Lake Winnipeg in a different light: Re-imagining environmental politics in a small-scale Canadian inland fishery.

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

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Abstract

Research for this thesis was carried out between 2016 and 2020, a period which was exceptionally politically and ecologically volatile for the small-scale commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg. Politically, the Province of Manitoba initiated major policy changes, including quota buy-backs and the rescinding of provincial endorsement of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act. Ecologically, a major flood in 2011 and detrimental impacts following from the consequent construction of the emergency channel between Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg had a major impact on the lake's habitat and fisheries. In hindsight, the period was a unique opportunity to witness the negotiation of values and the shape of governance among Lake Winnipeg's fishers and between them and government representatives of the Province of Manitoba.

The research included interviews with over 40 fishers and other Lake Winnipeg stakeholders and hundreds of informal conversations with commercial fishers from Fisher River Cree Nation, Gimli, Riverton, and Winnipeg. I engaged in participant observation in meetings between commercial fishers and the province of Manitoba and Freshwater Fisher Marketing Corporation, and in-depth analysis of Hansard records from the House of Commons and the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

I conclude that: (1) analytical tools such as Sen's capabilities approach and Interactive Governance (IG) Theory are insufficient alone to analyze and understand the complexity of critical debates and negotiations in fisheries and environmental governance. Both approaches leave limited space for critical environmental politics since both approaches still rely heavily on the division between society and Nature. Additionally, both approaches are insufficiently sensitive of disparities of power and do not pay enough attention to arbitrary power of ministers who can circumvent critical debates with fishers in the determination of policies. (2) Recent years on Lake Winnipeg illustrate a serious deficit in democratic decision-making in Manitoba. The space for fishers to disseminate their knowledge is highly circumscribed and their views on fisheries and the environment as a whole were ignored. Decisions were made without proper consultation, which undermined communities' and fishers' ability to protect their livelihoods. These, instead, were sacrificed for what the Province of Manitoba deemed to be a sustainable fishery or broader provincial interests.

Overall, I argue that decision-making processes need to be more power-sensitive and receptive to fishers' knowledge. The only way to do this is to allow fishers to participate from the beginning, when facts are created by scientists and bureaucrats. Instead of discussing ethical issues after facts are created, they need to be discussed simultaneously. Before such an idea can be realized, hierarchical politics need to be abandoned in favor of more decentralized politics. This more truly democratic approach might be comparatively difficult and messy from a governance point of view, but would be more inclusive, legitimate, and, likely, effective in matching the interests of the fishers of Manitoba with those of the province as a whole.

Key words

- Lake Winnipeg * Co-management * Power * Democracy * Well-being * Freedom * Co-production of Nature * Traditional ecological knowledge * First Nations * Sustainability

Acknowledgement

This work is an accumulation of over 15,000 km driven around Lake Winnipeg, reading over a couple of thousands of pages in the hansards of both Manitoba Legislative Assembly and House of Commons, over 60 hours of interview material along with countless informal conversation and email exchanges with people who share the same passion for Lake Winnipeg as I do and many hours of meetings. The past 7 years have been very challenging as I had to do all the work I mentioned but also survive very uncertain times on Lake Winnipeg as the powers of Manitoba forced changes that ultimately changed my research to what you are reading here. It happened a few times along the way that a seed of doubt started to grow in my mind that I might not be able to finish with the project I had undertaken. Whenever I began to doubt myself, people along the way pulled me up and helped me through it and it is with those people who I want to share my graditude in this short acknowledgement.

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Chapter 1: Small-scale fisheries as environmental politics – Lake Winnipeg under scrutiny

Eight years ago, I sat at a table with my advisor Dr. Derek Johnson, Dr. Kristofferson, and Dr. Fikret Berkes at the Natural Institute of University of Manitoba where the latter two were educating us about the great lake in our backyard, Lake Winnipeg. Both Dr. Kristofferson and Dr. Berkes spoke passionately about the lake and the dire need for further research on the lake and the commercial fishery which the lake supports. There were two issues that caught my attention at that particular meeting, (1) the governance of the commercial fishery where the idea of co-management was discussed extensively and the ability of Manitoba to govern such a complex ecosystem was a particular interest and (2) the excess nutrient loading into Lake Winnipeg and the politics of finding the 'right balance' between economic development and a healthy lake that could sustain commercial fishery. Those issues remain relevant in Manitoba politics today where politicians, activist groups, fishers, and other stakeholders are debating on the health and the viability of Lake Winnipeg to sustain recreational and economic activities for tourist and local communities alike. It is a thin line to walk to find what one deems to be the 'right balance' for a sustainable lake, and regardless of the good intentions one might have to fight for sustainability, it is often overlooked that such a search forces comparison between different and, more often than not, incommensurable values. One might decide to protect urban centers and therefore devalue other people's lands in the process. The incommensurability of values is often what make fisheries policy makers ill-equipped to find the 'right balance' because as soon as policy makers identify problems, other problems will soon arise. Introduction of private property mechanisms in fishing, for example, as a way to 'save' fisheries from depletion have only created social problems, such as loss of rights to nature or to make a livelihood (Carothers 2010, 2011; Hersoug 2005; Kolding, Garcia, et al. 2016; Langdon 2008; Soliman 2014). Or if one attempts to

find more efficient ways to fish, one might experience environmental complications (Soliman 2014). The paradoxes of comparing different values can be attributed to what Jentoft and Chuenpagdee (2009) described as the wickedness of fisheries. The comparison of different values is certainly problematic since it creates a hierarchy of valuation processes, which I describe in Chapter 6. Nonetheless, the wickedness of not only fisheries policies but environmental politics extends to how we debate on values and how different groups negotiate between each other over values. Fisheries is essentially a politics of values, but as Johnsen (2017), pointed out, it is almost impossible to leave politics outside of the realm of fisheries governance. In this work I am only restricting myself to fisheries, but I believe my work is relevant for environmental politics as a whole. Fisheries is surely an environmental issue and should be treated as such. As Degnbol et al. (2006) pointed out, policy makers often introduce solutions regardless of context or historical processes with the expectation of still getting the same results everywhere. Soliman (2014) advocates instead for the importance of transdisciplinary fisheries governance that moves away from single issue foci. Fisheries issues should not be considered strictly biological or economic, but environmental, social, and political as well.

Lake Winnipeg epitomizes three major problems that contribute to the wickedness of fisheries and environmental politics: (1) the hierarchy of knowledge, and the narrowness of bureaucratic knowledge; (2) the narrowness of democratic deliberation within the public sphere and (3) the lopsided political power structure within the neo-liberal modes of governance. I assert that together, those issues restrict public debate on values and consequently prevent people from protecting their livelihoods and social relationships they deem to be important for a good life.

1.2 The good life and public debate

Fisheries are no longer seen as a single focus issue but rather an accumulation of complex social, economic, environmental, and biological processes that cannot be resolved by one institution or one group of people. Rather, solutions in fisheries require collective efforts. This is what the *Too Big to Ignore: Global Partnership for Small-scale Fisheries Research Project* (TBTI) has been calling for. TBTI has generated a large body of literature that deals specifically with, as Jentoft and Chuenpagdee (2019) described, transdisciplinary knowledge and transdisciplinary governance. This is an attempt to broaden out to a fisheries governance that not only accepts different knowledges but also recognizes social issues as a part of the 'wickedness' of fisheries policies. TBTI chose Interactive Governance (IG) theory as a "*conceptual tool*" (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee 2019) for the analysis of the empirical reality and social and ethical values of small-scale fisheries. In short, IG theory splits the public sphere into two spheres: 'governing system' and the 'system to be governed' (Chuenpagdee, Kooiman, and Pullin 2008). For Kooiman and Bavinck (2005), the market, civil society, and the state are considered the governing system but cultural and natural systems are the 'system-to-be-governed' on the other hand. What makes the IG theory appealing is that it places a great emphasis on the interaction between the two systems. Kooiman and Bavinck (2005) defined interactive governance as:

> […] the whole body of public as well as private <u>interaction taken to solve problems</u> and create societal opportunities. It includes the formulation of principles guiding those interactions and care for institutions that enable them […] (17) [My emphasis]

Those societal opportunities are vital for 'broadening' up the governance processes because the epicenter of the theory is exactly that those two systems have an interaction between each other where different voices are included in learning and adapting to solve societal problems. It is a constant feedback between the two spheres. The premise of IG theory is that it expands the public

sphere, allowing interaction between the two spheres by valorizing participatory democracy and the possibility of identifying shared guiding values through those deliberations. Those societal opportunities are vital for 'broadening' up the governance processes because the epicenter of the theory is exactly that those two systems have an interaction where different voices are included in learning and adapting to solve societal problems. As Gray (2005) pointed out, "[…] individuals who are intimately associated with the resource have a wealth of knowledge that can enhance research and management […] (351)". Here, the voices of fishers, who assemble the environment and the social differently than bureaucrats, can correct the narrowness of traditional governance. The advantage of opening a space for fisher´s voices, as Song (2015) emphasized, helps to "[…] develop a sense of ownership and responsibility […]" (689). To help us to 'see', IG theory analyzes the success of the interaction between the two systems by determining the governability of the system as a whole. According to Kooiman, et al. (2008) the governability of a system depends on "[…] the overall capacity for governance of any societal entity or system […]" (3). In other words, the success of the system lies in addressing issues that might arise (Chuenpagdee and Jentoft 2009). The methodology of determining the 'desirable' outcome of becoming governable is my particular interest because governability relies first and foremost on values. As Chuenpagdee and Jentoft (2009) stressed, governability deals with "[…] relevant values and principles that should underpin the way governors define their tasks and roles […] (111)" which are results of deliberation between policy makers and other stakeholders such as fishers on what values and moralities should underlie fisheries governance. Values such as, 'twelve ethics and principles for meta-governing of fisheries', sustainability, food security (Soliman 2014), human rights (Allison 2012; Weeratunge et al. 2013) or SSF guidelines (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee 2019) are examples of possible yardsticks for a 'desirable' outcome for governability. These yardsticks for a 'desirable' outcome for

governability are also the basis for comparison between different modes of governance (hierarchical or co-management) in terms of how efficient the different modes are not just in representing the 'image' and the solution to challenges one might face but also, how well the mode of governance is in cultivating interaction with the system-to-be-governed (Chuenpagdee, Kooiman, and Pullin 2008). However, as Johnson and I (2015) argued, a marriage between well-being analysis and IG theory makes sense because such approach helps us in "[…] understanding the process and perception of governability […]" (295). In essence the appealing factor about well-being analysis, as applied by McGregor (2007, 2008) and of course Sen´s (1993, 1999b, 1999a) Capability Approach is that both defined well-being beyond monetary success. Well-being, especially in relation to the Capability Approach is that the journey or process of being and doing is the main focus. Hence, the fishers themselves will judge the system in terms of whether their material, social and subjective needs are being met. If so, in theory it would be an indication of a governable system. That is exactly what I did in my MA thesis.

