitimacy, examining the varied viewpoints of multiple actors and illustrating how livelihood governance failures can impact social cleavages and vice versa. At the country level, this chapter contributes to the bodies of work on fisheries governance, specifically in the war-affected Eastern Province, and on ethnicised livelihood discourses.

5.2   Conceptual thinking on fisheries governance, legitimacy and conflict

5.2.1   Fisheries governance and compliance

Jentoft and Chuenpagdee (2009: 554) have claimed that the governance of fisheries and coastal areas presents a 'wicked problem'. The 'wickedness' derives from several factors: Social problems tend to be given moral interpretations, compounded by disagreements among the different parties involved about the problem's nature, cause and solution. Further, wicked problems are often manifestations of larger structural problems. Therefore, understanding the complexity of the problem of illegal fishing, both as a problem in itself and as part of a larger problem, is important. It should be understood as a failure in state–society relations in a politically charged post-war context. This understanding will prove useful, not

only in resource governance debates, but also in discussions on the nature of post-war state–society relations.

Drawing on political and economic theory, Held (1987) and Weber (1922/1978) identified a list of factors that may influence compliance behaviour in general. According to these lists, citizens may adhere to rules because they are forced to do so, because they are simply following a routine, because of strategic calculations to gain the highest individual profit or because they regard the rules as justified and reasonable (Jentoft, 2000: 144). These motivations can be applied to compliance behaviour with regard to fishing.

Historically, fisheries compliance has been studied predominantly with the neoclassical economics understanding of the rational actor, who is primarily interested in profit maximisation. This model is based primarily on Becker (1968). Fisheries management systems follow a similar path, based on the premise that fishers' compliance or noncompliance is primarily decided by a calculation of economic gain vs. the potential risk of being apprehended (Blewett et al., 1987; Furlong, 1991; Sutinen and Gauvin, 1989, cited in Gezelius, 2004). The high cost of detection and fishermen's skill in avoiding capture (Charles et al., 1999; Furlong, 1991; Sumaila et al., 2006; Sutinen and Kuperan, 1999) are some other causes of illegal fishing (cited in Abusin, 2014).

However, in the past few decades, researchers have become interested in using normative frameworks such as morality and legitimacy to understand the compliance behaviour of fishers (Hatcher et al., 2000; Hønneland, 1998, 1999; Nielsen and Mathiesen, 2001: Viswananthan et al., 1997). This work has examined, for example, the tolerance of bribery and corruption (Akpalu, 2011; MEA, 2005). These studies have shown that morality, peer involvement and fear of social disproval are the main factors that influence compliance (Gezelius, 2002: 308). Therefore, the most recent thinking on compliance sees actors as both strategic and moral in their responses to management systems (Jentoft, 2000: 145). However, there is a need for more in-depth research on how and under what conditions different factors affect compliance decisions (Gezelius, 2002).

The institutional landscape of fisheries in southern and northern Sri Lanka is relatively well documented. Fisheries governance in these areas is shaped by legal pluralism, where state actors and institutions, as well as local community institutions, operate simultaneously (Bavinck et al., 2015; Wickramasinghe and

Bavinck, 2013). In such contexts, actors engage in 'forum shopping'; they 'shop' for different institutions to resolve their disputes, and this is a dynamic process (Sikor at al., 2009). Published work on fisheries governance in Sri Lanka has mapped the patterns of interaction between the state and non-state actors and studied the impact of these interactions on livelihoods, resource conservation and allocation. However, it has also been suggested that struggles over natural resources in an institutionally pluralist context can be seen as processes of everyday state formation (Sikor et al., 2009), but fisheries governance in Sri Lanka has not yet been explored using this lens.

Although evidence on fisheries governance systems is available for coastal Sri Lanka in the North and South, these areas are relatively ethnically homogeneous, and therefore the influence of identity-based tensions on governance processes is less evident. In contrast, coastal Trincomalee is ethnically heterogeneous and was directly impacted by the three-decade-long civil war. The war created different state–society and community relations and tensions in Trincomalee. In such directly war-affected areas, multiple normative frameworks may further strain or exacerbate social tensions that are already precarious, resulting in legal pluralism playing out in a way that may be more pronounced. An analysis of these competing normative frameworks will provide important insights for more effective fisheries governance, especially in conflict-affected contexts. Siriwardana de Zoyasa's (2015) recent work in Trincomalee on the same fishing activity analysed in detail nature of collective organising, and how this organising cut across ethnic and religious boundary lines to form around livelihood commonalities. In contrast, this chapter explores the relationship at the state-society inter-face as the primary focal point, in the area of illegal fishing and attempts to understand different forms of moral discussions by different actors that lend different types of legitimacies.

5.2.2 Legitimacy and state–society relations in fisheries

In response to noncompliance, fisheries managers have turned their attention towards the important role that legitimacy plays in influencing compliance behaviour (Nielsen, 2003). Legitimacy is an empirical phenomenon that transforms power or domination into authority and concerns 'whether, how and why people accept (or reject) a particular actor or institution' (Bellina et al., 2009: 8). The state's legitimacy is strongly dependent on what the constituency expects of the state, and legitimacy exists only as long as the relevant constituencies consider it to be legitimate (Bellina et al., 2009: 3), A legitimate state uses power in a justifiable way, where justifiability is context-specific and is dependent on social norms, moral

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principles and values (Jentoft, 2000). Legitimacy is also about the moral appropriateness of the state or actor in question (McLoughlin, 2015). The study of state legitimacy, then, is about the study of these social norms and their justifiability (McLoughlin, 2015: 4).

Legitimacy is often studied when there is a lack of compliance and the prevailing rules have been rejected. This situation is commonly termed 'legitimacy in crisis', and the present case of illegal disco net fishing is one such instance. However, a close analysis of the case at hand shows that, while the legitimacy of one set of actors—mainly the state—is being challenged and overruled, another set of legitimacies are in operation. This second set of legitimacies has triumphed through a different set of social norms and justifications, mainly at the community level. This leads to discussion of legitimisation processes and the legitimacy of non-state institutions. In post-colonial and post-war contexts, political authority is not synonymous with the state, nor is it a 'set of congruent institutions' (Sikor et al., 2009: 9).

Legitimacy is dynamic and therefore should be understood as a process rather than a static concept. McLoughlin (2015) used three key questions to analyse legitimacy: What is being legitimised, on what basis (moral values and social norms) and by whom (those who have power)? Everything depends on what people believe, and what people come to see as 'natural' and 'desirable' is shaped by their beliefs and their usual practices (Bellina et al., 2009). Therefore, understanding people's beliefs and practices is at the heart of understanding legitimisation processes. Further, social norms and their justifiability are fluid and will change with changing contexts (McLoughlin, 2015). Analyses of legitimacy should therefore attempt to understand that it will continually change and take different forms over time (Jentoft, 2000).

Everyday local legitimacy posits that, through the process of serving the everyday needs of the people, such as social welfare or access to basic services, state legitimacy can be engineered at a local level (Maxwell et al., 2016; Roberts, 2012). Further, in the absence of such processes by the state, public trust may anchor to other social or cultural bodies (e.g. religious bodies) that cater to people's needs. As a result of this, alternative forms of social legitimacies are created by norms and institutions that people have substituted for the state (Roberts, 2012:7). The analysis in this chapter will touch on these alternative forms of social legitimacies and explore the legitimisation or de-legitimisation of specific state actors in parallel to the legitimisation process of these alternative norms and institutions.

5.2.4 Conflict, livelihoods and resources

In times of latent or overt conflict, rights over natural resources become a main arena of contestation between different warring parties (Korf, 2005). 'Unruly social practices, direct power contests and competing notions of legitimacy may bend formal and informal rules to favour specific social actors' during civil unrest (Korf, 2005: 204). Further, in such situations, ethnicity may become a social and political construct that helps certain groups to negotiate access to resources while excluding ethnic 'others' (Banton, 1994; Hechter, 2000; Wimmer, 1997). Local conflicts often mirror competing claims at macro level, and Korf (2005), using three irrigation schemes in Trincomalee district during the ceasefire of 2002–2005, has illustrated how ethnicity became a fault line in access to land and irrigation allocation at both the local and the macro level.

In contexts such as Trincomalee, a district emerging from a three-decade-long civil war, the question of who can legitimately control and manage resources during times of instability related to violence is also crucial. Environmental entitlements theory, which speaks of 'legitimate effective command' (Leach et al., 1999: 233) over environmental goods and services, does not seem applicable in this instance, where evidence and decisions about who can effectively control resources are violently contested (Korf and Fünfgeld, 2006).

Despite hopes for peace at the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka in 2009, 'new' forms of identity-based conflicts are taking shape, mainly along religious lines (The Asia Foundation, 2011; Gravers, 2015; Hasbullah and Korf, 2013; Stewart, 2015). Although religious violence has a long history in Sri Lanka, from 2010 to 2015, religion became a major arena of communal contestation in the country (Verité Research, 2016). June 2014 saw the culmination of one such line of tension, when a Sinhalese Buddhist mob, instigated by a group of extremist Buddhist priests, attacked the southern Muslim town of Aluthgama. Muslims are considered economic competitors of the Sinhalese Buddhists, and, although cloaked in Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, incidents of violence against Muslims are also clearly based on economic rivalry. Further, while political patronage has historically been pivotal in maintaining or escalating some of these tensions, the former regime was seen as strongly linked with the incidents of religious unrest against minorities that took place from 2010 to 2015 (Verité Research, 2016).

Situated within a post-war context that is still affected by the continuities of war, this chapter explores how fisher compliance towards formal regulations is influenced by the perceived legitimacy of the actors and processes that enforce these regulations and how 'non-formal legitimacies at the local level' are used to defy formal regulations. The next section provides an overview of the study context and research methods used in this study. The chapter then moves on to map out the different stakeholders in relation to disco net fishing in Trincomalee and the normative systems that guide them. Next is an analysis of how state–society relations and relations within communities influence fisheries governance processes.

5.3   Study Context and Methods

5.3.1   Context

In Trincomalee, illegal fishing is closely associated with 'disco net fishing'. Disco net fishing, known as *Hembili del* in Sinhalese and *Surukku valai* in Tamil, is referred to as a purse seine method by the state fisheries authorities. Disco net fishing becomes illegal if the method is used contrary to a set of regulations. At the time of the data collection in 2014, the use of disco nets within 7 km of the shore was prohibited, and the mesh size had to be larger than 1.5 inches. However, from 21 February 2016, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development decided to 'ban' the use of this fishing method, introducing new regulations on the mesh size, as will be discussed below.

Based on interviews in the study area, it appears that the disco net was introduced to Trincomalee by Sinhalese fishermen originally from the Gandara area in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. These fishermen primarily employed Muslims in their fishing operations. Later, these Muslims started their own fishing operations using the same nets, and this practice was in use in Trincomalee throughout most of the war. A smaller proportion of Sinhalese fishermen, compared with Muslims, still use these nets, amidst strong opposition, often from within their own fishing communities. Tamil fishermen make up the smallest group using these nets. Disco net fishers are small-scale, one-day fishers, in terms of the equipment and craft they use. However, the income generated by their fishing activities is at a much higher scale, especially in comparison with other small-scale fishers. My data show that, on average, during the fishing season, a disco net crew member can earn around 5,000 LKR per day, and a fishing trip can yield up to 150,000 LKR during the peak fishing season (approximately 1,150 USD as of 30 June 2013). This amount is in sharp contrast to average daily earnings of 500–1,500 LKR for a fishermen using other fishing methods.

In 2013 and 2014, the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), with the cooperation of the Navy, stepped up their efforts to arrest these fishermen, confiscating their nets and other equipment and handing them over to the police. According data collected for the present study, in October 2013, 113 disco net fishers were arrested in Trincomalee, out of which 89 were from Kinniya, where 96% of the population is Muslim (Kinniya DS office, 2013). Despite these arrests, illegal fishing continues in Trincomalee. A brief follow-up visit to the district in September 2016 confirmed the continuation of the practice.

5.3.2   Methods

This chapter is based on data from 64 primary sources that discuss disco net fishing, including interview transcripts and observation records. These data sources contain all the information that I collected on the issue of disco net fishing. They include interactions with disco net fishers from a Muslim-majority area slightly south of Trincomalee town (Kinniya) and with one fisherman from a village slightly north of Trincomalee town (Keeri)[44]. The other sources include interactions with fishermen who opposed disco net fishing from Keeri and Jamaliya (Muslim), fish traders attached to three wholesale fish markets (from all three ethnicities) in Trincomalee and fisheries authorities from the Trincomalee District DFAR (Sinhalese). The selected data sources include the viewpoints of state authorities and of Muslim and Tamil ethnic minority communities. A focus on the Sinhalese fishermen who engaged in disco net fishing in Trincomalee could have added insights about competition, negotiation, interactions between the ethnic majority and minority fisher groups in Trincomalee, and their differing interactions with the state. However, this group has previously been analysed in-depth elsewhere (Siriwardane-de Zoysa, 2015), and therefore I limited my analysis to the interactions between ethnic minority fishermen, their communities and the state. As secondary data, this chapter also used the relevant government fisheries acts, the DFAR and Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development official website and newspaper articles reporting on illegal fishing in Sri Lanka to understand the existing formal rules and the most recent changes that have taken place.

5.4   Unpacking the 'wicked problem': Actors and normative systems

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[44] The name of this village has been changed to ensure confidentiality because of the sensitive nature of the data collected in this particular village.

The following sections map the formal and informal actors, the norms that drive them and the interactions among them at the levels of state–society and community. These sections also attempt to illustrate the different viewpoints in relation to the problem at hand, demonstrating how the competing normative systems and discourses around right and wrong—at the state and community levels—have resulted in clashes, which have opened up spaces for rule defiance, resulting in a 'wicked problem' of governance.

5.4.1 Formal actors and regulations

The Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act (№ 2) of 1996 gives power to the Director at the district level to appoint an 'authorised officer' to ensure compliance with the regulations of the Act. This authorised officer has the power to conduct searches, make arrests and seize craft, equipment and fish (Section 46 (4) a–g). In the Act, an 'authorised officer' includes any officer of the Army, Air Force or police with the rank of sergeant or higher and any officer of the Navy with at least the rank of petty officer (Section 66).

State authorities' efforts to curtail illegal fishing have included the modifying and tightening of regulations in relation to purse seining. In early 2016, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development decided to 'ban purse seining completely', citing a study done by the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Authority, which reports that the fish population in Sri Lankan waters is decreasing at an alarming rate because of the use of banned fishing methods (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Development, 2016). In practice, the so-called 'complete ban' has meant that the restrictions have been tightened: The minimum mesh size, which was 1.5 inches in 2014, was increased to 2.5 inches in 2016. Other regulations, such as the maximum net length of 225 m and height of 25 m, remain the same. In 2014, during the data collection, additional regulations were introduced by the DFAR at the district level. New requirements for disco net fishers included obtaining an affidavit from a justice of the peace and letters from the fisheries society president and the Fisheries Inspector stating that they were not engaging in any illegal activity. These fishers were also required to obtain a sea worthiness report from the marine engineer for their craft prior to applying for a license. For the Muslim disco net fishermen, these continuous amendments and added requirements contributed to a sense of illegitimacy regarding the formal rules and the actors designing and implementing these rules.

5.4.2 Normative structures that guide state regulations

Parallel to the resource depletion and sustainability concerns based on 'scientific research', the perception of the fisheries authorities was that those who engage in disco net fishing do so for purely profit-maximising reasons; it was thought that their motivation is the desire to earn large sums of money in a short period:

> It is mainly the Muslims who do these things. In Sinhalese, we call them '*ekathana pick up*' [on-the-spot pick-up], because they want to make money quickly. They tell us, 'You go ahead and arrest us; we will continue doing this'. This is the attitude they have.
>
> (Government officer, Department of Fisheries, Trincomalee)

This perception, in turn, seems to guide the formal regulations that are in place and how these regulations are enacted. The fisheries regulatory officers felt that the solution for minimising illegal fishing is to increase fines and step-up apprehension attempts to such a level that illegal fishing becomes unprofitable. For example, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has given orders to the Navy, the police and the DFAR to take stern action against those who violate the regulations (Department of Fisheries, 2016).

However, at least at the district level, the fisheries authorities seem to have recognised that other factors influence these fishermen's compliance behaviour. The above extract hints at one such dynamic; an underlying perception of impunity or rule defiance. This sentiment suggests a larger concern about rule of law or lawlessness in a society emerging from war.

The above extract also introduces the idea of an ethnicised livelihood activity in the normative idea of the state authorities that it is minority Muslims who engage in this illegal fishing activity. This is not to completely deny that Sinhalese and, to a lesser degree, Tamils also engage in this activity. However, as expressed by the fisheries authorities, as well as by fishermen of all three ethnicities, including Muslims, disco net fishing is closely associated with Muslim fishers in Trincomalee. The abovementioned figures on arrests and confiscation of equipment reported by the fisheries authorities also indicate that the majority of apprehended disco net fishers are Muslims. In a sense, the discussion of this illegal livelihood activity crosses over into identity politics at the everyday level. The fact that the majority of the state fisheries authorities are from the majority Sinhalese ethnic group adds an extra layer of power dynamics to perceptions of legitimacy, as is taken up in the next section.

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5.4.3   Informal actors and norms

Since the 1940s, the main informal institutions that represent fishermen, ensure their welfare and enforce informal norms and rules are the fisheries cooperatives and the more recently established Rural Fisheries Organisations (RFOs). Guided by the Cooperative Societies Act (№ 5) of 1972 and the Fisheries Cooperative Constitution (Scholtens, 2016), fisheries cooperatives have played an important role in mobilising social capital as conduits for government subsidies (in the past), marketing points and access points for new technology (Amarasinghe, 2009). An interesting and important change in fisheries cooperatives came about in 2010, when the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development introduced the RFOs (Scholtens, 2016). These organisations were intended to address the inefficiencies that characterised the cooperatives and were under the direct authority of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. The RFOs were designed to act as the main conduit for government assistance (Scholtens, 2016). As a result, in most coastal communities, two parallel fisheries organisations were operating, sometimes with the same official members sitting on both committees.

The importance of these fisheries organisations in fisheries governance is context-specific. In southern coastal communities, these organisations seem to be limited to providing welfare and credit (Wickramasinghe and Bavinck, 2015), but they continue to play a significant role in northern communities (Scholtens, 2016). In the case of Trincomalee, these organisations have had varying levels of significance, especially in relation to governance and the enforcement of norms and rules. In most fishing communities, these societies command a certain level of respect and obedience, as is illustrated by the following extract about a Tamil Hindu traditional fishing community called Keeri. Fishing has been practiced for generations in this community, mostly by those of the fisher caste. In Keeri, the Hindu temple played a key role in the decision making of the fisheries societies. However, in certain other communities, specifically where relative 'newcomers' to the sector engage in fishing, the authority of the organisations to enforce regulations is seen as contested:

> We haven't made a single raid in Keeri, for example. Once the president of the Keeri fisheries society told me that we don't even invite those who engage in illegal fishing activities to a wedding in one of our houses! They are that strict about it. But what happens in the other areas is that the purse seiners have money and therefore power. If the fisheries society is going against them, they will take it over and control it.

(Government officer, Department of Fisheries, Trincomalee)

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In Keeri, sanctions against those engaging in illegal fishing extend to social spaces such as religious activities. However, disco nets are being operated in this community, mainly by one person, as is elaborated later in this section. The extract above also points to the overwhelmingly dominant power the disco net fishers possess through their strong financial position.

In contrast to the situation in Keeri, a Muslim fisherman, Akbar, who opposed the practice of disco net fishing, explained how the fisheries societies and religious institutions (i.e. the mosque) in certain predominantly Muslim areas such as Kinniya actually encourage the illegal activity. This encouragement is based on a reciprocal social norm stipulating that, if the fishermen earn more money, they will be better able to support the mosque:

> They are all doing disco net fishing in Kinniya. Because of that, no one is going to go against that […] People who use the disco net are registered with the society, but they don't follow the society rules, and the police also support them […] [The fisheries] society tells them to go [fishing]. If they go for it [disco net fishing], they will give money to the mosque.

(Muslim one-day fisherman[45], Jamaliya)

Opposition to disco net fishing among fishers is driven by several factors. Some of these suggest purely economic reasons, such as the steep and sudden price drops in fish when fish caught using disco nets flood the market. However, this position is also based on the need for a balance among the various groups of fishermen and between what is caught and consumed now and what should be left for the future. This confirms Siriwardana-de Zoysa's (2015) analysis of the same fishing activity in Trincomalee. Those who oppose disco net fishing regard the illegal fishers as newcomers to the sector, with a limited skillset, equipment and knowledge. The illegal fishers therefore thought to have little interest in engaging in a variety of fishing methods. This seems to imply that the newcomers have different value/moral systems and different end goals for their activities. Concern for the sustainability of the fish stock, a sense of equity and sharing, and social and economic justice were not seen as part of their normative structures. A Sinhalese wholesale fish dealer, who is against disco net fishing, explained this as follows:

> They [Muslim fishermen] only go for disco net fishing. They know only that. They only know the two illegal fishing methods: disco net and dynamite. If those two are stopped, they have nothing.

(Sinhalese wholesale fish dealer, Trincomalee town)

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[45] This fisherman used a one-day, mechanised boat with nets or long line hooks for fish capture.

In contrast, the disco net fishers justify their fishing based on the social norm of increased communal wellbeing. In places like coastal Kinniya, which is almost completely Muslim and where dissent towards disco net fishing is minimal, this feeling was clearly expressed. My conversations with disco net fishers were usually coloured by this feeling of collective—rather than individual—profit making as extract below shows. This feeling of 'collectiveness' or generating livelihoods, and profits for a larger portion of the community, as opposed to atomistic or individualised motivations of those who opposed disco net fishing closely aligns with the work of Siriwardana-de Zoysa (2015).

> We can earn millions from disco net [fishing] and can help the people. People who don't have a job can work in the disco net [fishing], and they can earn the money.

(Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

However, it is not only Muslims who engage in disco net fishing in Trincomalee. A sizeable group of Sinhalese fishermen and a handful of Tamils also use this method. I met one such Tamil disco net owner in Keeri. As discussed above, Keeri has a strong collective dissenting attitude towards disco net fishing. Nevertheless, I came across a powerful disco net owner in this community. This man's name was Ranga, and he continues to operate disco nets, while the few others who used to do so in his community have stopped. The president of the *kovil* committee, the president of the fisheries society, Ranga's bookkeeper and his driver all confided that he operates disco nets with a crew of Muslim fishermen. However, Ranga did not confirm this himself, as he was extremely suspicious of our motives for being in his community.

> He has a disco net, and Muslims are the ones who operate these nets for him. Muslim people are the ones who mostly do the disco net fishing; that's why he [Ranga] has Muslim people to go for disco net fishing. Our people don't go for the disco net fishing; maybe one or two people might go for it.

(Tamil wholesale fish trader, Keeri)

Formal regulatory mechanisms have the potential to interfere with local regulatory processes in a negative way, which can become counter-productive and trigger consequences for the moral and institutional fabric of the fisheries communities. Therefore, mapping the institutional landscape of different fisheries contexts is important (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee, 2015). Further, stakeholders are strategic in the way they frame problems to reflect their own interests, with a clear view that the solution will depend on the framing of the question (Jentoft et al., 2010, cited in Scholtens, 2016). To find a solution to compliance

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problems, it is essential to understand these different framings, the interests behind them and the social processes that give meaning to the actions of different stakeholders (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee, 2009). This section has mapped the different stakeholder groups linked to disco net fishing and presented the different perspectives of these groups, as well as describing the normative structures and sense of morality that underline the actions of these different stakeholders. People's understanding of morality is not uniform across the different fishing groups in a given context, and these differing understandings provide an enabling space for the legitimisation of the illegal fishing activities, as is elaborated in the next section.

5.5   Perceptions of state–society relations and legitimacy

Irrespective of tightened state regulations, disco net fishing continued in Trincomalee, and this section discusses how perceptions of legitimacy have enabled this continuation. Muslim fishermen engaging in disco net fishing perceive the legitimacy of the state actors, rules and procedures as disputed because of lacking consistency, predictability, fairness and trust. Further, perceptions of marginalisation or being targeted unfairly and of the state authorities engaging in social practices such as accepting bribes have contributed to an erosion of legitimacy. The post-war transition has played an important role in creating such conditions.

5.5.1   The war to post-war transition and changing regulations

The changes over time in state fisheries regulations, enforcement authorities and enforcement processes, especially from the war to the non-war period in Trincomalee, have resulted in a lack of consistency and therefore predictability of state fisheries regulations and procedures. For Mazoor, a disco net owner and an active fisherman, it was during this time, when the 'LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] was also in the sea', that the government should have had strict rules and regulations:

> We went fishing even during the time when the LTTE was there and when there were bomb blasts. In 1990, one boat of ours was burnt in the sea. At that time, I was also at sea […] Only after the end of the war, the pass and license systems have been introduced. Even when there was the LTTE, they [the government] allowed us disco net fishing […] The government destroyed the LTTE, but more problems have begun now.

> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

The disco net fishers question the rationale of a livelihood that was 'legal' during the troubled times of war becoming 'illegal' during the stable non-war times. This change of the state's stance on disco net

fishing at the critical juncture of the ending of the war undermines the legitimacy of the regulations in the view of the disco net fishers. This is likely to be the case especially in war-affected areas such as Trincomalee.

The extract below, from Mazoor, highlights that the war to post-war transition is actually a blurred line at the level of the everyday lived experience of people in the war-affected areas. In fact, they perceive that they had more 'freedom' during the war to engage in their livelihoods. They see the requirement to obtain a license to access the sea for their livelihood as a form of 'control' by the state.

> How can we continue the fishing here? They [the Navy or the Department of Fisheries] always keep arresting the people. They arrested one of my friends yesterday, because they have fished within the Navy border, and he still hasn't been released. Is it [fish in the sea] the property of Mahinda [the former president]? It is the property of the sea, so we go and catch it. The war should come again. All the Muslims are expecting to have a war. We were never against the LTTE. We always supported them […] I had many friends from the LTTE. Earlier, I used to go with them to Alankerny [a neighbouring village] and have food at their houses.

> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

The extract above also poses the question of who has the right to control and manage natural resources during times of war and non-war and specifically underscores the significance of time in terms of war to post-war transition, where 'new' power negotiations and legitimacies may take form. The state was a remote entity in resource governance during the war, as it gave priority to preventing security threats from the LTTE in the sea and on land. However, after the end of the war, state priorities seem to have changed, and the Muslim disco net fishers saw the introduction of new rules and the tightening of enforcement procedures, with the support of the Navy, as intrusions in their daily lives. Tensions around the disco net issue then overwhelmingly shaped the way those who engaged in the practice experienced the state. These fisherman compared the current experience of being governed by the state to the times when the 'LTTE was in the sea' and seemed to prefer the 'LTTE times', at least as far as it relates to livelihood governance.