My MA thesis was a steppingstone to a better understanding of what fishers on Lake Winnipeg were feeling and thinking, and what values were guiding them as they were navigating the stormy waters of Lake Winnipeg. Because of the restricted nature of an MA thesis, I only managed to work with fishers in Gimli. Nonetheless, those few months there gave me a good enough glimpse to gain a better understanding of the fishery. The most intriguing outcome of my work was the interplay between the quota system and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC) in helping the fishers to protect what they deemed to be the most important aspect of their lives: their families and their freedom, or independence (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015). I concluded as summarized by Derek Johnson and myself (2015) that the institutional framework of FFMC and the quota system did indeed meet the fisher's material, relational and subjective

needs but did so imperfectly. The imperfection lies in the fact that the fishers believed FFMC was instrumental for maintaining their independence but nonetheless, they were frustrated with FFMC due to low fish prices they were being offered (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015). The situation during my MA fieldwork, however, was completely different from the one I entered in the fall of 2016. The aspects of public reasoning in both IG theory and the Capability or well-being approach were not exposed in my previous work as they were during my research between 2016 and 2020. The rapid regulatory changes on Lake Winnipeg highlighted the glaring downsides of both IG theory and the Capability Approach. Both theories rely heavily on participatory democracy to resolve any possible tensions by public debate where people can identify shared values. Sen (2009) placed a great emphasis in public deliberation as a key vehicle in the idea of the good life. Public reason is seen as the process of creating a collective consciousness of essential justice or values that people can agree through deliberation upon as the beacon for the good life. This is similar in IG theory's emphasis that an interaction between the two systems can resolve tensions where fishers and part of the governing system can together identify shared values (Chuenpagdee, Kooiman, and Pullin 2008). However, the case of Lake Winnipeg shows that both approaches' idealization of the role of participatory democracy in identifying shared values and meanings is unrealistic and misses the power struggles that shape the negotiation of values between different groups.

1.3 Lake Winnipeg tests the limits of participatory democracy

The politics of Lake Winnipeg have been contentious in Manitoba for the past three decades. The lake brings out a lot of emotions that can be traced to social and political struggles and economic interests between different groups that make the democratic deliberation around the lake as vibrant as it is. One needs only to look at the issues of water quality in Lake Winnipeg and

the commercial fishery to get the sense of the robustness of politics of values in Manitoba. Secondly, both of these vibrant issues highlight the inability of both IG theory and Sen's (2009) public reasoning as an analytical tool due to the lack of inclusiveness in relation to knowledge production and the consequent power struggle involving how successful different groups are in imposing their knowledge in public deliberation. Thus, both approaches have a serious blind spot for both power disparity and environmental politics. By not acknowledging these drawbacks in participatory democracy, First Nations and other fishers are set up to fail to protect their ways of life when being invited in co-management arrangement because the idea of participatory democracy does not match up with the complexity of life.

1.3.1 Political turmoil on Lake Winnipeg

The political turmoil on Lake Winnipeg accelerated when the Progressive Conservatives broke nineteen years of the New Democratic Party's power in 2016. The Conservatives won the provincial election by a landslide, taking 40 out of the 57 seats in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The Progressive Conservatives implemented various new regulations, not just in fisheries but in Manitoba generally. Many of those policies were part of a targeted dismantling of collective life in Manitoba. As an example, The Conservative government undermined collective action when it passed the *Public Section Sustainability Act* which placed serious constraints on unions, especially in the public sector, to bargain wages for their members. Similarly, the Conservative government attempted to undermine the Norway House Co-operative when the Minister for Sustainable Development handed a fisher a fishing license who had been kicked out of the co-op for circumventing the co-op´s code of conduct. By doing so, the government undermined the co-op's authority. The undermining of the social extended to the attempt by the Conservative government to privatize Provincial parks in Manitoba during the COVID-19

pandemic, an exercise which is still in process at the time of writing. However, what made the fisheries in Manitoba interesting in this context is that it was one of the first examples of the Provincial government's experiments to overhaul how society in the prairies should be organized. As can be seen from the timeline below, the commercial fishing industry in Manitoba, hence Lake Winnipeg, experienced historically speedy regulatory changes between the period of 2016 and 2019. Such radical changes have not been seen since in the end of 1960s and beginning of the 1970s.

July 1965	McIvor Commission established to investigate marketing condition of inland waters in Canada	**October 17 1966**	McIvor Commission report tabled to the House of Commons
December 18 1968	First reading of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation bill (C-148)	**January 16 1969**	2nd reading of bill C-148
February 27 1969	Senate passed the FFMC bill (C-148) without amendment.	**May 1 1969**	Bill C-148 passed from House of Commons.
August 25 1969	Leonard S. Evans, Minister of Mines and Natural Resources proposed Bill 10 (Fisheries Marketing Act) (Manitoba participation to FFMC)	**September 4, 1969**	Bill 10 passed 2nd reading in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.
October 6, 1969	Bill 10 passed 3rd reading in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Enacted into law.	**April 20, 1970**	Manitoba's Minister of Mines and Natural Resources declares that both fall and spring commercial fishery on Lake

			Winnipeg will be closed.
June 17 1970	The Fishermen's and Polluters Liability Act passed in Manitoba Legislative Assembly	**April 1972**	Non-Transferable Individual quotas introduced to Lake Winnipeg. Lake Winnipeg re-opens.
April 1986	Transferable Individual Quotas System introduced to Lake Winnipeg.	**May 17, 1993**	Minister of Natural Resource introduce bill 35 (Fisheries Amendment Act). Allowing fishers to sell their catch to retailers, restaurants and etc.
September 24, 2008	Bill 17 (Environmental Amendment Act) passed 3rd and final reading in Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Restricting expansion of Hog Facilities.	**June 2, 2011**	The Save Lake Winnipeg Act (Bill 46) introduced to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.
June 16, 2011	The Save Lake Winnipeg Act (Bill 46) passed 3rd reading and becomes effective in law.	**August 16, 2016**	Newly elected government of Manitoba announce their plan to opt out of FFMC
October 18, 2016	Manitoba Minister of Education presents resolution to the Assembly for opting out of FFMC	**October 10, 2017**	Bill 23 passed the 2nd reading and sent to the committee.
March 15, 2017	Minister of Sustainable Development, Cathy Cox introduce Bill 23 (opt out of FFMC) to	**April 3, 2017**	2nd reading of Bill 23.

	the Manitoba Legislative Assembly		
November 10, 2017	Amendment of Bill 23 from a committee approved. Bill 23 goes to the 3rd reading.	**December 1, 2017**	Bill 23 passed 3rd reading and becomes effective in law.
December, 2017	The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act (Bill 212) Introduced in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.	**May 2018**	The provision in Bill 23 that required fish buyers to pay within 7 days is removed.
May 15, 2018	The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act (Bill 212) passed through the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.	**March 16, 2019**	Rochelle Squire Minister for Sustainable Development announced the buy-back quota program.
March 16, 2019	Rochelle Squires decides to increase minimum mesh size from 3 inches to 3.75.	**May 8, 2019**	Fishers walk away from the Co-management Board, which is dissolved.

Figure 1: Brief history of regulatory changes of Lake Winnipeg

There is strong parallel between what happened between the period of 1968 and 1972 and 2016 to 2019. Both of these periods shaped commercial fisheries drastically and at the same time, values that were being negotiated and contested between groups were strikingly comparable. Certainly, there are limited documents available that are concentrated on the deliberation and valuation processes during the decision-making process between 1968 to 1972. Only McIvor's (1966) report gave a glimpse to the decision making process of establishing the FFMC and years later, Gislason, MacMillan, and Craven (1982) published their economic analysis of the quota system. That is why my research on Lake Winnipeg is empirically valuable. My presence on Lake Winnipeg during a transitional period gave me a unique opportunity to witness the negotiation (or

lack thereof) between fishers and the government. Even though I do not have the full picture of what the whole decision process between 1968 and 1972 looked like, available sources illustrate couple of things. First, the debate in both House of Commons and the Manitoba Legislative Assembly show that collectively oriented measures of marketing boards such as the FFMC to limit internal competition was foremost about how the market should be organized. The values of co-operation and financial security outweighed the need for having competition as the central value of the 'free market'. Secondly, even though economic, environmental, political, and social factors together triggered the institutional changes on Lake Winnipeg, politicians and bureaucrats took narrower views on the matter. The establishment of the FFMC was justified in economic terms, while the establishment of the quota system was seen as a priority for biological and economical integrity. The same could be said about the changes the Province of Manitoba forced through during 2016 and 2019. The decision to opt-out of FFMC was treated as a matter of economics while the decision to buy-back quota and increase minimum net mesh size was conceived as an effort to 'save' the walleye. Additionally, the changes during the same period illustrated the new moral politics of Neo-liberalism and the Cartesian dualistic politics which dismissed the fishers' collective interest. Because of the restricted reference points in democratic deliberation on the issues such as buy-back quota or opting out of FFMC the fishers' ability to not only protect their own way of life but also to negotiate with the government was heavily constrained. In the following chapters, I will illustrate how the fishers' knowledge and worldview tend to see fisheries in more depth than politicians and bureaucrats but, due to a lopsided power structure, the fishers' views are systematically excluded because they go beyond the scope of what politicians or bureaucrats acknowledge as acceptable knowledge.