5.5.2   The lack of fair procedures followed by government officials

Although mandated by the Fisheries Act, as explained above, the Navy acting as an enforcement authority in the post-war context challenges expectations and perceptions of fairness. People of all ethnicities—both military and civilians—share a history of violence in the directly war-affected areas of the country

such as Trincomalee. The military carrying out tasks at the state–society interface becomes even more problematic in such contexts. Further, the Navy is identified with the Sinhalese majority by the Muslim disco net fishers, and, in their eyes, this undermines the rightful power or authority of the Navy to carry out raids and arrests, as the following statement made by a Muslim disco net fisherman shows:

> Sinhalese and Tamils go for the disco net fishing in Trincomalee town; even yesterday, the Sinhalese have brought fish from disco net fishing. The Navy supports them, because they are of the same ethnicity. They help them ethnicity-wise.

> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

Further, the application of the regulations seems to be arbitrary, and the perception that the power possessed by the state actors is also arbitrary undermines their legitimacy in terms of fisheries regulation. Although Sub-section 46 of the Fisheries Act specifies that 'the authorised officer who seized the boat or other things shall, as soon as possible, produce the boat or other things before a Magistrate's court', the practice seems to be different, as was described by both the disco net fishers and the fisheries authorities. Arrests and the seizing of boats, equipment and fish catches were seen to be ad hoc in practice by the disco net fishers:

> The Navy will watch us when we go fishing. Some of them come and catch and beat us, some of them will take the fish and leave us alone, and some of them will catch us and hand us over to the police, and then police will hand us over to the courts.

> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

The feelings of marginalisation or discrimination expressed by the Muslim fishermen were not limited to discussions of disco net fishing. These feelings included perceptions of not being listened to and of the lack of provision of fisheries-related services and infrastructure facilities, as the following exchange with Mazoor illustrates:

> *Researcher*: Why don't you have multi-day boats in Kinniya?

> *Mazoor*: We don't have a harbour to keep multi-day boats. That harbour [Cod Bay] is only for Sinhalese. Who is going to give us a harbour, even if we ask?

> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

Cod Bay Harbour is primarily used by multi-day boats. During the monsoons that affect the southern and western coasts, boats from those coasts operate out of the Cod Bay Harbour. Because of a lack of data on multi-day boats and the operations of Cod Bay Harbour, I am not able to provide an ethnic breakdown of the multi-day boat operators or owners using Cod Bay Harbour. However, for the current analysis, perceptions such as these, held by the Muslim fishermen, clearly strengthen their argument that the fisheries authorities and decision makers discriminate against them in favour of the Sinhalese majority group.

5.5.3   Space for bribery

The legitimacy of the state actors in relation to fisheries is further challenged by the fact that they are seen to accept and even expect bribes from the disco net fishers. Muslim disco net fishermen admitted that they bribe the officials in the Department of Fisheries, the Navy and the police. Although it was not possible to gather conclusive data on the sums involved or the frequency of such bribes, comments made in passing implied that these bribes vary and may take the form of, for example, a cigarette, fresh or dried fish, or cash, and, on average, they need about 50,000 LKR in bribes (roughly one-fourth of their fish catch) for a fishing trip, in the event that they are arrested. The bribes were usually offered when they were apprehended at sea to prevent seizure or during the renewal of the licenses for the boat and equipment.

> Latheef said to the *mudalali*[46], 'Hewage [the Fisheries Inspector at that time in Kinniya, who was later given a punishment transfer] came the other day, I gave him a Marlboro cigarette, and he said he doesn't want that one—He needs 1000 rupees and he asked me why I didn't answer his calls and then he took 1000 rupees from my pocket and went back'.

> (Observations at the wholesale market, Kinniya)

However, in 2014, at the time of the data collection, the general feeling among the disco net fishers was that the space for bribery had become constricted, adding to their feelings of despair and anger. In their cost calculations, the disco net fishermen included the cost of bribes along with the other expenses of the fishing operation, such as annual insurance and license renewal. In their line of thinking, there seems to be no difference between the above categories. In a sense, they trusted that the authorities would grant them the necessary licenses in return for the 'formal' dues, such as insurance, and the 'informal' fees in the form of bribes, so all of this was included in the costing package. However, at the point of the data

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[46] Wholesale fish dealer.

collection, the authorities were seen to have betrayed this trust:

> We do all the things that they ask us to do, but they are the ones who are not giving us the license. The insurance charge is 14,000 rupees for one boat. We have given lots of money […] They don't allow us to go fishing after taking the money. They should have stopped allowing us to go fishing from the start. They promised us that we could get the license if we do the insurance, but they didn't give the license, so now we are going to ask them to give us the insurance money back.

> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

Fisheries compliance literature suggests that, from the rationalist point of view, corruption weakens enforcement because the risk of getting caught is assessed to be comparatively lower (Polinsky and Shaval, 2000). From a normative or moral point of view, trust in government institutions is seen to be weakened because of corruption and, for that reason, compliance declines (Levi et al., 2009). The case of the disco net fishers in Trincomalee clearly shows that the activity continues because of the opportunities available for offering bribes; however, it is not that the risk of arrests have become lower. It is more that there are higher possibilities of being released after being captured, when a bribe is offered and accepted.

5.6 The making or breaking of legitimacy: Procedural justice and the trustworthiness of the state

The extent of trustworthiness of the government and procedural justice affect people's willingness to adhere to formal rules and institutions such as the police and courts (Levi et al., 2009). When people perceive that government officials follow a set of fair procedures in an even and consistent manner (Levi, 1997; Tyler, 1990) and that they do so in a predictable and trustworthy fashion (Levi et al.,, 2009), people are more likely to see these officials as legitimate (Levi et al., 2009; Tyler, 2001). Predictability and trustworthiness are linked to consistency. The inconsistency in the application of regulations by one government actor, such as the Navy in the above description, and the inconsistency created by multiple state actors operating in the same space and on the same issue create a lack of predictability and unevenness and therefore challenge the legitimacy of these state actors as well as the regulations. Ironically, while state actors are perceived to be unpredictable in the application of formal rules, one predictable trait is their willingness to accept bribes from the disco net fishers.

Muslim fishermen who engage in disco net fishing perceive that the state has failed them at multiple levels, in terms of trust. They question the ability of the state to ensure national security during the war,

because their equipment and craft were destroyed in the sea. Post-war, they lack trust in the state, which they perceive as an ethnic majority power that supports the Sinhalese majority. Finally, the unwritten, informal system that they had relied on years, which was based on the understanding that they would be allowed to continue the practice of disco net fishing in return for paying fees (including bribes), seems to be breaking down, and this has further eroded their trust in the state. Therefore, one could argue that the disco net fishers feel that the state has betrayed their trust at multiple levels, and this has affected the way they see the state as a legitimate actor to be obeyed or followed. As their trust in the state has broken down and their perceptions of the lack of legitimacy have grown, the disco net fishermen have turned to other forms of legitimacies.

5.7   Community relations and morality

While the legitimacy of state actors in relation to preventing illegal fishing is being challenged, as shown above, another 'legitimising' process is taking place at the societal level. The disco net fishers use multiple strategies to gain and maintain acceptance for their fishing activities at the fishing community level. These strategies are based on shared social norms and morals.

Kinniya fishermen's identity seems in a way to be directly tied to their method of fishing, which is disco net fishing. Kinniya Muslim disco net fishers take pride in the fact that they are large-scale fishers compared with other neighbouring Muslim fishing communities, such as Muttur, for example. The fishermen from Muttur use primarily small-scale, one-day, non-motorised boats, in contrast to Kinniya fishermen, who operate with more crew members, generate higher profits and use fishing techniques and equipment that can catch a larger quantity of fish in one trip.

> *Naanga ellarum alli edukura party, ondu rendu pidika virupamila.* [We catch things in one scoop; we don't like catching one or two].
>
> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

Disco net fishermen are proud of their generosity in giving free fish to a diverse group of people. Giving free fish to crew members and those who provide support services such as cleaning the boat, sorting the fish from the net or carrying the fish catch from the shore to the market is the general norm for fishermen who operate mechanised craft. Going beyond this, the disco net fishers also gave free fish to general

onlookers on the beach, including military personnel and regular visitors (including the research team), and the fishermen were quite proud of this expanded norm of giving.

My analysis shows that this giving of free fish is used as a legitimising strategy, where societal acceptance and support for their fishing activities is sought in reciprocation for the gift. This happens at different levels and with a multitude of stakeholders. At one level, the fish is given in expectation of reciprocity in the future from those who hold power and have influence over the continuation of the fishing activity, such as the military. Whether this act could be considered a bribe is unclear; the general expectation from the side of the fishermen seemed to be that, in case they need the help of the military at some point, these people will remember the fishermen's generous acts. At another level, distributing fish for free in the neighbourhood justifies the fishing activity among their peers, as well as in the wider society, which builds legitimacy for their activities at the community level. Further, this act hints at profit redistribution or almost a welfare approach, rather than pure individual profit maximisation. The fact that these fishers present themselves as benefactors further strengthens their case. As described in the following extract, this also includes a religious element:

> When I was working at the *waadi*[47], if we got a disco net fish catch, we would keep about 20 kg of that fish separate, and we would give that fish to the people who work at the *waadi* and the elders who were there. I give to the elders because they can't earn anything and there isn't anyone to help them, so I give free fish to them to earn merit. And also widows and women who don't have any support from siblings come there; it will be a merit for us if we help them.

> (Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

Support from religious leaders undoubtedly legitimises the activity within the community. In Kinniya, at the time of the data collection, the leader of the mosque is also the president of the disco net fishing society, and he has intervened on behalf of the fishermen at the central government level in Colombo, as well as at the district level. The fact that the religious leader supports the fishing activity creates a sense of moral acceptance and sends a message of the acceptability of the activity, at least within Kinniya. However, when this community leader deals with the formal structures, he does not carry enough bargaining power to negotiate for a settlement in their favour and. As the following quotation shows, when this leader was insulted by the formal structures, there were several effects in the community.

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[47] Small buildings on the beach, maintained by the wholesale fish dealers, often temporary, for storing or buying fish from the fishermen.

We have sent people to Colombo to meet the DG [Director General]. When we went to the Fisheries Department to meet the AD [Assistant Director], he told us to leave before he speaks to us in filthy language. He spoke like that in front of a mosque leader. He is a mosque leader and president of the disco net fishing society. He didn't respect him and spoke like that. Is this the way an educated man speaks to the people? After that, we didn't say anything and we left. All the people from the Fisheries Department are okay. The AD is the one who doesn't give us the license. The destiny of Kinniya is going to change because of the AD.

(Muslim disco net fisherman, Kinniya)

The most important effect of the interaction described in this extract was that whatever regard the disco net fishermen had for the fisheries authorities was lost, which further undermined the state's legitimacy as a regulating authority. Further, the refusal or the perceived insult to their religious leader took the tension between the fishermen and the authorities beyond the realm of livelihoods to that of religion and therefore collective identity. This has important implications, given that the fisheries authorities are of the majority Sinhalese ethnic group, and this exchange occurred when anti-Muslim sentiments among Sinhalese Buddhists were at a peak.

The case of Ranga, who operates disco nets in Keeri—the Tamil Hindu community that collectively opposes disco net fishing—provides an interesting contrast to the case of Kinniya Muslims. Within his community, Ranga relies on a dual image of community benefactor and violent thug to continue using the disco net. First, he has cultivated the image of village 'patron' by 'supporting' around 80 fishing families with credit during the lean fishing season. At one point during the lean fishing period, he explained, in front of his employees, how he supports the crew members of around 40 boats by providing them with credit, with the understanding that those indebted to him will sell their fish catches exclusively to him during the fishing season. The strategy of binding fish suppliers to ensure a continuous supply through provision of credit is a common practice among fish dealers. However, Ranga seems to be providing credit at a much more extensive scale, compared with his fellow fish dealers in the community.

Though he [Ranga] is like that, he is a good person. It is only because of him that some families are surviving; he helps the poor people. He gives money to the fishers, and that is how he keeps his suppliers. Although he speaks roughly, he is not like that.

(Tamil fisher wife, Keeri)

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However, woven alongside the image of benefactor is the implicit and explicit image of Ranga as a village villain. In the following extract, one of his fellow fish dealers explains how Ranga is perceived within the community, recounting an incident that took place with crew members from outside the community.

> Ranga doesn't know how to interact with people. He uses dirty words. I don't like that. He is used to drinking alcohol […] They had some problem at the *waadi* yesterday about his setting a lower price for disco net people […] When the suppliers [Muslim fishermen] questioned Ranga about the price, he tried to beat them up and then, without paying them any money, he [Ranga] sent them away.

> (Tamil wholesale fish dealer, Keeri)

Additionally, irrespective of the prominent patron role that he seems to be playing within the community, Ranga was completely absent from the annual village *kovil* festival, which is a significant event for the community. The village transforms during the festival by turning vegetarian and abstaining from fishing. All the wholesale fish dealers from the village were at the forefront of this festival, except Ranga, which also hints at a certain distance he maintains from the communal rituals and practices.

Ranga has also strengthened his position as a disco net operator through a well-established network outside the village, made up of actors such as the police and Sinhalese fish dealers at the main Trincomalee wholesale fish market. The following extract from his bookkeeper illustrates the nature of his relationship with the police, which involves a well-practiced form of bribery: Providing the police with free fish was a common practice for him, and, during our frequent visits to Keeri, we observed on a number of occasions how the police jeeps would pass the wholesale market in the village and drive right up to Ranga's fish *waadi*, stop there and go into the *waadi* or speak to the workers at the *waadi*.

> The police had come to meet Ranga *Anna*. They come for fish, but they don't buy it for cash; they get fish for free. They never buy the fish for cash; he gets things done by giving free fish. He gives the fish to the officers in the higher positions in the police, but these people [the junior officers] always come here. We ignore them.

> (Tamil bookkeeper for Ranga, Keeri)

Faced with the failure of the state to cater to their basic needs, people turn to alternative mechanisms to legitimise their activities (Roberts, 2012). The Muslim fishers turning to their own community members

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and community leaders and being successful in garnering their support for disco net fishing clearly supports this point. In Ranga's case, he has been able to mobilise support from actors outside his own community. These findings show that the disco net fishers are harnessing support from both horizontal and vertical connections in their legitimisation processes.

Based on a legal pluralist viewpoint, Wickramasinghe and Bavinck (2015) have argued that state and community institutions have both a parallel and a contradictory impact on fisheries governance, and the current analysis supports this point. In certain instances, the institutional and normative multiplicity of the state and community results in clashes, as shown by the case of the Kinniya Muslim disco net fishers who defy the state authorities and rely on community-based linkages to legitimise their fishing activity.

5.8   Conclusions

'Wicked problems', such as fisheries governance issues, are often symptoms of larger structural concerns. For example, in the case of Trincomalee, a minority group's perceptions of discrimination at the hand of the state. The case of illegal fishing clearly illustrates the need to understand fisheries governance issues as a manifestation of a larger problem at the level of state–society interaction, specifically regarding the legitimacy of the actors involved in governing fisheries in Trincomalee. Further, resource governance problems can also cause or contribute to the exacerbation of larger socio-political issues, and, in post-war contexts such as Trincomalee, governance becomes a highly sensitive issue that must be handled with careful thought and planning.

The case at hand also underscores the role played by timing and context in shaping legitimising processes in a way that is unique to post-war contexts such as Trincomalee. During war, the fisheries sector and resources were relatively ungoverned and unregulated in Trincomalee. In the post-war context, they have become spaces, activities and actors subject to the regulation and governance of the state authorities. This shift has severely restricted the continuation of the livelihood that the disco net fishermen engaged in during the war.

Faced with the perceived failure of the state as a legitimate actor to regulate fisheries, the disco net fishermen turn towards other forms of everyday politics, power dynamics and local legitimacies. However, these local legitimacies also vary in the way they manifest and draw power. The disco net fishers actively create local legitimacies through the norms and practices of redistribution in the form of

giving away free fish, providing for not only the family but for the community as a whole, and projecting themselves as 'proud large-scale fishermen', as opposed to their small-scale neighbours. However, there are also exceptions to the rules of the local legitimacies game, as shown by the case of Ranga, who has actively created a persona of a benefactor to the community while also relying on a dense network of contacts with power holders such as the police.

There is no uniformity in the rules shaping community-level institutions and their actions or the state institutions and their actions. Certain Muslim-dominated communities are divided on the disco net issue, whereas other areas show an almost complete acceptance of the practice, which is supported by not only the fisheries societies, but also the mosques, as was observed in Kinniya. Parallel to this, one of the state actors—the police—is seen to act as an accomplice and, in this instance, in partnership. In a sense, the Muslim fishers who engage in disco net fishing seem to use the influence of one state actor to defy the rules and regulations of another—the fisheries authorities—resulting in fragmentation in the state apparatus and in inter-community relations. Therefore, the contestations are not simply about forum shopping between the formal state and informal community institutions and norms; they are also about negotiating the norms and navigating within the formal and the informal rules of the game.

Most developing country fisheries contexts operate on a system of plurality of formal and informal rules and norms, and focusing on only one of these elements will give a partial picture and result in management failures, which the case of disco net fishers clearly illustrates. More specifically, the case of illegal fishing in Trincomalee illustrates that overlapping and competing regulatory norms, rules and actors create differentiated and dynamic fishing-related outcomes. When shared war-related violence forms the backdrop of interaction for these actors and normative frameworks, negotiations about access to resources and regulatory efforts become not just a livelihood and resource management effort, but a broader and more sensitive political issue. Hence, it is necessary to understand and address fisheries governance issues as 'wicked problems' and as processes that need to go beyond conventional planning approaches. Adding to Jentoft and Chuenpagdee's (2009: 559) argument that the solutions to these wicked governance problems are not in the commonly used marine and coastal management toolboxes, and that they are 'institutional, political and even philosophical', I conclude that, to be effective, such solutions should be located in an understanding of locally and historically grounded norms, rationales and institutions.

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Chapter Six: Conclusions

This thesis has examined fishing and fish marketing in the eastern coastal district of Trincomalee in post-war Sri Lanka. Through stories of fish, where people fish, fish capture methods, seasonal changes and visits to the temple, I examined how ethnicity, gender, religion and to a lesser degree caste and class intertwine with the way people make a living through fisheries. More specifically, I have analysed how fisher livelihoods of men and women living in coastal Trincomalee have been shaped and reshaped by social, political and identity dynamics, primarily at the mundane everyday level and, to a certain extent, at the wider macro level. The overall research question that this thesis addressed was **'How do the differentiated identities of men and women affect their livelihoods, and how do these livelihoods shape identity-related dynamics and social tensions in fishing communities of post-war eastern Sri Lanka?'**

Rather than providing a summary of the conclusions of the preceding chapters in sequential order, in this chapter, I draw out the trends emerging from the different chapters under the four specific research questions introduced in Chapter 1, with theoretical references where appropriate.

6. 1 How do religions and moralities shape livelihoods and *vice versa*?

Economic activities, such as the fishing livelihoods discussed in this thesis, are deeply and intricately embedded in the cultural and social fabric of the daily lives of individuals, families, communities and institutions. In Chapter 2, I focused on one such set of socio-cultural systems: the (religious) moral economy of fishing. Given the constant danger to assets and lives, fishing as an occupation is profoundly shaped by religious beliefs and religious morality at the individual and family levels, especially among Buddhists and Hindus. This trend is not unique to the case at hand (see Acheson 1981; Kurien, 1995; Ram, 1991). However, in the Sri Lankan case discussed in this thesis, this sense of risk was heightened during the civil war, when fishers not only pitted themselves against nature, but also faced risks to life and equipment at the hands of the Sri Lankan military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This heightened risk propelled an urgent need to seek divine protection for fishers of all ethnic and religious groups in Trincomalee. The coastal Sinhalese Buddhist fishers continued the historic traditions of 'borrowing' the protection of Tamil Hindu deities, against a backdrop of ethnic tensions between these

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two ethno-religious groups. This practice clearly illustrates the complex and dynamic interaction patterns that define the eastern coastal strip of Sri Lanka (Gaasbeek 2010, Siriwardane-de Zoysa, 2015, Klem 2012).

In Chapter 3, the case of Muslim fishermen selling their fish at the auction centre managed by the mosque, sometimes at prices lower than the market rate, shows how the aims of obtaining utility and achieving spiritual fulfilment clearly coexisted. Men and women consciously switched between 'different', but often overlapping, justifications for engaging in economic activities in certain ways. This closely corroborates the economic sociology premises of embeddedness and economic actions being influenced by the social morals in a given society (Booth, 1994: 653; Hollingsworth, 2006: 103; Sayer, 2004: 2; see also Narre, 2011; Polanyi, 1957: 46). More specifically, this trend also illustrates the Weberian ((1922) 1978: 63–64) notion of 'economically oriented action'.

Focusing on the nexus between religious morality and livelihoods, this thesis found five different mechanisms that mediate such religious morality and livelihoods.

First, religious norms, beliefs and rituals that mould economic activities (Sayer 2004) are constructed as men and women give them meaning and practice. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, in the case of Muslim men, the duty of providing for the family was prioritised above observing the religious fasting during the month of *Ramazan* (or *Ramadan*), based on the narrative of fishing being a physically draining job. These men relied on the strength of the fasting practices of their wives and families to achieve religious fulfilment, reasoning that it would not have been possible for their families to do this without the financial support that the men provided. Fishers' understanding of how fisheries work is based on 'powerful and sincerely held' religious beliefs (Brown, 2008). However, this thesis has argued that these religious beliefs are neither fixed nor static, but rather change based on the context or the need of the day. By focusing on individual meaning-making processes, this thesis concluded that men and women use the malleable nature of seemingly static religious doctrine to mix, match and choose spiritual practices and beliefs to suit the need and the occasion. Thus, rather than sole devotion to one religion (or the basic premises of a particular religion), fishers attach meanings to, adopt and adapt basic religious tenets and ideologies that provide meaning and justification for their livelihood activities.

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As discussed in Chapter 2, Buddhists rationalised their attachment to the Hindu Gods and Goddesses in two ways. Given that the Hindu pantheon is sought by devotees for blessings, protection and the fulfilment of material wishes, the Sinhalese Buddhists also turned to these Gods and Goddesses, more than to the Buddhist temple. This practice has been clearly illustrated in work by others on 'practical Buddhism' (Nash, 1966; Southwold, 1978). Studying Trincomalee, Siriwardana-de Zoysa (2015) also remarked on the shared religious practices of syncretic Hindus and Buddhists, without attempting to understand why this practice is taking place. This thesis provides a more nuanced analysis, through the explorations of Buddhists' decision to turn to the Hindu pantheon, as accentuated by the contradiction that women and men saw between the Buddhist principle of not taking the life of another being and the killing of fish for a living. This analysis leads to my opposition to Gupta's (2003) claim that fishing is despised as an occupation in Sri Lanka because it is fundamentally contrary to Buddhist ethics. Apart from the need to clearly define what 'Buddhist ethics' is, Sinhalese Buddhists continuing to engage in fishing and to seek divine protection from the Tamil Hindu deities complicates Gupta's simplification of fishing as being despised in Sri Lanka.

Second, looking at how religious beliefs and rituals take shape as men and women give them meaning, this thesis found (Chapter 2) that the understanding of morality is not uniform across different groups in a given geographical context. These differentiated understandings have resulted in two opposing positionalities in terms of the moral economy of illegal fishing in Trincomalee, providing an enabling space for the continued justification of 'illegal' activities, while also creating space for the continued opposition of this activity by other fishing groups. These opposing positionalities are based on multiple factors: morality in terms of what is right and wrong for the present and for future generations; perceptions of the lack of legitimacy of the fishing regulators' efforts to ban this particular type of fishing; support or opposition for the so-called illegal activity at the local level; competition for resources; and identity politics, which are driven by macro-level political discourses. Therefore, the moral economy needs to be understood through the multiple lenses of economics, politics and communal support, as well as context- and time-bound notions of what is right and wrong. Therefore, while agreeing with Sayer (2004) that economic values and ethical or moral values do come into tension during the decision-making process, this thesis has contended that, rather than representing a simple dichotomy between egoism and altruism (Sayer 2004), these values exist on a spectrum, with a range of shades and complex combinations found in between.

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Third, the findings of this research indicate that the shaping of livelihoods by religious morality is mediated by other factors such as gender and class. The use of the intersectionality framework within the thesis resulted in this understanding of religious morality as being mediated by other identity categories. For example, in Buddhist households, it was the women who were principally responsible for seeking protection for their male family members who went out to sea and for seeking prosperity in the form of a good fish catch. Buddhist men also engaged in religious rituals prior to fishing trips, but the rituals necessitating more self-discipline and the sacrifice of daily comforts, such as fasting for a period of 14 days to receive blessings from the Gods and Goddesses, were clearly women's duty. In Muslim households, it was the women's responsibility to observe the fast during the month of Ramazan; the constructed narrative among the Muslim fishermen was that they are exempted from fasting because of the hardships of fishing work.

Fourthly, the case of illegal fishing discussed in Chapter 5 illustrates that morality is also ethnicised. The popular discourse around illegal fishing in Trincomalee among those who oppose the practice took a clear normative stance against the fishing activity in question as an immoral activity and against those who engage in it—Muslims, the 'other' group, who were seen to embody the antithesis of 'moral' fishermen. Among other things, as Chapter 2 introduces, a moral fisherman embodies values such as ensuring a livelihood for future generations by preserving the fish stocks; therefore, he is motivated by more than purely profit maximisation. In contrast, the Muslim fishermen in Chapters 2 and 3 were constructed as the 'other', an immoral and greedy lot focused only on their profit margins. However, the morality that the Muslim fishermen constructed in both chapters was based on pride in being large-scale fishermen and was confirmed by the legitimacy that they earned from the local population. As shown in Chapter 5, for Muslim fishermen, the legitimacy of the state to regulate fisheries was contingent on the norms, values and moralities that the state acted upon. This view was influenced by macro-level ideological discourses on Muslims, and when these fishermen's own values, norms and moralities were in opposition to state regulations, the result was a lack of compliance on their part. Therefore, to be effective and efficient, fishing regulations must factor in these processes through which morality is constructed, be it through ethnicity, religion or otherwise.