Both the IG theory and Sen's (2009) idea of public reasoning have the assumption that the free exchange of ideas can resolves differences through debate. However, such a view, as the case of Lake Winnipeg illustrates, is naïve and lacks necessary critical information on how debates really take place. Both approaches ignore larger environmental politics. In the case of Sen (2009), he himself ignores the roles of institutions in the valuation processes and their influence on how values are defined which is not static but constantly moving across space and time. In other words, values are negotiated through politically charged processes between different groups or institutions. IG theory is ontologically challenged since it relies too heavily on reducing the environment as something to be governed. This may have broadened the concept of governability by including the interaction between the two systems. Governability is not just about the success in terms of biological diversity but also considers social justice. At the same time, it also shrinks the public sphere for deliberation. Splitting the social and the natural gives an edge to a hierarchy of knowledge where the scientists are the ones with the authority to talk about both systems and also how the issues are being framed. Such separation does not open a space for other interpretations (A. Song 2015; J. P. Johnsen 2017)[1]. I am in no way saying we need to dismiss either the IG theory or Sen's (2009) idea of public reasoning and the Capability Approach. Rather, I am proposing to expand those two approaches by offering a valuable critique through the umbrella of environmental politics by combining the anthropology of David Harvey (1996, 2005, 2018), David Graeber (2011, 2012, 2015) and Wendy Brown (2019) on one hand, and Bruno Latour´s (2004) and Jason W. Moore´s (2015, 2016) ontological critique of environmental politics on the other. Together, those approaches challenge the idealizations of participatory democracy and shared values and help us to build a bridge to a wider public sphere that should enhance both

[1] The main authors of the IG theory acknowledge the theory's ontological shortcomings.

the IG theory and Sen's Capability approach and push them into a space of a new political possibility.

1.3.2. The step beyond

The work of authors mentioned above underscores why the current conceptualizations of the Capability Approach and the IG theory fall short and provide us with a vision of how we can move forward. First, I place a great value in Wendy Brown's observations on the neo-liberal attempt to shrink political life in every shape or form by imposing their own narrow notion of morality and freedom. Wendy Brown, author of *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West,* describes how neo-liberalism has not only robbed us of the political deliberation on social issues, condemning those who attempt to do so by calling them an enemy of the free society. Additionally, as Brown (2019) mentioned, by imposing the conceptualization of freedom to a mere individual competition and free from the power of the state, the process of individualization reduced political subjectivity to mere voters and spectators. Second is Latour's *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Science into Democracy* which, in a sense, reiterates Brown's point with an environmental twist. As Brown (2019) argued, neo-liberalism has undertaken the project of stripping political life and political discourse from any ties with the economy while Latour (2004) illustrated how Cartesian dualism has separated nature from social and political discourse. Suddenly, nature is something outside of our realm that only a few "experts" have the "ability to speak" and "tell the truth" about (Latour 2004, 14) – to save the world! The ultimate sacrifice is that the public sphere has been reduced since the public debate is consistently being neutralized with scientific facts that are indisputable. There is limited space for fishers and others that might hold different kind of knowledge to participate in the debate in their engagement with the state. This is vital as I talk about in this case of fishing and the difficulty the

fishers have to dispute the experts of the Province of Manitoba (Chapter 5). Lastly, both Brown (2019) and Latour (2004) follow a path that many Indigenous scholars have encouraged others to follow, and that is the core of the Indigenous struggle and their fights for their own political subjectivity and engagement against the smothering tactics of the state or the tyranny of the market (P. Kulchyski 2005, 2013).

All of those authors offer us a messy path, but nonetheless it is necessary to take in the fight for expanding the concept of public discourse and environmental politics further. Together with my case of Lake Winnipeg, it will help us understand why public reasoning through the mechanism of co-management or creating a common notion of sustainability has failed miserably in fisheries politics or environmental politics as a whole.

1.4. The navigation of the political waves of Lake Winnipeg

The navigation of the stormy political waves on Lake Winnipeg for the past few years has been challenging. As I previously stated, such political turmoil has not been seen on Lake Winnipeg for more than fifty years and as yet the full picture on the consequences of these changes is not apparent. My time and experience on Lake Winnipeg, however, has presented interesting insights in fisheries governance that deserve serious consideration. From one point of view, I am only echoing James C. Scott's (1998), Degnbol et al.'s (2006), Jentoft's and Chuenpagdee's (2009) observations on limitations to 'govern' nature. On the other hand, I am focusing on political processes and subjectivities and on the idea of how people get together to discuss pressing political issues are more often than not undermined in their efforts by both traditional politics and political projects. Further, I argue that our analytical tools -- either it is the Capability Approach, or the IG theory -- are yet inadequately equipped to comprehend the juxtaposition of the social and natural

systems with power disparity and thus to allow the realization of true democratic engagement in governance to be realized.

In **Chapter 2** I offer a critique of both IG theory and Sen's Capability Approach and his idealized version of public reasoning. Both of the approaches are a very liberal way of illustrating how public debate takes place and how values are negotiated through debates. However, both the IG Theory and the Capability Approach fall short in the area of environmental politics and power, which need to be addressed. There are two issues I tackle in the chapter that I believe both approaches are ignoring which limits their analytical capacity. (1) The power of the neo-liberal policy to not only impose its own definition of freedom but to limit the issues that are being debated. (2) The problem of the Cartesian dualism in the debate on environmental issues; by separating culture and nature, we are automatically reducing our political terrain and who can participate in debate. I propose to follow Latour (2004) by combining values and facts to slow down the consultation processes and thereby become more knowledge and power inclusive.

Chapter 3 is my detailed account of navigating a very fluid fieldwork setting where I, as an anthropologist, had to adapt to regulatory changes that affected my research. I illustrate how public anthropology can enhance the ability to understand an ever-changing reality by working closely with my informants, bouncing ideas back and forth about what was going on, and what was about to happen. I did not have the facts ready on paper in front of me and neither did my participants, but I did a small-scale experience of Latour's (2004) suggestion of combining values and facts. I did so by discussing the ethical considerations of my informants at the same time as I was producing the facts or other available facts became available. This certainly slowed down the process but, in return, I have research that tells much more accurately what happened between

2016 and 2019 on Lake Winnipeg. I will have to revisit these facts we co-produced in couple of years with my informants to know how well they stood the test of time.

Chapters 4 & 5 go together to illustrate two important points. First, I am showcasing how values are in fact moving targets and they change across time and space. This point is highlighted by the rise and fall of Marketing Boards in Canada. Negotiating values is a highly politically charged process, but between the 1930s and 1960s when most Marketing Boards were established the idea of mutual aid and making ends meet was on the agenda. This was a stark contrast to the neo-liberal project that forced changes to the concept of the market towards more competition and individualization from the 1970s to the present. Secondly, in those chapters I am showcasing the difference between groups in conceptualizing freedom and how it was resolved in the public sphere. In the case of Manitoba, it was resolved through the political power of the Conservative party.

Chapter 6 revolves around the problem of Cartesian dualism and how the separation of culture and nature shape the outcome of the public debate. Between 2016 and 2019 the issue of sustainability of Lake Winnipeg was prevalent. Related this issue, an environmental group, Manitoba Wildlife Federation (MWF) with an academic main spokesperson pushed for stricter regulations on commercial fishers to reduce fishing pressure. The debate about the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg illustrated well the hierarchy of knowledge: The Province of Manitoba picked the knowledge of a professor and an environmental group over that of fishers. By restricting the point of reference of the debate the deliberation about the environment never really shifted to how the Province itself had undermined the sustainability of the lake with its infrastructure. In the end, due to the hierarchy of knowledge and power, it was the commercial fishers themselves who had to bear the burden of ‘enhancing sustainability’ on Lake Winnipeg.

Chapter 7 criticizes the idealization of participatory democracy by both Sen (2009) and the IG theory. Co-management arrangements have been conceived as a good governance to solve a legitimacy crisis in fisheries governance. However, I argue that Co-management Boards can as easily become political tools implemented solely as a technical fix. As this case study of Lake Winnipeg illustrates, it is not enough to trust democratic deliberation blindly since political power and a hierarchy of knowledge shrink any effort of public debate.

Chapter 8 summarizes the arguments presented in the dissertation and illustrates how the case of Lake Winnipeg can help us expand Interactive Governance theory and Sen's theory of public reasoning.

Chapter 2: Reinvigorating the public sphere – a critique of Interactive Governance theory and the Capability Approach

The Capability Approach and Interactive Governance (IG) Theory are both innovative analytical tools in their respective fields of studies. The Capability Approach has been prevalent in development and social justice studies while the IG theory has been gradually established as one of the leading conceptual approaches in research on fisheries. Both approaches place great value on participatory democracy as a vehicle to resolve tensions or disagreements between groups. Sen (2009) conceptualized democracy as "Government by discussion" (Sen 2009, 3) while Jentoft and Chuenpagdee (2015) and Symes (2006) argue that co-management is the preferred mode of governing within the IG theory because of its democratic quality. Certainly, the context in which those approaches were developed are different. Sen´s (2009) public reasoning is central to his Capability Approach. Sen envisioned people´s ability to come together to deliberate collectively on central values which should underpin a just society. The freer the exchange of ideas, the better. The deliberation on values is essential for the idea of good life since the fruit of these exchange of ideas should be values that will be conceived as the yardstick for how one ought to live a good life. On the other hand, the IG theory is first an attempt to broaden fisheries governance and push for what one would consider 'good governance'. IG theory is an analytical tool to compare between policies or modes of governance, as an example between hierarchical or co-governance (Jan Kooiman 2008, 188). The IG theory opens a space for considering 'Governing System' and 'System-to-be-governed' and how the interaction between the two systems should enhance collaboration, communication, reflection and most importantly, learning and adaptation: Together, the interaction between the two systems should enhance the capacity of fisheries governance to address problems that might arise (Jan. Kooiman and et al.