Finally, religion and morality shaped livelihoods through the involvement of religious leaders in fisheries management and decision making at the community level. In certain communities in Trincomalee, religious institutions such as the mosque or the Hindu *kovil* played a key role in the decision making of

the fisheries societies and in fisheries activities. As a result, the norms and rules governing the functions and decision-making processes of these community-level organisations have come to be based on multiple value and norm systems, drawing on a mix of economic and religious or spiritual rationality. Although it did not provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of religious bodies in fisheries governance, this thesis brought to light an informal governance mechanism that has received scant attention in recent scholarly work on fisheries governance in Sri Lanka; this is discussed in Chapters 1 and 5.

In summary, acknowledging the embedded nature of the economic activity of fishing is a good starting point for reaching a nuanced and grounded understanding of the fisheries as a sector or as an economic activity. This type of understanding is necessary to prevent regulatory failures such as the attempts of the state to curtail illegal fishing in Trincomalee. However, this acknowledgement is not sufficient, either through the theoretical lens of moral economy or through a pragmatic lens of fisheries governance. To this end, in addition to illustrating the ways in which economic activities are socially and morally embedded, this thesis argues that the nature of the embeddedness is dynamic, time- and space-bound, and mediated by how men and women chose to embody and disembody morality, religiosity and competing or complementary value systems. A failure to comprehend and respond to these dynamisms will result not only in failures of natural resource governance; it may well spill over into political and ideological grievances and tensions.

6. 2 How do the intersecting identities of ethnicity and gender shape livelihoods and *vice versa*?

Eight years since the end of the war, ethnicity and nationalisms based on ethnicity continue to be used for divisive political motives at different levels of power and social organisation in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is a continued need to study ethnicity in its different manifestations. However, popular ethnicised discourses are insufficient to explain the social inequalities and tensions found in post-war Sri Lanka. This thesis explored how ethnicity is mediated by other categories of social identity such as gender and class. While ethnicity prescribes livelihoods practices available for people of a certain gender or class, the practices of livelihoods as they evolve in everyday life also inform and shape ethnic identity at the micro level.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 3 of this thesis, the academic literature on conflict in Sri Lanka has emphasised ethnicity (Frerks and Bart, 2004), sometimes at the expense of masking social inequalities emerging at the intersection of gender, caste and class (Silva, Sivapragasam and Thanges, 2009). More recently, however, important bodies of literature adding nuance to the work on identity and conflict in Sri Lanka—beyond the almost exclusive focus on ethnicity—have originated from scholars focusing on women's experiences (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Perera-Mubarak, 2012; Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2004; Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004) and those focusing on everyday inter-group interactions (Gaasbeek, 2010; Siriwardane-de Zoysa, 2015). This thesis has built on both of these bodies of work and confirmed that ethnicity is mediated by other social identity categories such as gender and class. Further, it has added to the ongoing discussion about identity and livelihoods in post-war Sri Lanka, based on the analysis that, while different identity categories mediate differentiated access to livelihoods, people's livelihood activities and the identities that are linked to these livelihoods—especially those that are traditional, such as fishing—also shape how they see themselves.

Fredrik Barth (1969), in his seminal essay, states that, more than the shared cultural characteristics of a group, what defines ethnicity is the difference that distinguishes them from others. Through its deployment of the intersectionality lens, this thesis confirmed that difference and how difference is constructed and maintained by group members, as well as elites outside the specific groups, do define what ethnicity is and what it means to group members at a given point in time. In times of civil unrest, ethnicity became a political and social construct used by political elites (Stokke and Uyangoda, 2011) and by general masses, as is shown in this thesis in Chapter 5 on illegal fishing, where difference and the need to maintain difference become heightened. The clear distinction of 'immoral others' who threaten the sustainability of future fisheries, based on their own seemingly greedy intentions for personal gain, coming from most Sinhalese and Tamil fishermen and aimed at Muslims, is an example of such maintenance of difference. In this case, the hegemonic identity category of ethnicity is intricately interwoven with the type of livelihood activity. Therefore, this thesis found that ethnic identity in fisheries is mediated by other social identities such as gender and, in this particular example, by the type of livelihood activity. Similar to the way men and women do gender, men and women of different ethnicities, castes and class groups also do ethnicity.

Continuing to use the intersectionality lens (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989), this thesis analysed how identity constructions mediate differentiated access to livelihood spaces for men and women. Chapter 4

explored how men and women from minority ethnic groups were excluded from wholesale fish marketing at the main wholesale market. Although Sinhalese Catholic women from Negambo sold fish at the markets in Negambo, in Chapter 3, I showed that Sinhalese Buddhist women living in Trincomalee who were originally from the Southern Province were completely excluded from the fish-capture and fish-selling spaces. Intersections of identity categories create hierarchies of power, encompassing dominant identity groups and marginalised or subverted identity groups.

Women, irrespective of ethnicity, were excluded from fishing-related spaces based on gendered cultural taboos and institutionalised practices, such as the exclusion of women's participation in the sector from the management bodies and the official statistics. This trend corresponds very clearly with feminist writers who deploy intersectionality lenses and explore how women are structurally marginalised (Staunæs, 2003) and how class, ethnicity and regional disparities intersect with gender to produce social difference (Bilge, 2010; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Nevertheless, the story of women in coastal Trincomalee is not one of exclusive and complete marginalisation, and this warrants a re-thinking of the application of the intersectionality lens to capture their agentive power in more detail.

In Chapter 3, for women, work in the lagoons or in the shallow sea areas had a greater meaning than merely being an income-generation activity. These were spaces where they could be independent and free, as they were physically away from the home environment and spending time with their peers, while also ensuring savings for their future and for their families and, in some cases, crossing constraining gendered cultural and structural boundaries. This thesis clearly illustrates that understanding the differences between men and women in terms of how they do gender is central to the analysis of economic activities or livelihoods (Milkman and Townsley, 1994).

However, I disagree with the argument of Milkman and Townsley (1994) that gendered divisions are based on a different logic and that, therefore, gender should not be 'lumped together' with other categories of subordination, such as race. I argue that it is important to study gender as it intersects with other identity categories. This thesis has found that gender is mediated through other identity categories and that it is at the intersection of these different categories that access is gained or denied. Especially the case of the gleaning Muslim women brought out how their minority ethnicity and lower class position in relation to the wider society, as well as historical associations with the gendered and ethnicised livelihood

had mediated access to only a certain type of livelihood activity, which generally seems to be denied to women of other ethnic and social groups.

Further, people are not passive recipients or victims of structural processes. In coastal Trincomalee, men and women used their agentive power in different ways and with different degrees of success to maximise their livelihood opportunities. In this use of agentive power through their livelihood activities, men and women shape identity discourses. The Muslim and indigenous (*veder*) women discussed in Chapter 3 have thrived on their very marginality and traversed the structurally created exclusionary boundaries and spaces by relying on their traditional knowledge and skills and, in certain cases, their marginality. Being part of kinship networks comprising both men and women helped them to cross these boundaries. In this way, women reconfigure the spaces that are available to them in terms of livelihoods.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, although the intersectionality approach allows for a nuanced analysis of the structural powers in operation that disadvantage certain groups compared with others, it lacks the capacity to capture people's agentive power to subvert these structural powers (Bilge, 2010; Collins, 2000; Staunæs, 2003). With the aim of addressing this gap in the intersectionality discourse, I turned to the actor-based (Long, 2004) and room-for-manoeuvre (Hilhorst, 2003) approaches to complement and extend my analysis to capture peoples' agentive power as discussed in the paragraph above.

In Chapter 4, the dealers in the market, who were Sinhalese Buddhist men from the Southern Province, were the border guards of the frontier during the war, under the Sinhalese nationalist banner. However, they also embodied the 'dare devil' risk taking characteristics of the profit-oriented entrepreneurial masculinities during the war, and post-war chose to break away from the fish traders' society that mediated their access to the market. In doing so, they threaten the discourse and practice of Sinhalese ethnic dominance at the market and may reconfigure the ethnicity-based power dynamics in and around the market. As introduced in Chapters 1 and 4, while the intersectionality approach enabled a nuanced understanding of marginalisation processes for women, masculinities and hegemonies theory proved to be more useful to understand the role that masculinity played in the economic sociology of fisheries in Trincomalee. The findings of this thesis closely corroborate the body of work on masculinity and nationalism discussed in Chapter 4: In nationalist conflicts, the dominant masculinity is that of defenders of freedom, honour, homeland and women (Enloe, 1990, cited in Nagel, 1998). Further, embodying

multiple masculinities, the wholesale dealers also embody the masculine form of entrepreneurs (Connell, 1995, cited in Bruni et al., 2004: 408).

However, hegemonies are not absolute or static. Men and women negotiate and renegotiate power structures, and some thrive on their very marginality. On this point, my findings correspond closely with the regional literature on the marginality of fisher-folk in India; specifically, Ram (1991) has argued that marginality carves out a space for people to articulate a distinct cultural identity that challenges the general caste hierarchies. Raghavan (1957) has made a similar case for Rodiya communities, who are considered the lowest caste group in the Sinhalese caste system, noting that they seem to thrive on their marginality.

Finally, while agreeing with Gaasbeek (2010) on the need to understand the multiplicity of people's identities, I oppose his rejection of hierarchies in identification. The processes of inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation described in the above sections confirm that hierarchies of social power exist, and understanding these hierarchies is important. However, these hierarchies of social and political power are dynamic. More specifically, the understanding of masculinity and femininity as plural, dynamic and negotiated, combined with the display of agentive power by subordinated or marginalised groups, results in hegemonies or structures of dominance that are continually shaped and reshaped at the everyday level. For example, there was no single image or embodiment of a wholesale fish dealer in the micro-world of coastal Trincomalee. The Sinhalese Buddhist men were at once ethno-nationalist heroes and risk-taking, immoral entrepreneurs who were also seen to provide economic and political leadership to the society. Importantly, there are multiple masculinities rather than one way of doing masculinity. These different ways of doing masculinity, in turn, challenge the dominant power in the market, as shown in the way the fishermen suppliers evaded the watchful eye of the fish traders and broke their bonds of obligation to sell their fish to particular dealers to whom they were indebted.

In conclusion, in post-war contexts such as Sri Lanka, society is still often violently divided along different identity lines, especially in terms of ethnicity: a 'Master Cleavage' as Klem (2013) calls it. In such a context, inclusive and sustainable post-war rebuilding and meaningful community cohesion require the understanding that a) ethnic identity is socially constructed and mediated by the enactment of other identity categories; b) men and women use agentive power in accessing livelihoods and, in this way, they shape and reshape identity discourses; and c) hierarchies of power are dynamic in nature. There is a need

for a deeper understanding of the power dynamics at play, how power is created and negated at the intersection of different identity categories and in their performance, and how these categories are shaped and reshaped, resulting in unequal access to economic opportunities.

6.3 How do state–society relations affect fisheries livelihoods, and what is the role of state–society perceptions in legitimising the state as a fisheries regulator?

Legitimacy is an important factor that mediates state–society relations. In politically sensitive contexts such as Sri Lanka, which is emerging from a protracted war in which the state was itself one of the warring parties, the importance of legitimacy is even more pronounced. Legitimacy is also emerging as an important concept in discussions of resource governance and compliance. Moving away from a more instrumental approach to understanding fisheries compliance, as discussed in Chapter 5, I positioned my analysis within recent thinking on fisheries compliance that sees actors as both strategic and moral in their responses to management systems (Jentoft, 2000). Following this line of thinking, the study of legitimacy is about understanding morality and normative frameworks and their justifiability in a given context (McLoughlin, 2015). However, in this thesis, the empirical and analytical insights presented by the post-war context in Trincomalee, where '[u]nruly social practices, direct power contests and competing notions of legitimacy…bend formal and informal rules to favour specific social actors' (Korf, 2005: 204), add nuance to legitimacy and fisheries compliance discussions.

As discussed in Chapter 5, for Muslim fishermen engaging in illegal fishing in Trincomalee, the legitimacy of the state's role in fisheries regulation has been eroded by perceptions that the state engaged in accepting bribes and arbitrarily enforcing regulations, which led to a lack of consistency and predictability. These trends confirm widely cited components of procedural justice in compliance literature, which discuss how following a set of fair procedures, achieving consistency and therefore predictability lead to an increased sense of legitimacy of officials (Levi, 1997; Tyler, 1990). However, the use of seemingly ad hoc violence primarily against the minority ethnic Muslim illegal fishers, especially through a state military actor—the navy—in a post-war context, highlights the need to study not only procedural justice, but also a mapping of different stakeholders, multiple framings of the compliance problem, the interests behind these and the social processes that give meaning to the actions of different stakeholders (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee, 2009, Jentoft and Chuenpagdee, 2015). These fishermen's lack of trust in the state, which they claim stems from the state's failure to protect their craft and equipment

during the war, adds to this dynamic. Therefore, this thesis contributes to this recent thinking on fisheries management and compliance by emphasising the need to understand how socially constructed identities of the different stakeholders act as social and, more importantly, political processes that shape compliance decisions.

Therefore, in place of the state, these fishermen have sought the support of community-level actors, including religious leaders and their neighbours in general, to legitimise the continuation of their fishing activities. In legal pluralist contexts such as Trincomalee, actors engage in 'forum shopping'; they 'shop' for different institutions to resolve their disputes (Sikor at al., 2009).

Further, in contexts of legal pluralism, such as Sri Lankan fisheries, competing normative frameworks attached to different legal mechanisms are often open to contestation and opposition by different groups of resource users. This thesis has underscored how legitimacy at the state–society interface and in the intra-community sphere both undermined and facilitated compliance decisions. As discussed in Chapter 5, state actors' framing of illegal fishing as an ethnicised livelihood activity practiced primarily by Muslims has resulted in the increased alienation of Muslim 'illegal' fishers, impeding their engagement with the regulatory processes and with state actors, at least in a 'legal' manner.

For the Muslim fishermen, the ethnicised discourse espoused by state actors has led not only to the perception of being excluded from resources and livelihood opportunities, but also to a sense of political exclusion. As discussed in Chapter 4, the perception that state actors promote access to market spaces as ethnicised livelihood entitlements illustrates another instance where state practices create inclusions to and exclusions from livelihood spaces. In a society emerging from conflict, these ethnicised exclusionary practices—and even the perception of such practices—severely hamper post-war rebuilding. As discussed in Chapter 5, in the absence of trust in the state structures, people turn to local bodies, and, as a result of this, alternative forms of social legitimacies are created by norms and institutions that people have substituted for the state (Roberts, 2012:7). These alternative forms of legitimacies and norms, as well as the institutions that underpin them, can be seen as processes of everyday state formation (Sikor et al., 2009). The analysis also tentatively points towards the observation that, at a micro level, these exclusionary practices may have, at least partially, contributed to the defeat of the Rajapaksa regime in 2015.

However, legitimacy is not a static concept. As norms and values that shape and reshape legitimacy change, legitimisation happens. In the analysis presented in this thesis, this legitimisation process is manifested in the way Muslim fishermen seek local-level community support to legitimise the continuation of a livelihood activity declared illegal by the state. Thus, the state's role as a legitimate actor to govern natural resources is negotiated, made and unmade on a daily basis. Analyses of legitimacy should therefore attempt to understand that it will continually change and take different forms over time (Jentoft, 2000).

In conclusion, adding to the debates on state legitimacy, through a natural resource governance lens, this thesis argues that local-level legitimacies are as important as electorally won, constitutionally accorded state legitimacy in ensuring compliance for resource management. Discourses on state-building in post-war contexts need to pay careful attention to these legitimising processes and to how local-level legitimacies are shaped and reshaped, as well as to the influence of these local-level legitimacies on state legitimacy. Natural resource management approaches, especially in post-war contexts divided along identity fault lines, need to bear in mind that their task and mandate are not just about managing livelihoods and resources; rather, their topic of concern is a broader and more sensitive political issue. In such contexts, legal or institutional pluralism in governance becomes more complex, as the state and non-state governance institutions and normative frameworks are shaped by perceptions and narratives of social and political exclusion, lack of trust in formal institutions and minority grievances.

6.4 How do legacies of war and politics shape livelihoods (and *vice versa*)?

All of the chapters in this thesis have foregrounded the continued legacies of war for the everyday lives of men and women, primarily in the way they engage in their livelihoods. More specifically, it has analysed the impact of the continued presence and influence of the military in livelihood spaces (mainly Chapters 2 and 3), the continued effects of the war economy and war entrepreneurs (mainly Chapter 4), and the spilling over of livelihood-related tensions into identity politics and tensions (mainly Chapter 5). This analysis has confirmed that war-related dynamics continue to shape the daily lives of men and women and that 'a linear and dichotomic understanding of war and peace is naive and over-simplistic' (Klem, 2012: 11). Further, through an analysis of how people engage with the state at the local level regarding their livelihood activities, this thesis found that the state continues to reify political, economic and socio-cultural inequalities in post-war Sri Lanka.

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A thread running through all of the chapters in this thesis is the continued impact of the war and of the military presence in the area on the lives of men and women in war-affected Trincomalee, which confirms the 'naturalised' status of militarisation referred to by De Mel (2007: 242). However, this thesis qualifies the above argument, finding that these continued legacies of war have created differentiated impacts on the livelihood spaces, trajectories and activities of men and women. Ethnic minorities were more vulnerable in negotiating with the military for their livelihood spaces. This was especially true for the Muslim gleaning women in the lagoons. This, in turn, contributed to the sense of physical insecurity that these women faced. Chapter 3 showed how the need to negotiate with the Sinhalese-speaking military to enter the lagoons and shallow sea areas interrupted the gleaning work of Tamil-speaking Muslim women, who were vulnerable in these negotiations. In Chapter 5, Muslim men's need to 'negotiate' with the military at sea to continue their illegal fishing activities eroded the legitimacy of state actors, as described in the previous section. Finally, in Chapter 2, for Tamil men who had to negotiate with the Navy, often offering free fish, to retrieve their fishing nets that had drifted to high-security zones around the Navy camps, the negotiations resulted in decreased profits. All of these experiences had a strong undercurrent of a sense of frustration and sometimes powerful perceptions of the lack of freedom to engage in their livelihoods, as minority groups in the country.

In contrast, certain war entrepreneurs who profited during the war continued to prosper. The Sinhalese Buddhist wholesale dealers' ascent to political and economic power, discussed in Chapter 4, was greatly enabled by the ethnicised livelihood entitlements that they managed to access during the war through their close networks with the military (e.g. the ability to pass through checkpoints). This trend confirms the analyses of other scholars working in the region (Goodhand et al. 2000; Korf, 2004). However, this thesis has provided an original contribution to the Sri Lankan literature on war entrepreneurship through its analysis of how, in the post-war phase, these dealers have been able to further consolidate their position in the market through the patronage politics of the central state representatives.

This thesis also found that tensions over livelihoods and resources spilled over into political conflicts and vice versa. In other words, the central state powers continued to mobilise and manipulate the ideologies and everyday politics of the ethnic majority group to ensure their continued support. This was clearly seen in the state sponsorship provided to the Sinhalese wholesale traders at the market, as discussed in Chapter 4. Muslim fishers' perceptions that Sinhalese fishers are being privileged, as discussed in Chapter 5, is another example. This trend confirms that, in countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka, post-war,

legitimisation processes are actively driven by politicians through the reification of nationalist politics and the delivery of patronage (Byrne and Klem, 2014: 225). However, the fact that this project failed, with the defeat of President Rajapaksa in January 2015, demonstrates the power of alternatives to continuing to support the regime.

Through discussions of how the state failed to obtain the legitimacy to regulate illegal fishing in the view of Muslim fishermen, sponsored politically motivated hegemonising projects, excluded ethnic minorities and women, and rendered women invisible in the fisheries sector by not including them in official fisheries statistics, this thesis highlighted how the state continues to reify political, economic and socio-cultural inequalities in post-war Sri Lanka. In conflict-affected areas such as Trincomalee, this reification of inequalities not only ethnic lines, but also along gendered and religious fault lines will prevent any meaningful discussions on reconciling social differences in the post-war context. Therefore, this thesis responded to the need raised by Rajasinham-Senanayaka (2009) to 'look beyond the "ethnic" narrative, and understand the embedded social and economic inequalities' (cited in Arambawela and Arambawela, 2010: 373) if one wishes to achieve a meaningful and sustained rebuilding of Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, this thesis found that there is no linear progression from war to post-war, in terms of men's and women's experiences of engaging in their livelihoods. Some of the war-related dynamics such as militarisation and war entrepreneurship, sometimes supported by the state, continue to shape the everyday livelihood activities of men and women in Trincomalee, and this has resulted in unequal access to livelihood spaces and opportunities. However, it would also be overly simplistic to assume that the social, political and economic tensions discussed in the different chapters of this thesis will result in a linear progression to overt conflict or violence. This thesis concludes that the situation in Trincomalee is one shaped by shared violent war histories, opposing and coexisting political, social and economic presents and uncertain futures.

6.5 Overall conclusions: Identity and livelihoods

This thesis combined concepts from economic sociology and intersectionality, introduced in Chapter 1, and, in the subsequent chapters, used empirical data to answer the main research question: 'How do the differentiated identities of men and women affect their livelihoods, and how do these livelihoods shape identity-related dynamics and structural inequality in fishing communities of conflict-affected eastern Sri

Lanka?' To understand the state–society interface in fisheries livelihoods, at the local level, this thesis used concepts related to fisheries compliance and legitimacy.

This thesis analysed embeddedness as a two-way process: socio-political identities shaping the economic activity of livelihoods, and the economic shaping the socio-political. The thesis makes two main arguments in terms of local theoretical and empirical discussions. First, it adds a granularity to the ongoing debate within post-war Sri Lanka on the different ways in which social identities of men and women shape and reshape their access to livelihood opportunities and resources. Historical and structural forces shape these interactions and facilitate or prevent access and create social inequalities that go beyond the popular ethnic grievances narrative on Sri Lankan conflict. Further, men and women often attempt to subvert these power structures, with differing degrees of success. However, this thesis also found that, while gender, class, caste and religious identities are salient in the daily lives of men and women in post-war Sri Lanka, ethnicity still acts as a) a strong ideological concept that people use to give meaning to their daily lives and organise into collectives; and b) a convenient and familiar criterion to express grievances and give form to a dynamic 'other' at a collective level.

Second, this thesis adds a new dimension to discussions on identity in post-war Sri Lanka by analysing the way livelihoods or economic activities of men and women shape and reshape their identities, in a context where ethnic identity has become a hegemonic identity marker. Livelihoods, especially those that are traditional such as fishing and gleaning, define who men and women are. Fishing is not just a livelihood, but also way of life, as illustrated in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. Importantly, livelihood activities also define who men and women are differently as research question 2 analysed. Therefore, economic institutions and livelihood activities, in combination with other social identity categories, add another layer to discussions of intersectional identities—both in the way people see themselves and in the way they organise their social and political lives in broader society. Thus, discussions, decisions and action on livelihoods and related economic institutions, such as credit or markets, should pay close attention to and seek to understand the implications of dynamic and context-specific economic activities being embedded in society and politics.

In terms of the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 1, first, this thesis closely corroborated the concepts of economic sociology, through its analysis of a) the embedded nature of fisheries livelihoods and related identities in the wider social fabric where men and women live, as well as what this

embeddedness means for the way men and women construct and use their identities, b) the moral economy tenets that men and women are both strategic and moral in their livelihood-related decisions and actions, and c) the economically oriented nature of men's and women's actions. However, the incorporation of the intersectionality approach to understand gendered power relations added more nuance to the tenets of economic sociology, especially for understanding processes of structural marginalisation and exclusion, such as cultural taboos and institutionalised practices. Further, combining the concepts of people's agency and room to manoeuvre enabled the understanding of people's agentive power, which the intersectionality approach, in its preoccupation with macro processes and structural discriminatory practices, has often failed to make explicit.

6.6 Insights for policy and practice

This PhD research was embedded within the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, which sought to understand, as one of its overarching research questions, how policy and practice focusing on post-war rebuilding can be informed by what we learn through livelihood trajectories of men and women living in post-war contexts. This PhD thesis set out to understand how the economic activities of fisher livelihoods are shaped by socio-cultural, political and identity dynamics and how fisher livelihoods, in turn, shape and reproduce these dynamics in coastal Trincomalee. This section provides several recommendations for policy and practice, emphasising the need to understand, engage with and—if and when necessary— address identity re/formation processes in post-war contexts.

- **Inclusive post-war rebuilding** should be a policy consideration, a political mandate and a component of non-state programming in lower-middle income countries such as Sri Lanka that have experienced war violence and divisive politics. In the light of the findings of this research, the 'inclusive' nature of this effort should be informed by the understanding of both discriminating structural forces and individual agentive processes. Further, it is also important to understand the social processes that marginalise men and women that create overlapping vulnerable categories, such as single women from minority ethnic groups. Inclusiveness in rebuilding Sri Lanka means providing infrastructure and officially recognising and including marginalised groups such as Muslim gleaning women in Kinniya and *Veder* women in Batticaloa.

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- **Beyond mainstreaming gender**: While 'mainstreaming gender' as a cross-cutting issue in programme design and implementation is commendable, how the provision of certain types of livelihood assistance to certain types of beneficiary groups will entrench and worsen identity-based discrimination should be considered and investigated. Making a distinction between men and women in the way they do gender is central to the analysis of economic activities or livelihoods.

- **Programming and policy should go beyond a unidimensional framing of gender**. There is a need to understand marginalisations and deprivations at the intersection of identities such as ethnicity and caste, for example. Taking gender mainstreaming approaches further and making them more meaningful, programme designs should build in intersectional approaches, where and when appropriate.

- **Continued legacies of war** such as the presence and activities of war entrepreneurs and militarisation need to be taken into account in programme design and planning considerations. As already stated by other scholars working in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, the demarcation of the post-war transition period should be treated as an artificial construct, while trying to capitalise on the absence of active fighting in the areas directly affected by war in the past.

- **Everyday politics**: Post-war rebuilding livelihoods programming also needs to engage with the messy reality of everyday politics, which is undoubtedly influenced by macro-level ideological discourses. This is especially so given that tensions over livelihoods at the local community level have the tendency to spill over into identity-based political tensions. This engagement will need to happen at the individual beneficiary level, the community leadership level, the local partner level and the programme staff level.

  Specific to the fisheries sector

- Women engaged in fisheries activities such as gleaning and catching prawns, fish and crabs in the lagoons should be recognised, made part of fisheries development plans and considered in policy decisions. Recognising their place within the sector will lead to more efficient policy

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implementation, the achievement of sector development goals and the facilitation of livelihood access services for these women.

- In fisheries management and regulation, state fisheries regulating authorities should be cognisant of how their actions, as individuals and as a state entity, shape their legitimacy or authority to implement regulatory actions. Irregular enforcement, seemingly arbitrary decisions and rules, and perceptions of corruption erode the trust base and authority of state actors.