2005; Chuenpagdee and Jentoft 2009). IG theory determines how effective different modes of governance are in cultivating interaction, or Governance Interaction between the two spheres. However, both the Capability Approach and IG theory share two shortcomings in their attempts to promote participatory democracy. Both shortcomings are crucial to the argument that follows in this chapter. As I am proposing to expand the public sphere, I am in no way saying either of the approaches reject the potentiality of expansion, or 'broad consultation'. In fact, both approaches would aspire to make space for more voices to be heard. My argument is rather focusing on the lack of ontological and critical depth in the consideration of environmental politics in the approaches. Both the Capability Approach and IG theory endorse an idealistic version of democracy but fail to go far enough to address systematic restrictions and acknowledge how class and power differences shape outcomes in public deliberation. In this chapter, I will tackle two issues that highlight these drawbacks well. The first issue is the power imposed by neo-liberalism to define values such as freedom or sustainability, which is not sufficiently addressed by either the IG theory or the Capability Approach. This is a crucial point because neither approach treats values as moving targets that have to be ever negotiated through a political process where power disparity does matter greatly. Here, the power imposed by neo-liberalism influences deliberation, or how certain values are defined and by whom. The second issue closely relates to the first one: the power disparity imposed by the Cartesian dualism to which both IG theory and the Capability Approach are insensitive. Just as the neo-liberal political project imposes power, Cartesian dualism reinforces who is allowed to debate and what ways we ought to talk about environmental issues. Lake Winnipeg is case in point as I will illustrate in following chapters. Nonetheless, I believe the work of Harvey (2000, 2005, 1996), Graeber (2011, 2015), Brown (2019), Moore (2015) and Latour

(2004) help us understand shortcomings of IG theory and Capability Approach in democratic deliberation, while also offering a way to expand the approaches.

Neither IG theory nor the Capability Approach adequately address the ecological and social aspects in their respective conceptual tools. Both approaches offer an analytical lens that helps us to understand debates on values and why some institutions fail, such as a consequence of limited freedom of the press in establishing collective ideas of social justice or the lack of interaction between the civil society and nature, resulting in inadequate solutions. However, both approaches do this imperfectly because they overlook the tension in how values and facts are produced on an ontological and epistemological level. First, the problem is the theories' Cartesian dualism, and the way interactive governance engages with the 'governing system' as the regulator and influencer of the ´system to be governed'. The Capability Approach does not recognize the Cartesian dualistic problem. Latour's (2004) path of the necessity for expanding the social by combining facts and values might be the appropriate approach. No longer should we rely on just scientists to produce the facts to 'save' the eco-and the social system but rather, the process needs to be fuller by including more voices of stakeholders and ethical considerations during the process, but not afterwards when the facts have been already established. Such a position is impossible to take if one continues to reinforce the current "[…] symbolic, cultural and political apparatus […]" (Hage 2012, 302). It is therefore crucial to pay more attention to " […] how natural and social entities are brought together in particular 'meeting points' […]" (Murdoch 2001, 126). To do so, we need to follow the Moore's (2015) position of co-production of nature but as Moore (2015, 2017, 2018) himself argues, it is impossible to separate a social system such as capitalism from the ecosystem and vice versa. The social system is just as embedded in the natural system as the governing system is; they co-produce each other. Instead of separating the two spheres (natural

and cultural system), they should be combined under the same umbrella as, for example, world ecology or 'the oikeios' (J. W. Moore 2015). This means, in essence, to "[…] bring together (bundle) definite human and extra-human activities and movements […]" (J. W. Moore 2015, 46). Acknowledging that if we change something, that action "[…] simultaneously changes [our] own nature […]" (J. W. Moore 2015, 46). If we see the social, environmental, and political system as world ecology, we change how values are deliberated because no longer are we focusing on how the so called 'governing system' influences the 'system -to-be-governed' as IG theory proposes, but rather how our actions today will not only change the system that we are embedded in but ourselves in the process as well.

Secondly, the neo-liberal era has placed serious limitations on the democratic deliberation processes that need to be acknowledged, especially since interaction between the two systems plays such a prevalent role in the Capability Approach. Additionally, according to Sen (2009), the public sphere is open for everyone to exchange their ideas freely. However, the power posed by neo-liberalism shrinks the breadth of societal opportunities and the public sphere which are so central to IG theory and the Capability Approach. Above I suggested to follow Latour's (1999) innovative way of going beyond Cartesian dualism by breaking down the barriers between objects and subjects. We cannot, however, accept everything in his theory at face value. Latour (1999) was never a fan of what he called 'social explanation' since he believed in freeing us from our stagnant way of thinking required to free our informants as well, "[…] [w]e won't try to discipline you, to make you fit into our categories; we will let you deploy your own worlds, and only later will we ask you to explain how you came about settling them […]" (Latour 2005, 23). Such a position certainly creates a serious drawback and leads us to a dangerous path. As Elder-Vass (2008, 2015), Castree (2002) and Murdoch (2001) have pointed out, social structures that either

have been agreed or forced upon others influence how we act or deliberate issues. As Derek Johnson et al. (2019) notes, "[…] some interpretations of fundamental value terms have greater political credibility than others […]*"* (50). Here, the neo-liberalism as a political project plays a huge role. It is important for one to keep in mind that when I talk about neo-liberalism, I am using Brown's (2019), Harvey's (2003, 2005) and Graeber's (2001, 2015) works as a point of departure. Their positions are something of a juxtaposition of both the neo-Marxist tradition and the Foucauldian way of analyzing neo-liberalism where the focus simultaneously goes to economic relations and "[…] political reasons and political production […]" (W. Brown 2019, 21). All of them argued in some way or other about the transition of neo-liberalism from an economic project to a moral one. In the foreground, as an economic project, neo-liberalism tells us that it serves people's well-being the best by "[…] liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom […]" (Harvey 2005, 2) but the only way to do so is to initiate political processes which secure "[…] private property, free markets, and free trade […]" (Harvey 2005, 2). The cost of doing so is at the expense of democracy in two ways. Firstly, related to the Cartesian dualism, neo-liberalism as a political project depends on institutions that do not need to hold any democratic accountability since they are separated from democratic processes. They are ruled by, "[…] experts and elites […]" (Harvey 2003, 66). The morality project of neo-liberalism, however, revolves around valuation and reason which has a profound effect on democracy by overhauling "[…] law, political culture, and political subjectivity […]" (W. Brown 2019). As neo-liberalism has pushed for freedom and the free market as the pinnacle of moral rationality for the past four decades, the space for other political issues such as collective life, inequality or social injustice evaporates along with political deliberation. Political subjects are turned into scattered individuals who are expected to participate in markets that are freed from the power of the state or any other social concerns (W. Brown 2019).

2.1. The devaluation of social concerns in public reasoning.

It was a nice afternoon in the spring of 2018 on Lake Winnipeg as I was driving on highway 9 on my way to visit Blake[2], just to check in and see how the preparation for upcoming spring fishing season was going. As usual, Blake was working hard getting his nets and gear ready for the season. Blake invited me to his shed to talk while he was sorting out his nets. The conversation quickly turned into a philosophical debate on the good life. In the middle of the conversation, Blake turned his head, indicating that I should follow him to a small office space in the back of the shed. In the office, there were a lot of old newspapers and other documentation about the fishery on Lake Winnipeg. Blake told me to take a quick look at an old minute of meetings between fishers and the Province of Manitoba back in the 1970s and 1980s. Blake said, "look at this! Back then, they are trying to change the mesh size. Just like today". We went through a couple of older documents that told the same story. The same issues circling back and forth and that got me thinking and I asked Blake couple of questions. The first one was simply, how did fishing intertwine with his idea of the good life, and secondly, where did he find the energy to attend meetings with the Province when he acknowledged himself that those meetings were more than often futile. Blake did take few minutes to reflect on the questions and then he uttered, "Solli, let me tell you a story". Blake took few second for himself before he started to recall a lunch that he had with his father and his sons.

> "A few days ago, my father took me and my boys out for a lunch to a restaurant in Gimli. It was a restaurant that my father had sold his catch to. The old man paid for all of us just so he could sit beside us, watch us eat his fish and ask us, 'how is the fish?' And he would gladly pay for that fish, again and again. It was not really about that…This is fishing, when you care about what you got. You care for the fish. That fish is you! It is you in more ways than one. It is your soul, your pride. It is everything you are. It is not your livelihood; it is

[2] All the names in this thesis are pseudonyms.

> your life. This is more important than some dollar bill for some American with a fishing rod. Our soul is in that water!"

Blake´s story became the inspiration for an editorial that I wrote for the journal *Icelandic Connection* (Pálsson 2019) because it epitomized the fisher's relationship with Lake Winnipeg. What Blake eloquently explained, is that fish is not just a commodity that fishers offer to the market to make a living, they are essentially offering part of themselves and sharing their hard work with people, their loved ones or with strangers. Certainty, this is not a unique perspective. Anna Tsing (2013; 2015) described a similar expression of pride among mushroom pickers in Oregon who displayed themselves with what they called "[…] trophies of freedom […]" (31). This has been well established historically in academic literature focusing on job satisfaction among fishers, where pride and freedom play predominant roles (Pollnac and Poggie 1988; Pollnac, Pomeroy, and Harkes 2001; Pollnac and Poggie 2006; McGoodwin 1990; Carothers 2010). It would be foolish to only focus on freedom and pride in Blake's father's story. The lesson of the story undoubtedly connects to the process of what Tsing (2013) described as "extending social relations beyond transaction" (23). By bringing fish to the market and hence, part of themselves, the fishers are not only making themselves available to the "social field" (Tsing 2013, 22) but also they are a "[…] continual reminder of the need for reciprocation […]" (Tsing 2013, 22). Here, I have arrived at the second part of Blake's story. Blake continued, elaborating,

> "We try to support people, who support you and if that is not what it is all about, then how do you sustain a community? It is not necessarily that I feel pride in serving the food I am catching; it is the responsibility for my community. If someone says, 'I need 50 pounds of fish?', I will reply 'here you go! Take it, sell it or cook it. The people who are cooking it are helping me, the people who are eating or serving the fish are helping me. We go to restaurants in town because they helped us. The money goes to the community'. You have done something, as the person who bought your fish to get something back. It is not necessarily about 'getting it', it is about being a part of something that is bigger than yourself. If you look at the bigger picture, you will find out what you really do not know because there is so much going on all over the place, and we are more connected to each

> other than we know. I cannot do something that does not affect you – And if I think I can do something that will not affect you, then I am selfish!"

The point Blake is making here is a crucial one, as he summarizes well the struggle I am attempting to convey here on the fishers' search for a meaningful collective life on one hand, and sense of control of one's own destiny on the other hand. This is fundamental to understanding Blake's and other fisher's idea of the good life. Their sense of the good life is having a positive impact on their community or the world through their actions, which resonates with the central thesis of Graeber´s (2018) book, *Bullshit Jobs,* that people do cherish the social values their livelihoods bring rather than thinking strictly about creating material wealth. To hear a member of your community praise you for having "a good fish" makes one feel respected in the community, knowing that you contributed to something good. It is a great sense of feeling to know that you are not destroying the environment or taking advantage of other people. For many people, building sociability is most important and for many fishers on Lake Winnipeg, it goes beyond what the 'mainstream' academics would consider sociability. The connection goes beyond connectedness between fellow fishers and members of the community. It is the relationship fishers have with Lake Winnipeg, which sometimes can be characterized as kin-like, as one of my interviewees back in 2013 pointed out as he compared the relationship with the lake to a marriage (Pálsson 2014). This connectedness should force us to recognize the importance of expanding the public sphere, and ultimately, to bring the social back into the democratic deliberation of how to push the idea of the good life further. Here is exactly the source of the struggle between fishers and the government.

Amartya Sen's work on the Capability Approach, and thus his interpretation of social justice, becomes a point of reference for conceptualizing the idea of the good life. Throughout the dissertation, however, I will illustrate the pressing issue of expanding his Capability Approach as an effort to re-imagine Sen's notion of social justice and public reasoning. The strength of Sen's

theory of capability can also be considered its glaring weakness. Much criticism of Sen's work derives from his lack of interest in including literature from political economy and social science (Gaspar 2002, 2007). Sen (1988, 1999a, 1999b) places strong emphasis on freedom and democratic deliberation in his idea of the good life and social justice without truly acknowledging the effect of neo-liberal policies, the very same political projects upon which he bases his theory. As Gaspar (2002) pointed out, Sen channeled all his energy in the philosophical idea of freedom and agency, and he completely ignores the concept of personhood in his theory. Das Gaspar (2002) argued that through the Capability Approach, "[l]ife is viewed as a stock exchange or supermarket" (445). Here Das Gaspar is referring to the Capability Approach idea that an individual chooses opportunities or options according to what they have reason to value. The problem of placing community membership just to mere instrumental skews how personhood develops because personhood evolves as we:

> interact with others, and to form purposes and then care about, commit to and act on these, and to deliberate about the tension and balancing between different incommensurable values (Gaspar 2002, 451).

At the same time, by ignoring the importance of community membership, Sen consequently did not integrate positionality of individuals against social structures or how different social categories shapes peoples' experience and perception of their opportunities to cultivate their personhood. Ontologically, Sen did not, either, pay any attention to how peoples' different relationships with the environment shapes ones personhood and consequently affects how one might seek the life one might desire (Cruikshank 2012; Povinelli 2001). Sen fails to meaningfully address how life politics can limit the set of available valuable functioning to which people can realistically aspire (Qizilbash and Clark 2005). Life politics is in essence an amalgamation of Brown's (2019), Fischer's (2014), Graeber's (2001, 2011, 2018), and Harvey's (2012, 2018)

observations on the influences of political economy on people's ability to make a living. In other words, life politics should be considered as a practice-based observation on political economy. There are many aspects of political economy that people do not have any control of, yet, it has considerable influences over what is available to people in their efforts to meet basic survival. The strength of Sen's theory, however, is the fact that he has largely left the Capability Approach in a space of potentiality by rejecting the endorsement of any lists of 'core capabilities', as Martha Nussbaum (2000, 2006) did. Sen refused to 'freeze' a list of capabilities for all societies for all time to come, irrespective of what the citizens come to understand and value (Sen 2009). By endorsing a list of 'core capabilities' Sen would have locked his theory for years to come.

This is important for two reasons. One, Sen (2009) placed a great value in the process of public reasoning (debate) as an instrument for democratic politics in the search of "social justice" (Sen 2009: 44) and holistically, what should be considering good. For Sen, endorsing a list of capabilities would have deprived people of the opportunity to critically debate the fundamental institutions and "political questions" (Sen 2009, 55) in each society. This is, as Sen (2009) himself conceded, an ultimate rejection of the Rawlsian and Hobbesian transcendental institutionalist tradition that emphasize the idea that the good life is best secured by certain sets of institutions to cultivate an environment for a just society (Rawls 1971; Sen 2009). Sen's rejection of Rawl's institutionalism was to an extent a contrary position to take because Sen´s own concern for democratic deliberation took precedence as the key to debate and " […] examine what emerges in society, including the kind of lives that people can actually lead […]" (Sen 2009, 10). However, democracy is itself certainly an institutional apparatus which for Sen is the vehicle to deliberate on which institutions ought to underpin the society instead of having pre-arranged sets of institutions. Theoretically, this is a vital point for various political projects but traditionally the

effort has gone to finding the "right" institutions, the fisheries have been no exception, where experiments of the introduction of individual quota systems or marine protected areas as an example, resulted in mixed results. Recently however, Co-management Boards have materialized here and there as a sort of public reasoning platform for examining the world people are living in and to try to find a consensus of a common conception of social justice and ultimately, what should be considered good. One might believe the incompleteness of the Capability Approach was a weakness, but it also can be seen as a strength in the way it opens a space to interweave with other theories. This flexibility allows us to link the Capability Approach with other schools of thought to address the systematic restrictions and social differences.

2.2 The gift of freedom

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach has been widely celebrated and his vision for well-being and social justice has been highly influential in development and social justice studies for the past four decades. My intention here is not to delve into the entirety of the philosophical underpinnings of Sen's Capability Approach nor is it necessary to do so since there is an ample body of literature that does so elsewhere (Dasgupta 1993, 2001; Gaspar and D. 2002, 2007; Nussbaum 2000, 2011; Sen 1999a, 1999b, 2002). I will rather restrict myself to discussing the central thesis of his theory since it is highly relevant for not only how we conceptualize wellbeing but, more importantly, how his thesis has influenced the critical debate on well-being. The appeal of the Capability Approach is that it challenged the old notion of our resource based and 'arrangement-focused' sense of wellbeing presented by John Rawls (1971) and other social contract theorists (Gaspar 2007; Sen 1999a, 2009, 1988, 1985). For Sen, the idea of social contract theorists was inherently problematic since they strongly believed that finding the "right" institutions and sufficient control of resources by an individual was sufficient to lead a life that one deems worth living. A set of fixed resources falls short because, as Sen pointed out, some

people will always be in a disadvantaged position, regardless of the arrangement of institutions. People are different, with different needs, especially in the case of people who have been pushed to the margin of the society. As Sen himself argued, people in a position of being disadvantaged will always have "[…] greater difficulty in converting primary goods into achievements […]" (Sen 1988, 278). Sen accused Rawls and his followers of being too fixated on the outcomes and hence ignoring the struggle of each individual to blossom (Nussbaum 2000). More deliberately, Sen stressed that Rawls had by his outcome-oriented approach stripped people of their own agency by making the assumption that popular representatives are in the position to decide "what principles must be seen as 'just' for guiding the basic institutional structure of society" (Sen 2009, 198). In transcendental institutionalism there is no obligation for the representatives to publicly debate moral or political underpinnings of institutions and it did not celebrate the potential of individuals do so either. That is where the Capability Approach shines: it opens a space for conceptualizing well-being on a moral and political level where individuals have the potential to reflect on the implications and consequences of their own decisions. What makes the Capability Approach such an appealing epistemological way of conceptualizing well-being is the gift that Sen is asking us to value before anything else: freedom.

Freedom for Sen is, as Anna Tsing (2013) would put it, "[…] the gift that everyone needs […]" (28) and it is carried out accordingly in the Capability Approach. Sen (1988) characterized his approach neatly by saying, "[…] what living standards we can enjoy must depend, at least, partly on how <u>free we are to choose</u> one bundle of commodities rather than other […]" (272) [My emphasis]. The key in understanding the role of freedom, in Sen's thought is to decipher the distinction between functioning and capabilities. As Martha Nussbaum (2000) rightfully observed, the distinction between the two concepts is very murky one which does not make it a good choice

for the theory. In its simplistic way, functioning is first and foremost a representation of what an individual desires to do or wants to be in their life (Sen 1985; Beuterlspacher et al. 2003). As in other theories, such as in the Rawlsian tradition, functioning deals with "[…] particular achievement of the person he or she is succeeding in having […]" (Sen 1999, 33). The Capability Approach, however, according to Sen is the "[…] range of lives – constituted by valuable functioning from which a person can choose […]" (Qizilbash and Clark 2005, 105). When we are talking about capabilities, we are doing so on two different levels (Nussbaum 2000, 2011). On the one hand, there is basic and internal capability which highlights the skills within us but still needs to develop in cooperation with our closest environment to open a door for "[…] more advanced capabilities […]" (Nussbaum 2000, 84). On the other hand, Nussbaum (2000, 2011) talked about combined capability which is basically internal capabilities in addition to the "[…] social/political/economic condition in which functioning can actually be chosen […]" (Nussbaum 2011, 22). In a nutshell, what Nussbaum is trying to argue is that

> It is not possible conceptually to think of a society producing combined capabilities without producing internal capabilities. We could, however, imagine a society that does well in creating context for choice in many areas but does not educate its citizens or nourish the development of their power of mind (Nussbaum 2011, 22).

In that sense, it falls upon the State to offer citizens a variety of capabilities in order for the individual to achieve their ultimate end goal, which is, to lead the life they deem to be worthy, or are succeeding in being who they desire to be. For the Capability Approach, it is not the end goal that matters the most for evaluating well-being, it is the journey or the process of doing and being (Sen 2002). The agency of the individual is brought back into the picture. The process involves what Sen coined 'reasoned evaluation' (Sugden 2006, 39) or 'sustainability of the reason' (Sen 2009, 194). This is a process where the individual places his or her choices under the lenses of their own moral and political beliefs. Many decisions need to "survive our own seriously

undertaken critical scrutiny" (Sen 2009, 194) and what is deemed to be valuable or ranked functioning after one's every desire are based on those critical reflections. The reasoned evaluation happens both on an individual and on a collective level, but we will put that discussion aside for a moment. Even though those reflections are important to understand how people think and why people do what they do, it is still not the main vehicle of the Capability Approach. The main criteria of evaluating if an individual is leading the life he/she desires will always depend on, according to Amartya Sen, how free they really are in choosing "[…] their own life path and the power of effectively pursuing their goals […]" (Fischer 2014, 149) . This is a very powerful move on behalf of the Capability Approach because by placing freedom at its center, it not only emphasizes people's liberty to do what they believe is right for them but, also, creates space for choice as Nussbaum (2011) argued. As Sen himself said,

> […] in assessing the 'opportunity aspect of freedom', the focus has to be on the alternatives that a person has reason to value or want. The importance of freedom and of opportunity would be hard to motivate if the focus were not on the options or processes that one has reason to value or want, but rather an alternative one has no reason to seek […] (Sen 2002, 5).