- Regulators and managers should make efforts to understand that fishermen are not only driven by greed and profit maximisation. While a larger and quicker catch is an important consideration, rule and authority defiance may originate from other sources besides a simple profit-maximising aim. Therefore, tightening regulations and increasing fines will not solve the problem of lack of compliance.

- A holistic approach that combines biological, social and economic spheres is crucial for the sustainable management of fisheries (Urquhart and Acott, 2012). Sustainable management is still a priority topic with regard to fisheries, despite several decades of focused attention. Faced with concerns over stock depletion, a management framework that integrates not only economic, but also social and political considerations, is essential for post-war contexts such as Trincomalee.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

Power and natural resource governance: There is a need for studies located within broader natural resource governance dilemmas that include investigations of power at their centre. Specific to the fisheries sector, although governance is very much about authority and the 'legitimised' dominance and control of resource users and resource extraction by state authorities (in most cases), there seems to be a gap in knowledge about the role power plays in governance. This kind of research is especially lacking in contexts where natural resource conflicts overlap with man-made conflicts such as war.

Maritime masculinities: Rather than treating masculinity and masculine dominance as homogeneous within fisheries, more studies should focus on unpacking the category, understanding the plurality in masculinities in fisheries, communities and countries, as well as across different cultural contexts. Studies

taking this approach can add more nuance to the feminist discourse on the patriarchal nature of maritime societies globally, as well as in specific societies.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Other research, outreach and dissemination activities

Journal papers and book chapters

Munas, M. and Lokuge, G. (2014). Shocks and coping strategies of coastal communities in conflict affected North and East of Sri Lanka. *Regional Environmental Changes* (Special Issue: Global change, human–ocean interactions and ways forward), 16(2): 289–299. Available at: http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10113-014-0632-x

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Blog Post: 'Outside the net': women's participation in fishing activities in Trincomalee district of Sri Lanka. *SLRC Blog*, 19 March 2014. Available at: http://www.securelivelihoods.org/blogpost/56/Outside-the-net-womens-participation-in-fishing-activities-in-Trincomalee-district-of-Sri-Lanka

Magazine article: The gleaners of Kinniya, why the inclusion of women in fisheries related work is essential. *LMD Magazine*, August 2014, p. 87. Available at: https://lmd.lk/2014/07/30/fisher-communities-2/

Photo essay: Mutaher, M., and Lokuge, G. Raal Ammumma. A woman's livelihood along the east coast. Available at: https://cepaseries.atavist.com/raal-ammu- (first essay in a series, work in progress)

Conferences and presentations

Lokuge, G. (2013). Shocks and coping strategies of coastal communities in conflict affected North and East of Sri Lanka. Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Lokuge, G. (2013).Outside the net: women's participation in fishing related activities in Trincomalee district of Sri Lanka. Hyderabad, India.

Lokuge, G. (2014). Cultural and ideological values vs. economic returns. Merida, Mexico.

Lokuge, G. (2014). Outside the net: Inequality in fisheries in Trincomalee-Sri Lanka, case of coastal women. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Lokuge, G. (2015). 'Negotiated I': identity (re)formation and negotiation through fisher's narratives. Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Lokuge, G. (2016). Identity and contested spaces of fisheries: case of Trincomalee district, Sri Lanka. Zurich, Switzerland.

Lokuge, G. (2017). Even fish have an ethnicity: identity and livelihoods in coastal Trincomalee. Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Appendix II: Social networks mapping question guide

Social Networks

<table>
<tr><td>

Tips for interviewer and note taker

Try to visualise and build the map parallel to the conversation

Objectives:

1. to establish who these actors are
2. why this relationship exists
3. the direction of the relationship
4. the strength/quality of the relationship (frequency and need)

Decide the order of discussion based on your relationship with the respondent

</td></tr>
</table>

Types of networks

1. Families and relatives

2. Occupation

3. Suppliers—fishing gear, bait, fish

4. Buyers

5. Any kind of government authorities—Grama Niladhari , Department of Fisheries, military, CFC, police

6. Community associations—Fisher societies, women's societies, temple/mosque committees, credit groups

7. Religious

Family and kinship

Who is there in your family? What do they do?

If you need some advice about your work or a personal problem, who would you talk to you in your family? Why do you talk to them?

Who in your family comes to you for advice?

Occupation-related relationships

Who do you go to sea with/do sales/business with? How often do you meet them per week?

Why do you go to sea with them and not others/why do you do business with them? Have you changed who you go to sea with/do business with? Why did you change?

From whom do you buy your fishing equipment? And other things needed for your job?

Who funds the repairs of the fishing equipment and craft? Where do you get the repairs done?

From whom do you take credit related to repairing/buying fishing equipment? Why do you take these loans from them?

What are the government institutions that you approach connected to your work? How often do you meet these officers? For what type of things do you meet them?

From whom would you get advice related to fishing in the past when you started up? Now?

Who comes to you for advice on fishing/the fish business? For what type of things? Do they come to you often?

If you were to group fishers/traders, how would you group them (by ethnicity, fishing method, etc.)? When do these different groups come together and interact with each other (for example, do Sinhalese and Tamil fishers interact with each other during the Kali *kovil* festival?)

Other relationships

Are you in formal/informal credit groups? Who are the group members?

From whom would you borrow some money in an emergency (less than 5,000 rupees)? Who would come to you in such an emergency?

Are you a member of a society/committee (linked to fishing and not linked to fishing)?

With whom do you go to the mosque/temple/*kovil*? Why do you go with them? How often do you go to these religious places? Do you worship before you go to sea? Do you observe special religious customs such as fasting? With whom do you do these?

With whom would you discuss your family problems?

Who comes to you for personal advice?

With whom would you spend time (have a drink, play cards) when you are not working?

Whom do you respect most? Why? For what kind of things?

Trust

What is trust? Who do you trust and when (e.g. traders who give fish on credit to buyers)? Has this changed over the years in terms of your fishing activity or fish selling business? Why do you trust them? Has your trust of a particular person been broken?

Would you let others use your engine/boat/weighing scale/motorbike if they asked for it? To whom do you give it? Are there people to whom you would not give it? Why not?

Say you are in a situation where you have run out of fuel in the sea—What would you do? Whom would you ask for help?

Say you need fuel for a fishing trip, and you can't get it from your current supplier—From whom would you get it? How would you return it? Are there people who borrow such things from you?

Do you trust people from other ethnicities and religions? Why?

Apey kattiya—Who do you identify yourself most with? Who do you consider as outsiders?

To whom do you give fish for free? Why do you give it for free to them?

Do you use bribery and corruption in your business and fish capture?

Information

How do you get information on prices, markets, buyers and sellers? How reliable are the sources? How do you figure out their reliability?

Do you get information from other fellow fishers? Who are they?

Where do you usually exchange information about things such as prices and fish stocks?

Rules and norms

What are the written rules in connection to your occupation?

Who set these?

What will happen if you don't abide by these rules?

What are the norms that you follow within your occupation?

Who set these norms?

What will happen if you don't follow these norms?

Who can anchor boats at your landing site? Are outsiders allowed in? If not, why not? What will happen if an outsider anchors their boat in your landing site?

Who can buy fish at your landing site? Are outsiders allowed in? If not, why not? What will happen if an outsider buys fish from there?

Do you help each other to pull the boats up to the beach? Who do you usually help, and who helps you?

Do you repair others' nets or lines/*thoondal*? Who helps you to repair yours? Do you pay or do you get paid?

Do people go fishing on *Poya* day/Friday?

Are there particular types of fish that you don't catch?

What do you do when you buy a new livelihood asset and use it for the first time (give a *daaney* for example)?

How was your first day at sea/in the lagoon/business experience? Who did you do it with? What did you feel like?

Power

Who decides the price of the fish?

How do you/they decide it? If you don't agree with the price, can you change it?

How do you decide whom to sell the fish to? Can you sell the fish to a different *mudalali* if you want to? Why?

Who decides the opening hours and days of the market? Can you change that if you want to? Why?

Who decides the days and times that you can go fishing? Can you change it? Why?

Who decides whom you work with? Can you change your fellow crew?

Who do you think has more power in your business/occupation-related transactions? Why do you say that these people are powerful?

What has made them powerful? How have they become powerful? (linked to the question of who is a *mudalali*)

Do you think that the Sinhalese *mudalali* are more powerful than the Muslims or Tamils?

Who decides on spending in the household? What do you spend the money you earn on? Does your spouse give you money? Who controls the household-related expenses? If you need money to buy something for yourself (like jewellery, a dress or alcohol/cigarettes), can you do it yourself or do you have to ask for your spouse's permission?

Appendix III: Individual question guide

<u>**Intersectionality and Contested Spaces of Fishers**</u>

<u>**Individual Question Guide**</u>

<u>Life history</u>

Personal and family

Who is in your family? How many daughters and sons do you have?

How many granddaughters and grandsons?

Where do they live? Are they married?

Are there any mixed (ethnic or religious) marriages in your family?

What language do you speak at home?

What language do you speak at the place you work?

What language do you speak when you meet government officials?

Education

When did you first start going to school? How many years of education have you received?

When did you stop going to school? Why?

Who helped you in your schooling?

Does your education help in your current occupation?

Migration

When did you first come here?

Where are your parents from?

Have you lived anywhere else? Where? Why?

In the different places you have lived, who have been your neighbours? How did they help you?

How often do you interact with your neighbours?

Do you exchange food plates with them during religious and cultural festivals?

Occupation

How did you start this job? Why did you think of doing a job?

Who helped you to start the job and along the way?

Have you made any changes to the way you work? (duration, place of work, whom you work with)

Who do you sell your fish/prawns/*matti* to?

Are they regular customers? For how long have you known them? Where are they from? Can you name them? How did you get to know them?

Who are your suppliers? For how long have you known them? Where are they from? Can you name them? How did you get to know them?

Do you work with anyone else? Who are they? Where are they from? How long have you known them?

Economic and financial

Do you have savings? Where?

Do you receive *Samurdhi*? Since when? Did anyone help you to get *Samurdhi/pin padi*?

What do you usually use it for?

Have you taken any loans? From whom? For what?

Social and religious

Are you part of any society/organisation in the community? Which one?

How did you join this? How did you first hear about this society/organisation? Why did you decide to join?

How often do you go to the temple/*kovil*/mosque? With whom do you visit religious places?

If you visit more than one type of religious place, why?

 Do you wish things had been different/you had done things differently in the past?

What? Why?

Support networks in general

If you need a small loan, from whom would you get it?

If you need some advice about a family problem, who would you talk to?

If you need advice about your job, who would you talk to?

If you need food in some emergency, whom would you ask for it?

Appendix IV: NVivo Coding list based on first round of coding

Alcohol
Banned fishing methods
Buyers
Conflict
Contribution to household income
Credit
Fish price
Fish trading
Fishing or gleaning method and craft
Formal institutions
Identity
Kinship
Markets
Migration
Norms and rules
Power
Religious
Rituals
Seasonal calendar
Societies
Suppliers
Trust

Appendix V: Profile of wholesale fish markets in Trincomalee

	Market				
	Keeri	Kinniya	Trincomalee main market	Muttur	3rd Mile Post
Market building structure	Concrete with open sides, 4 stalls demarcated by columns	Concrete building with open sides and a room at one of the sides for the cashier	Two-storey building with closed sides, stalls on the ground floor and offices on the upper floor	Concrete Building with open sides	Small hut where payments are made, a small structure to support the scale in the centre of a cement slab
Dealers	Four dealers	One dealer	56 dealers	One dealer	One dealer
Number of suppliers	Boats: 200 *Oru*: 15 Beach seine: 1	Boats: 103 Lorries: 40 Beach seines: 22	More than 300	Boats: 140 *Oru*: 300	Boat: 35 Lorries: 4 Beach seine: 1
Number of Buyers	150–200	130	Small-scale retailers: 200 Stall owners: 56		30
Profile/identity of					
-Buyers	Majority Tamil	Very few Tamil	Muslim, Tamil and	Muslim	Tamil and a few

	Very few Muslim, Few Sinhalese buyers		Sinhalese		Muslims
-Suppliers	Tamils	Predominantly Muslim	All three ethnicities	Mainly Muslims	Mainly Muslims
-*Mudalali*/stall owners	All Tamil Hindu	Muslim	All Sinhalese Buddhist	Muslim	Muslim
-Management structure	4 stall owners, fishermen give a portion of the income to the *kovil*	One *mudalali* takes the market on tender from the Urban Council and runs it	Ceylon Fisheries Corporation	Mosque takes the market on tender from *Pradheshiya Sabha*, One *mudalali* pays rent to the mosque	Managed by one *mudalali*
Rent amount for the market building/infrastructure	100 LKR per day per stall paid to the *kovil*	Tender amount paid to Urban Council annually: 5,483,000 LKR, divided by 12 months with an advance of 3 months to be paid	Small stall: 10,000 LKR per month; large stall: 15,000 to CFC Key money: 120,000 and 150,000	20,000 LKR per month	No rent
Marketing system	Open auction	Two systems (inside and outside), Open auction	'Open' auction	Open auction	Price decided by *mudalali*

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		and sold at an agreed price			
Marketing done by	Auction run by 4 *mudalali*	Auction run by 1 *mudalali*	Auctions run by 56 *mudalali*	Auction run by 1 *mudalali*	Market operated by 1 *mudalali*
Weighing	Weighing done by *kovil* representative	Weighing done by representative of *mudalali*	Weighed at individual stalls by employees	Weighing done by an employee	Weighing done by an employee
Employees	3 *mudalali* employ 3 auctioneers	*Mudalali* employs 6 salaried employees	CFC employs staff, *Mudalali* employ staff	Two employees	5
Storage	Storage: 3 *waadi* for ice	*Mudalali* owns a *waadi*	*Mudalali* own *waadi*		Fish stored at home
Suppliers: type of fish	Fish from one-day boats and beach seines	Fish from one-day boats including those that use disco nets (crew about10) and beach seines			
Women's engagement	No women involved in the fishing-related activities	Women engaged in collecting seaweed			No