No longer should we concern ourselves with trying to find the 'right' institutional arrangement when we have entered the messiness of opportunities and choices, which becomes the concern of society to cultivate an environment that enables citizens to be free to "pursue their own end" (Sen 1999, 278). The reliance on freedom creates a very problematic situation for the Capability Approach, which even Sen (1999) acknowledged but did not properly address by admitting that freedom has "different facets". For example, freedom can simultaneously mean freedom to breath fresh air, but also the freedom of pollute the air that we breath. Sen's liberal world view was too focused on illustrating the gift of freedom and therefore ignored other conceptualizations of freedom.

2.2.1 Freedom turns into 'unfreedom'

Amartya Sen's major blind spot is his lack of critical attention to the power the neo-liberal project manifested in societies between the 1970s and 1980s that swept and reshaped people's subjectivities and what people should desire, and which is still going strong to this day. It is ironic that Sen (1985, 1988, 1999b, 1999a, 2009) and Nussbaum (2000, 2006, 2011) celebrated the Capability Approach for offering people freedom and liberated us from the institutional arrangement-oriented thoughts, such as Rawlsianism, while simultaneously not questioning the assumptions of the institutional arrangements of neo-liberalism. Martha Nussbaum (2003) did warn us about the slippery slope of freedom; that is, freedom cannot always be perceived in a positive light. She usually did so in the context of the environment, by highlighting the potential consequences of the freedom to pollute as her case in point but, like Sen, she never expanded her imagination to other possibilities of a state or life outside of the neo-liberal 'iron cage' or shared any reservations about how neo-liberalism as a moral and political project transforms the gift of freedom. Here I find Wendy Brown's (2019) and Zygmunt Baumann's (2000) take on neo-liberalism and how it has changed people's political subjectivity very useful.

In short, Brown (2019) and Baumann (2000) both illustrate how neo-liberalism has slowly dismantled the social and instead formed us into a crowd of individuals in a political sense. On the moral side, however, as I explain in chapters three and four, the neo-liberal conceptualization of freedom can be measured by the "absence of explicit coercion" (W. Brown 2019, 96). In fact, for neo-liberalism, freedom is seen only as something born as a side effect of the market. For Sen, markets are one of the pillars of his theory, since the market is seen as a vehicle for the creation of opportunities (Panzironi and Gelber 2012).

Wendy Brown's (2019) detailed account of neo-liberalism has laid the groundwork for the augmentation of anti-politics in North America and explains how one of the main architects of

neo-liberal economics, Friedrich Von Hayek, put great emphasis on the concept that markets should not only create environments for exchange and economic relations but also, "[…] govern and discipline individuals while maximizing freedom […]" (W. Brown 2019, 11). Freedom could only be shaped through the space that markets create since according to Hayek, paraphrased by Wendy Brown, markets arise "[…] spontaneously and [are] transmitted through tradition, rather than political power […]" (W. Brown 2019, 12). In other words, freedom through the vehicle of markets is born outside of the sphere of law or politics and instead is understood as a platform for voluntarily participation of exchange between actors. Everyone can participate if they "[…] freely accept and abide […]" (W. Brown 2019, 75) by certain principles; personal responsibility and competition. Participation in the market 'frees' people from the shadow of the coercive power of the state and the culture of dependence. By creating the hegemonic idea of the relationship between markets and freedom, Von Hayek and the school of neo-liberalism is not only an attempt to shape people into raw individuals but, on the larger scale, they are as Wendy Brown observes, attempting to remove politics from the social by undermining those who want to push social issues such as social injustice to the public as, "[…] enemies of a free people […]" (W. Brown 2019, 44). They are being accused of politicizing the market or the social, following the footsteps of a "[…] freedom destroying monster of invasive state […]" (W. Brown 2019, 49). This leads to two related consequences. (1) By dethroning politics and the social, the space for collective freedom is limited and freedom itself turns into 'unfreedom'. Neo-liberalism offers freedom through the space of the market. Various choices are promised for the individual but as Walby (2012, 104) stressed, "[…] most often, choice is merely the perception of choice […]". That is exactly what Baumann (2000) criticized as he pointed out;

> […] [R]elocation of ethical/political discourse from the frame of the 'just society' to that of 'human rights', that is refocusing that discourse on the right of individual to stay

> different and to pick and choose at will their own models of happiness and fitting life-style […] (29).

What Zygmunt Baumann is really telling us is that "[…] individualization is a fate, not a choice […]" (Baumann 2000, 34) and if someone wants to refuse the gift of 'individualization' or 'freedom' as neo-liberalists would define it, is simply "[…] not on the agenda […]" (Baumann 2000, 34). (2) The public space shrinks further which puts a limit on what is being discussed, and by whom.

Sen's understanding of wellbeing is paradigmatic of the neo-liberal approach. Sen emphasized the philosophical exercise of functioning and capabilities but at the same time ignores the politics of life. These politics are the constraint the market might place on an individual by denying one the capability to live a good life. By separating the actual experience of the people from political economy, Sen might have been influenced by Hayek's notion that only markets can open the space for freedom and create "[…] morally disciplined individuals […]" (W. Brown 2019, 49), who search for their own best opportunities. This point resonates well with Hannah Arendt's argument in *Human Condition* but, as Brown (2019) pointed out, Hannah Arendt disapproved of including life politics with freedom or well-being, and simply argued that freedom in the public space would disappear due to " […] demands that flooded the political realm with bodies and their needs […]" (W. Brown 2019, 49). What life politics teaches us, as Fischer (2014) pointed out, "[…] the life one values" is conceptually constrained by cultural norms and social forces […]" (144). In other words, and this is my own interpretation, influenced by Karl Marx of course, that we cannot talk about freedom without talking about life politics and power.

2.2.2 Life politics and freedom

One can argue that Sen (1999b) simply followed the lead of neo-classical economics and that he completely ignored any conception of politics of life in his theory. Or, perhaps he followed

the lead of Hannah Arendt (1998), determining that such concerns of the human bodily needs might only dishonor the pure gift of freedom. Sen's perspective is almost as if we were living in a utopian world without any overreaching power and, more radically, one where other social relationships disappear. The problem is that we do seek relationships with others to become part of something larger (Kymlicka 1991). What is more puzzling in Sen's work is that he does not spend as much space as he should have on questioning the neo-liberal institutional arrangement that effects the opportunities that are available to individuals. This is the point that Michael Fischer (2014) stressed, the interplay between aspirations, structural opportunities, and agency. In Fischer's case, he illustrated that the balance between aspiration and agency on the one hand and opportunities and resources on the other was highly uneven among coffee farmers in Mozambique in favor of the former. Fischer's point highlights the structural conditions that are not always visible in the Capability Approach simply because it interferes with the purity of freedom to choose. Once again, it comes down to Sen's ignorance of structural factors, since he never challenged the system which results in a blind spot for his theory. Capitalism in practice is perceived as a medium for opportunities and, according to the Capability Approach, markets enable disadvantaged people to improve their material well-being which ultimately will heighten one's ability to choose the life one values (Fischer 2014). Nonetheless, capitalist markets bring not only psychological distress to people through the inequality they thrive on, they also limit the opportunities available for people (Graeber 2018; Harvey 2018, 2014). Sen in some ways separated freedom from making a living. As I have mentioned, he emphasized the market as a vehicle of opportunities, but he did not spend much time on how the market through the mechanism of money, imposes structural constraints on freedom. The assumption held by the Capability Approach indicates that a higher income or material well-being will lead to more opportunities or

enhanced agency but that is not always the case. Money, as Emily Martin (2015) observed, can either "enhance pure interaction" (109) or dissolve social ties. That is, you can increase material wealth at the expense of people's relationships with their land (Kirsch 2008; Li 2015) or a person may choose to pay for their own leisure rather than helping out a financially troubled friend. The power of money as a commodity and consequently, how the money ultimately can affect people's ability to make a living, is largely left untouched by the Capability Approach, especially in relation to freedom.

Money as a representation of value carries a challenge to the 'realness' of the economy as long as it is treated as a commodity, open for buying and selling and therefore posing a threat to people's achievements and agency. David Harvey (2018) referred to the quality of money being a commodity as madness of economic reason because " […] daily life is held hostage to the madness of money […]" (172). For Harvey (2018) and Marx (2009), the madness of money is illustrated by its ability to take a life of its own by growing without much effort but simultaneously devalues itself through fictitious capital. The notion of fictitious capital is crucial, especially, because the capital market is the only one we have and it forces people to participate in it regardless of their desire to do so or not (Weiss 2018). As Harvey (2013, 2018) stressed through his reading of Marx, fictitious capital is an important vehicle for capital expansion since it opens a space for boundless growth; but such growth is detrimental for regular people. Such opportunities for indefinite growth create incentives to speculate in rent and other valuable properties. The acts of speculation by investors consequently reduce people's ability to buy or even rent a house or properties. This was best illustrated during the subprime mortgage crises in 2008 when market forces pushed many marginalized people in the United States out of their own homes (Harvey 2014). People were stripped of their agency and aspirations by outside forces. That is the problem when exploring the

effect of markets and the nature of money on people's wellbeing. Capitalist markets are seen as something outside of life politics or politics in general (Neiburg and Guyer 2017). Something that should not be touched, and we already have models that are supposed to govern money and the only action an agent can take is basically to be prepared for the worst on one hand while being ready to jump on opportunities when they present themselves on the other hand (Neiburg 2010).