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Payment arrangement from the suppliers	Mudalali gets 10 LKR per kilogram	7% goes to the mudalali	5–20 LKR commission per kilogram	10%	10 LKR commission per kilogram
Payment arrangement from the buyers		60 LKR from small-scale buyers, 7% from large-scale buyers		10%	
Opening hours	6 a.m.–8 a.m.	6 a.m.–10 a.m., or until the fish catch is sold	5.30 a.m.–10 a.m., wholesale	5.30 a.m.–9.00 a.m.	5.30 a.m.–9.00 a.m.
Unit of auctioning	Auctioning happens at a per kilogram rate	Open auction— Auctioning happens based on fish baskets as unit of auction on the beach. Inside the building at a per kilogram rate			No auctioning
Payment for auctioneer	Receives fish as payment from the fish suppliers	Receives a wage of 500 LKR per day from the mudalali			

Role of auctioneer	No bookkeeping involved	Bookkeeping involved			
Linked government entities	None	Urban Council	Ceylon Fisheries Corporation	Pradheshiya Sabha	None

Appendix VI: Seasonality calendar

	Nov–Jan (waarakan[48] time)	March–May	May–July	July–September
Small-scale fishers (mainly non-mechanised)	*Gal maalu* and *Salaya*	(Fishers from Pattanombar, etc.) Travel to areas like Lanka Patuna and catch *olumeeyo* and other *gal maalu* around rocks. They leave early in the morning, travel 3 hours one way, fish for 2 hours and come back by 5 p.m.	*seelawo*, *paraw*, *gal maalu*	Cuttlefish
		Rod fishing in Kulla They congregate together like in a meeting. *thera paraw*, *bollo*, *linno*		
		Bata line fishing, about 75–100 hooks attached to a line and they catch *gal maalu*,		

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[48] Lean fishing season, in general from November to February.

		paraw, *thora* and *mora*		
Kattu valai	*bollo*, prawns			
Day boats (mechanised)	*kelawalla* (but few fishers engage because it is the off season)			
Pasi panna (mainly Sinhalese, *balaya* caught using rods and sometimes hook and line)	Mainly *balaya* (*balaya marana rassava*, in the night, 7 people travel in the boat), sometimes *kelawalla*			Some of them go to Kalpitiya for *Pasi Panna*, but the fishers from those areas don't like them going there. This is a new method for them, and they say 'Do not bring in new methods here, leave us to harvest the fish resources in our area'.
Beach seine	*alaguduwo*, *linno*, *hurullo*			
Trap fishers				
Lagoon fishing	Crabs and prawn			

(Kuchchaveli, Sampbaltheeve, Kokkilai)			
Colour fish collectors	Outside Trincomalee, in areas like Kalpiti, Hambantota	In Trincomalee. After the monsoons, the fresh water mixed with the sea water enhances fish breeding.	Outside Trincomalee

Source: Based on an interview with a fisheries society president, on 3 February 2014

Summary

'Even Fish Have an Ethnicity': Livelihoods and Identities of Men and Women in War-affected Coastal Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

Gayathri H. H. Lokuge

Located within the nexus between identity and livelihoods, this thesis explores how the economic activities of fisher livelihoods are shaped by socio-cultural, political and identity dynamics, and how fisher livelihoods, in turn, shape and reproduce these dynamics in post-war Sri Lanka's coastal district of Trincomalee. The analysis focuses on the economic sociology of fisheries, the inequalities and marginalities in livelihood spaces that are created through intersecting identities such as gender and ethnicity, and the way fisheries are governed—both formally and informally—in politically volatile contexts. This thesis argues that ethnic identity is mediated by other social identity categories, such as gender, location and type of livelihood activity, in the creation of unequal access to livelihood spaces. However, men and women often attempt to subvert structural discriminatory patterns, with differing degrees of success.

Since the country became independent in 1948, Sri Lanka's history has been dominated by conflict centred on competing ethno-political interests, particularly in terms of access to state power. The perceived privileging of the ethnic minority Tamils by the British colonial powers led to a series of political moves by successive governments in post-independence Sri Lanka. This included making Sinhalese the official language of the country and awarding special status to Buddhism in the constitution. Subsequently, unfavourable perceptions about the privileging of the majority ethnic group and their cultural, social and political symbols led to the formation of Tamil militant groups including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Most discourses on conflict in Sri Lanka have strong ethnic dimensions. However, arguably, ethnic lines are used mainly for mobilising the masses for conflict. The killing of 13 Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) Army soldiers in 1983 in an ambush by the LTTE resulted in widespread anti-Tamil riots in the capital city of Colombo. This event is commonly identified as the trigger point for the protracted war between the Tamil militants and the GoSL. The war continued for three decades, with fluctuating degrees of intensity, until the LTTE faced a military defeat at the hands of the GoSL in 2009. However, the ending of the war does not translate linearly into a post-war condition in Sri Lanka, given the continued presence of the military in the directly war-affected North and East and the social and economic inequalities and tensions that create divisions within the country, undermining meaningful and sustained rebuilding efforts in Sri Lanka.

The thesis begins with an introductory first chapter that presents the aims of the study, locates the research within the context of post-war Sri Lanka, describes the study areas and presents an overview of the methodological approach and theoretical frameworks used. Located in fish landing sites, markets and religious places, Chapter 2 focuses mostly on the livelihoods aspect of the thesis. It analyses how economic activities, such as fishing livelihoods, are deeply and intricately embedded in the cultural and social fabric of the daily lives of individuals, families, communities and institutions. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of how fishing livelihoods are more than an income-generating activity for men and women, considering the different inter- and intra-group value systems that apply to fisher-folk in their day-to-day practices. At the individual level, given the high risk involved in braving the seas every day, religion takes a central place in a fisher's life, irrespective of their specific faith. This phenomenon is heightened by war-related insecurities and threats. However, individual and communal struggles over contradictory economic and religious values are an ever-present aspect of the fishermen's religiosity. We found this process to be marked by rationalising and meaning making, embodied through the daily experiences of these fishermen and women.

The findings show that people take advantage of the malleable nature of religious doctrine to mix, match and choose from different religions to suit the current need and the occasion. Religious beliefs and ideologies also create and sustain socio-political differences, which are further constructed by macro-level political discourses. At the community level, although there are complex, historical tensions between all

of the religious groups in Trincomalee, with heightened tension and violence during the war years, Hindus and Buddhists share considerable religious complementarity. Muslims are increasingly marked as separate—in spaces of religious ritual, such as the Hindu temples, and also in terms of types of fishing livelihoods. Most Muslims also see themselves as separate. Through an analysis of how discourses on religious identity play out in everyday life, Chapter 2 argues that economic rivalries over fishing resources may spill over into—or be reinforced by—religious and ethnic tensions in the post-war context.

Chapter 3 focuses more on the identity aspect of the thesis, with research based in the lagoons and shallow seas of Trincomalee. Using intersectionality theory, this chapter examines how the intersection of the social categories of gender, race, ethnicity and location creates structural inequality. Drawing upon narratives of Muslim, Tamil, Sinhalese and indigenous/*Veder* women catching and marketing fish in coastal Trincomalee, this chapter analyses how historical factors, such as population movements and war, have shaped the current realities and positions of women. Further, the chapter illustrates that, although a clear case can be made that certain groups of women are particularly disadvantaged at the intersection of ethnicity, caste and livelihood location, similarities in cultural gender norms across ethnic lines mean that the inequalities facing women may overshadow other identities.

Although multiple inequalities affect these women's daily lives and participation in activities, they are not passive victims; they use their own agency to negotiate for access to livelihoods. Nevertheless, the women engaged in various fishing-related activities who participated in this study appear to be completely invisible to the government fisheries management bodies. The resulting lack of institutional representation disadvantages these women in negotiations for space to engage in their livelihood activities. Registration of these women in coastal livelihoods would provide them with a first measure of recognition and empowerment, strengthening their chances of negotiating access to livelihood resources.

With the ending of the three-decade-long civil war, changes have taken place in the main wholesale fish market in the conflict-affected coastal district of Trincomalee. These changes are reflected in the market structure and governance, as well as in the number and kinds of people inside the market. A marketplace that was formerly multi-ethnic and mixed gender has become dominated by male traders from the Sinhalese Buddhist ethnic majority group, excluding women and ethnic minority men. By focusing on the multiple masculinities of male wholesale dealers and their interactions with fishermen suppliers, Chapter 4 a) provides a nuanced analysis of the historical and contextual factors that shaped the political and

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economic hegemonising processes of the wholesale fish market; b) attempts to understand how, within this hegemonising process, the dealers embody and negotiate between overlapping ethno-nationalist, enterprising and patron–provider masculinities; and c) analyses how these diverse masculinities ultimately may contribute to the collapse of the gendered ethnic dominance at the market. This chapter adds nuance to the ethnicised discourse on war and livelihoods in Sri Lanka and globally. Further, the chapter also brings a masculinities approach to the study of contemporary maritime anthropology.

Chapter 4 thus continues the focus on identities and attempts to understand ethnicity as socially constructed and as mediated by other forms of identity, such as gender, or, more specifically, through masculinities. Focusing on masculinities and the different subject positionalities of men at the wholesale market—a dimension that has been largely missing in Sri Lankan discourses on post-war livelihoods and identity—this chapter provides a nuanced analysis of how a unidimensional focus on ethnicity or gender is insufficient to explain the post-war power dynamics. It analyses how the embodiment and practice of masculinities, such as risk-taking entrepreneurs and dare-devil border guards, show both complicity with and resistance to political and economic domination or hegemony at a given point, and how this changes over time.

The findings indicate that hierarchies of social and political power are dynamic. More specifically, the understanding of masculinity as plural, dynamic and negotiated, combined with the display of agentive power by subordinated or marginalised groups, results in hegemonies or structures of dominance that are continually shaped and reshaped at the everyday level. There are masculinities, rather than one way of doing masculinity. These different ways of doing masculinity challenge the dominant power structures and hierarchies.

Chapter 5 focuses on a particular illegal fishing practice (disco net fishing) and examines how governance processes mitigate or exacerbate social tensions. The chapter centres on the interaction between formal and informal fisheries stakeholders and fishers, arguing that perceptions about the legitimacy of formal state actors in regulating fisheries strongly influence compliance behaviour. This chapter demonstrates that the perceived lack of legitimacy of the state in fisheries regulation was profoundly influenced by context and timing. The active interest taken by the state, aided by the military, in tightening fisheries regulation and enforcement measures after the end of the war violence was seen by the disco net fishermen as a strongly negative factor in their daily lives and livelihoods. When shared war-related

violence forms the backdrop for state, non-state and citizen interactions and normative frameworks, negotiations regarding access to resources and regulatory efforts become not just a livelihood and resource management effort, but a broader and more sensitive political issue.

Faced with the perceived failure of the state as a legitimate actor to regulate fisheries, Chapter 5 found that the disco net fishermen turn towards other forms of everyday politics, power dynamics and local legitimacies. However, these local legitimacies vary in how they manifest and draw power. Therefore, the contestations reported in this chapter are not simply about forum shopping between the formal state and informal community institutions and norms; rather, they are also about navigating within the formal and the informal rules of the game. The case of illegal fishing in this chapter clearly illustrates the need to understand fisheries governance issues as a manifestation of a larger problem at the level of state–society interaction, specifically regarding the legitimacy of the actors involved in governing fisheries in Trincomalee. Therefore, this chapter concludes that there is a need to understand and address fisheries governance issues as 'wicked problems' and as processes that need to go beyond conventional planning approaches.

The concluding chapter of the thesis highlights five specific conclusions based on the findings presented in the previous chapters. First, the embedded nature of economic activities, such as those in fisheries, means that they are dynamic, time- and space-bound, and mediated by how men and women chose to embody and disembody morality, religiosity and competing or complementary value systems. These dynamisms in morality contribute to the social re/construction of fisheries as work. Second, in contexts such as Sri Lanka, where society is violently divided along different identity lines, especially that of ethnicity, inclusive and sustainable post-war rebuilding and meaningful community cohesion will require understanding that a) ethnic identity is socially constructed and mediated by the enactment of other identity categories; b) men and women use agentive power in accessing livelihoods, shaping and reshaping identity discourses through their livelihood activities; and c) hierarchies of power are dynamic in nature. Third, local-level legitimacies are as important as the electorally won, constitutionally accorded legitimacy of the state in resource governance. Consequently, discourses on state-building in post-war contexts need to pay careful attention to these legitimising processes, to how local-level legitimacies are shaped and reshaped, and to the influence of local-level legitimacies in strengthening or weakening state legitimacy. Fourth, continued legacies of war shape the lives of men and women. Fifth, the findings of this thesis add a granularity to the ongoing debate within post-war Sri Lanka on the different ways that

social identities of men and women are (re)shaped through their access to livelihood opportunities and resources. Expanding the argument that economic institutions reshape gender at the individual, interactional and institutional levels, this thesis shows that economic institutions and activities shape the intersecting identities of men and women in complex ways, both in terms of how they see themselves and in the way they organise their social and political lives in the wider society.