This certainly poses a challenge, especially for fishers who like many others are dependent on outside forces, regardless of how much agency one might hold. Fishers are heavily reliant on fish prices that are often determined outside of their control. There are speculations in currencies and calculations of the Consumer Price Index that express the 'right' price. Emily Martin (2015) illustrated such a case among farmers by emphasizing the negative correlation between effort and reward. Regardless of how much one works, one might feel one's effort to be useless because of low prices and the only reward one received was to "wind up beaten in the end" (E. Martin 2015, 105). As McCormack (2015) pointed out, prices can help us understand people's actions and why they do what they do, simply because prices combine the future and the present. In other words, "[…] uncertainty about future prices may shape activity in the present […]" (McCormack 2015, 137). This shapes how fishers think about their future. As Marx (2009) argued, we cannot comprehend freedom without understanding fulfillment of bodily and social needs and how people use their limited agency within the capitalist market in their pursuit of freedom. Certainly, value and values intersect as Graeber (2018) described, this is how people who on the surface might seem to work according to their social values could be looking for some hidden agenda to enhance their material well-being. However, there is also the case of people who work to make sure that others can achieve their social values, which is strongly associated with the caring classes, such as in health care, education or even domestic housework. These are first and foremost oriented to

guarantee that others have the time and ability of freedom to play. As an example, fishers on Lake Winnipeg emphasized greatly the idea of freedom for caring, that is, their work not only has social value in caring for their community but also allows them to secure freedom for themselves and their families. The fishers wanted to make sure that their kids have the freedom to play or participate in group activities, by paying their bills. However, if they cannot do so, it would be for them a situation where they hold less freedom. This is a profound gap because as Graeber (2018) consistently pointed out, the jobs that are more geared toward 'caring' and other social values are often paid less than other jobs more founded on economic profiteering or have fewer social values for the world as a whole. This is a challenge that, for example the FFMC has been facing and into which I go into greater detail in chapters 4 and 5. That is, the FFMC and, consequently the fishers are reliant on the exchange rate between the Canadian and US dollar, and of course, the related cost of living. The opportunity to participate in the market therefore not only depends on the fisher but also on market speculation on currencies or the housing market.

There is another issue that illustrates the complexity of life that is not always captured by the Capability Approach, besides a short description by Sen through his concept of 'unfreedom', a situation when resources and opportunities exceed one's agency. And certainly, there is a situation where resources and agency can exceed opportunities, which is not very common especially in capitalist market relations where command of resources or wealth can buy political power and vice versa (Graeber 2011). However, the complex relation between aspiration, structural opportunities, and agency often rests upon the unpredictability of life. Sen (2009) argued for 'sustainability of reasons' when one is deciding what one aspires to do or what should be important to one's action. Nonetheless, one can debate oneself what are right things to do and what capabilities are sufficient to live the life one imagines to be a good one but despite the 'rationality'

of the decisions, the reality might turn out to be different. Graeber's (2018) *Bullshit Jobs* is a good example of this where one might achieve certain aspirations and opportunities that enable one to command more resources. However, the price is that the opportunities turn out to be an illusion, as one is stuck in a situation that is both physically and mentally draining where the feeling of doing something fulfilling is missing.

I also like to use Berlant's (2011) example of Le Pére and his son, Franck to highlight the point. Berlant describes how Franck´s father, worked hard to make sure his son Franck would have the opportunities and freedom to play and achieve his aspirations of moving upward to a managerial class. Franck goes to business school in Paris and achieves what he aspires to do before he returns home to work in the same factory as his father for a short period of time. However, working at the same place but on a different level created a tension between the father and the son, where the latter emphasizes in front of his father that he is now the one who belongs to a class that holds the power. This disparity in power somewhat undermines the relationship between the two to a point that when Franck return to Paris, he realizes that he can no longer return home with his face "imploded and lost expression" (Berlant 2011, 212). The situation that they both had imagined had turned sour and left the son in a state of "*impassivity*" (Berlant 2011, 212). There is no guarantee that the aspirations that one desires will end up being exactly what one imagined at first.

2.3 Democratic deliberation & new political possibilities

The possibilities anthropology offers us are endless and I think the late David Graeber said it best in an interview with Charlie Rose in 2011, when describing anthropology as field of study where we "[…] try understand the full range of what has been possible, politically, economically,

socially and so forth" […][3]. By using anthropological literature and methods as a weapon, I attempt to highlight, not only what had been tried but also, to show that we can push well-being and IG theory to a new political possibility. The following chapters will illustrate how politicians and bureaucrats in Manitoba are still stuck in the same "symbolic, cultural and political apparatus" (Hage 2012, 302). In other words, the diagnosis and the solutions offered by politicians and bureaucrats are remarkably similar to past practices and pay little heed to fisher's knowledge. This impasse frustrates fishers who are trying to push institutions in the direction that fits best with their worldview. Amartya Sen tried his best to offer us a space of messiness of opportunities. The same can be said about the IG theory which illustrated the importance of interactions as a hope that a broader set of voices would expand the scope of bureaucratic and political knowledge. Unfortunately, both approaches were not critical enough to illustrate how debate really takes place. Sen and the IG theory simply failed to open up space for a new political alternative.

I have already discussed the problem regarding how the link between the Capability Approach and freedom blinded Sen to the possible shortcomings of the way he understands freedom. There is a second problem. Sen´s simplistic and idealistic take on democracy, and on public reasoning, is highlighted in his work, *Theory of Justice.* Sen reinforced the traditional idea of democracy which is 'government by discussion' (Sen 2009, 3) and public reasoning was placed in the center as a vehicle for creating a collective consciousness of essential justice. The hypothesis was that democracy and freedom of the press opened a space for the voice of the marginalized to be heard and to bring the political elite into the loop of what is going on. Sen at least acknowledged that democracy is certainly not a Western innovation, but he still falls into the trap by idolizing the 'westernized' democracy as he stressed:

[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVDkkOAOtV0

> "[…] [T]hese developments in institutional formats were immensely innovative and ultimately effective. There can be little doubt that there is a major 'Western' achievement there […]" (Sen 2009, 323).

Here, Sen describes 'westernized' democracy as an effective way to govern but Sen did not seem to recognize when arguing for the importance of democracy for public reasoning on either social justice or the good life, effectiveness is probably not what we should be looking for in democratic deliberations. A similar point can be made about weakness of the IG theory: IG theory envisioned participatory democracy as the most effective way to govern in order to make a system more governable. Neither of the theories really address properly the downside of their idealized participatory democracy, the need for more inclusive and power sensitive spaces.

I will be using Bruno Latour's work and scholars from Native Studies to illustrate further what is missing in Sen's work and the IG theory to push those analytical perspective further. There are two related issues that Sen and in fact the IG theory really never dealt with that need more attention. First of all, it is the inclusion of environmental politics in public reasoning and secondly, what role values should play in those discussions. Sen was a big believer of 'objectivity' in public reasoning about topics such as justice and injustice (Sen 2009). On the contrary, as Bruno Latour (2004) has argued, blind adherence to the ideal of scientific 'objectivity' has created 'two houses' in public discussion, the house of natural matters on one hand and a house of social matters on the other hand. This split of public discussion into two different houses has shrunken public debate and our capacity to face various challenges. Latour (2004) explains that scientists are the only ones who can travel between both houses. They can collect data and then tell the social house how to deal with nature. Others do not hold the authority to go freely between the two houses. This is a trap that the IG theory also falls in. It is interesting to mention that the father of the IG theory acknowledged the potentiality that "[…] because of nested hierarchy of systems, nature in the end

governs all societal governance […]" (Jan Kooiman 2008, 174). However, he did not go far enough since IG theory creates two spheres, the 'system to be governed' and the 'governing system' which in the end reinforces the dualism between nature and culture. The IG theory described the role of the 'governing system' to "[…] influence the interaction between the ecosystem and the socioeconomic system that it governs […]" (Chuenpagdee and Jentoft 2009, 113). As Jahn Petter Johnsen (2014) phrased it, "[…] resource governance assumes that there is a separation between the environment, the people who manage the resource, and those who are managed and the fisher […]" (430). Despite the purported feedback between the 'Governing system' and the 'system-to-be-governed' the assumption remains the same that "[…] nature became something that humans acted upon from outside, through technology […]" (Jahn P. Johnsen 2014, 430). It is the Governing system's responsibility to convince the entities within the system-to-be-governed about the images of the problem that arises and the following interventions to address the issue. This exemplifies what Song et al. (2018) and Jahn Petter Johnsen (2017) referred to as 'first' and 'second' order cybernetics. That is, the IG theory relies on the hierarchy of knowledge and power since the governing system is supposed to know what is happening between an ecosystem and socioeconomic system and it is the only sphere that knows how to influence the 'system to be governed'. I agree with Song et al. (2018) and Jahn Petter Johnsen (2017) that such a separation within the IG theory paralyzes it ontologically and epistemologically. The latter two suggest that the IG theory or fisheries governance needs to move towards 'third order cybernetics.' By definition, 'third order cybernetics'

> […] signifies the domain where the interventions and responses are interlinked in a way that it only becomes meaningful to describe them relationally, that is one cannot fully understand oneself without the consideration of the other *[…]* (A. M. Song, Johnsen, and Morrison 2018, 383).

This is a similar idea to what I am proposing but instead of using the analogy of cybernetics, I am relying on bringing environmental politics within the IG theory and the concept of 'co-production of nature' (J. W. Moore 2015). IG theory needs to escape the Cartesian dualism and begin to see systems as co-producing each other. Such a vision certainly will change the debate on governability and the interventions that are available to 'save' the fishery. Everything is interlinked and need to be treated as such so the question of governability should not revolve on the efficiency of the 'Governing System' to influence the 'system-to-be-governed' or just cultivating interactions between these systems. Rather, the focus should be on the process of how facts and interventions co-produce a new reality, so we are not talking about governability in a narrower sense.

The narrowness of the public sphere created by the Cartesian dualism is similar to the dismantling of the public sphere by neo-liberalism. That is, neo-liberal approaches to freedom or the free market are separated from other social issues. Freedom and the free market are defined narrowly while other conceptualizations of freedom and the free market are not accepted. Secondly, Sen and the IG theory never really talked about differences in political subjectivity and how individuals in different contexts might be engaged politically differently. As an example, many First Nations communities attempt to cultivate very inclusive public debates and people take an active part in the decisions process locally (Asch 2014; Graeber 2013; P. Kulchyski 2005) or people debate democratically on major issues in local space despite living in an authoritarian society (Weeden 2007). Together, the arguments presented here and in this thesis are foremost to illustrate that we need to start thinking about environmental issues that are perhaps slower in pace but will allow us instead as Latour (2004) put it, to "foster great respect for procedures" (123). Effectiveness should not be the priority, but rather a broad inclusion of voices and different knowledges. Therefore, the goal should not be ticking boxes as the fulfillment of certain

procedures, whether environmental assessments or consultation with First Nations. The respect for the procedures is not reached until all voices and different knowledges are included in the production of facts and decisions.

2.3.1. Environmental politics within public reasoning

It is striking in Sen's and the IG theory's voluminous works that they give little attention to environmental politics, either in relation to capabilities and functioning or public reasoning. In the case of Sen, he briefly talked about deterioration of the environment, noting that "[…] to prevent catastrophes caused by human negligence or callous obduracy, we need critical scrutiny, not just goodwill towards others […]" (Sen 2009, 48). Sen never detailed how to reach the point of critical scrutiny, other than we needed to be 'objective' in our reasoning and our decisions need to sustain our own reasoning. Holland (2008) and Nussbaum (2006), however, extended the Capability Approach by adding environmental politics into the mix. Both of them pointed out the importance of the environment as a means for both functioning and capability of a person or a collective unit. The available opportunities to transform nature can be a vital function for an individual or collectively to fulfill one's capability, materially or relationally. But there is a constant tension between fulfilling one's capability through the means of using the environment and simultaneously diminishing other people's capacity to meet their own capability. A clear example of this is the dumping of waste. Corporations tend to dump waste on areas on which poor and marginalized populations dwell. Such dumping might increase the margin of profit and therefore enhance the corporation's capability but at the same time, it limits the residents' capabilities to hold any control over their own environment in order to lead the life they desire (Harvey 1996, 2000). As Nussbaum (2000) observes, such a situation is an injustice, which made her and Holland (2008) suggest that capabilities need a threshold, or a ceiling, to prevent a social injustice from happening. The problem is that it is a very murky idea since, as an example, who

decides what the threshold should be? Who will debate between the opposing parties on what should be considered an acceptable degree of pollution? An example can be found in the wording of bill C-68 that places great emphasis on "offsetting" that basically allows someone or an entity to destroy one part with the condition that the same actor would "make it up" in another area. The question is always, would such thresholds not just be another way for the more powerful entities to get their way?

Nussbaum (2011, 2006) solved this problem by creating her own "core capabilities" list where one can find what she believed to be ten fundamental entitlements for a good life. Capabilities such as, "[…] being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely*"* […] (Nussbaum 2003, 41) or " […] being able to participate effectively in political choices that governs one's life […]" (Nussbaum 2003, 41) can be found. This is an interesting take on the Capability Approach which is supposed to be comparative in nature and focusing on people's freedom rather than looking for the 'right' institutional framework. Nussbaum (2003, 2006) brought the Capability Approach to the contractual tradition by taking a step further in including animals into the social contract of the good life but also, gave animals a list of 'core capabilities'. For Nussbaum (2006) one of the downsides of contract theory is the assumption that only "[…] rough equals can be primary, nonderivative subjects of a theory of justice […]" (Nussbaum 2006, 327). This meant that animals and the environment were excluded in both contract theory and the Capability Approach since "[…] there is something we all gain by cooperation rather than domination […]*"* (Nussbaum 2006; 62). There is this assumption within contractualism and Capability Approach that humans should be the masters of the environment and animals. The radical addition to contract theory that Nussbaum presented in the *Frontiers of Justice* is that she gave animals agency just like humans, an innovation somewhat akin to Latour's

(2005) tradition. Animals are perceived as active agents who look for living a thriving life as Nussbaum observed,

> […] Animals are not simply part of the furniture of the world; they are active beings trying to live their lives; and we often stand in their way. That looks like a problem of justice, not simply an occasion of charity. So it is another large shortcoming in a theory if it cannot even frame the relation between humans and animals as the sort of relation it seems to be, involving problems it clearly seems to involve […] (Nussbaum 2006, 22) [My emphasis]

This is a vital observation from Nussbaum who pointed out a glaring gap in both contract theory and the Capability Approach, which is the failure of assembling relations between humans and animals or the environment. Her 'core capability' list for animals was seen as a way towards that goal. One of the capabilities that Nussbaum talked about was that, just like humans, animals are entitled to capabilities to maintain relationships with either each other or with humans that are characterized as "[…] reciprocal rather than tyrannical […]" (Nussbaum 2006, 398). Furthermore, one of the core capabilities of animals according to Nussbaum is that "[…] Animals "in the wild" are entitled to an environment that is the sort in which they characteristically flourish; so, protecting this capability means protecting animals' environment […]" (Nussbaum 2006, 397). This is certainly an interesting attempt to concede that animals and their environment also hold some capabilities to lead the life where they can succeed; but if they are unable, it would be a case of injustice. Nussbaum's 'core capabilities' for humans and animals, however, has two epistemological and ontological problems. Regarding the first one, Sen (2004, 2009) and Robert Sugden (2006) criticized Nussbaum for supporting lists without allowing a deep and critical public debate on the list. As Sugden (2006) pointed out, the source of Nussbaum's list is very vague as he stressed, "[…] she [Nussbaum] does not tell us who participated in the discussion, how they were chosen, or how it was determined what the consensus of the discussion was […]" (50). For the Capability Approach, this is crucial because it criticizes other schools of thought for

determining on behalf of the public, as experts, what individuals should strive for and what should be considered good. The effort Martha Nussbaum showed in assembling humans with non-humans was important, but it nonetheless illustrated a grave ontological problem. This was not just a lesson on how to create assemblages between humans and non-humans but also, the traditional Cartesian dualistic problem. Despite trying to build bridges between humans and non-humans, she was not explicit about how to break down the wall between humans and non-humans, other than humans needed to respect the lives of non-humans. This heavily restricts our debate on what should be considered good, and what we should be striving for. Ultimately, the end goal is to expand the social instead of reduce it into two different 'houses'.

Critical debate on environment issues within the framework of traditional environmental politics continues to be problematically invested in the separation between culture and nature (Palsson 2006). The lessons learned from other cultures, particularly the Indigenous ones, have yet to be realized and often have been turned upside down. Other cultural examples are used to 'shame' North Americans or Europeans for 'disrespecting' nature instead of modelling their behavior according to those

> […] who for their part are said to "respect nature", "live in harmony with her" and plumb her most intimate secrets, fusing their souls with those of things, speaking with animals, marrying plants, engaging in discussion on an equal footing with the plants […] (Latour 2004, 42).

This is a crucial point Bruno Latour is making because the whole deal does not circle around 'disrespecting the nature' but rather "not treating it at all" (Latour 2004, 44). In other words, Latour is saying that those cultures do not take the environment out to deal with it separately. It is dealt holistically within the public sphere. Nature is simply perceived as an integral part of the social or a part of the larger political community. Latour is here alluding to what we refer to as 'pluriverse' (Latour 2004, 40) or 'multiple realities' (Viveiros de Castro 2004b, 2004a, 2011, 2013;

Cadena 2010). When I refer to pluriverse or multiple realities I am first and foremost emphasizing the importance of acknowledging ontological differences between groups. That is, we should not dismiss the relationship between the subject and the object which influences how people act within their reality and how knowledge is produced (Blaser 2010; Latour 2004). More importantly, as a researcher I need to ask not only why my informants think the way they do, but try "[…] to arrive at a position […]" (Carrothers et al. 2010: 184) that my informants hold. That means an expansion of the political community where not only the humans hold a degree of political agency but also non-humans or other earthly beings, such as fish, plants, water and etc. (De La Cadena 2010).By entering a space of 'multiple realities', we are entering a space of combinations of values and facts but simultaneously, breaking our shackles from the 'Cartesian dualistic' cage that we have been locked in for far too long.

2.3.2. The combination of values and facts: the emptiness of the social

The shortcomings of multi-culturalist initiatives are demonstrated (Latour 2007) when particular groups, often Indigenous, attempt to illustrate their distinctive cultural differences and are quickly restricted in their activities by the state through economic or political means (Coulthard 2007, 2014). This includes how different groups are supposed to talk about and treat the environment but, for many, the space for a different ontologically or epistemological reality limited or non-existent. In short, regardless of the culture, the environment is always seen as the "common denominator" (Harris and Robb 2012, 668). The environment everywhere is perceived homogenous where, theoretically, it follows the same laws so one can apply the same facts and consequently deploy the same tool kit to address the same issues with the same results (Viveiros de Castro 2004b, 2004a; Blaser 2009).

This creates not only a rift between culture and environment, but it exaggerates the imbalance of power between technocrats/scientists and the public. As Latour (2004) observed, it only allows technocrats/scientists to walk and talk between environment and the social, and there is no room for anyone else. Those same 'experts' ultimately, have the "[…] ability to tell the truth and, finally, the ability to bring order to the assembly of humans by keeping its members quiet […]" (Latour 2004, 14). In translation, the experts are not supposed to participate in politics, rather engage in producing facts through various scientific inquiries in order to help us to understand the environment and tell us what to do and how to address any problems that might arise (Latour 2005, 2004, 2007). Traditionally, there needs to be a strict distinction between facts and values. Values will be determined by the evolution of facts and will change accordingly. As an example, as soon as hydroelectric power or oil pipelines became a fact of nature, subsequently the ethical and political questions will be asked. Whether it is a hydroelectric project in Quebec (T. Martin and Hoffman 2008) or a pipeline construction in Denendeh in the Northwest Territories (Coulthard 2014) the ethical questions are raised afterwards. So called "objective morality" (Latour 2004, 98) is abandoned. The balance of the question of common world and common good is lopsided in the way that we spend more time in producing facts instead of asking and spend more time on the ethical questions of the beginning in the process, since from there we could produce facts. But the connections between values and ethical considerations are often largely ignored (Latour 2004). Still, if one attempts to combine science with values, one is accused of "politicization" (Latour 2004, 16) and "[…] polluting the purity of science by introducing base social considerations […]" (Latour 2004, 16). That is exactly why there is such a tension between so called western technocrats and scientists and Indigenous knowledge or fishers on Lake Winnipeg; the latter precisely brings the values and facts together to expand their sense of the social. As I illustrate

further in chapter 6, fishers and the First Nations combine facts of sustainability with their ethical considerations. For them, sustainability is not about fishing production, it is about making a living and the ethical consideration of dumping waste is asked simultaneously. In contrast, bureaucrats and politicians already have decided on the facts and what sustainability entails, and the ethical consideration of the lake or their interventions will be discussed later, even after the decision has already been made.

Being strict about scientific objectivity and more importantly, accepting that "facts are stubborn" (Latour 2004, 105) and should not be disputed has political implications. Such a mindset restricts who is allowed to speak publicly regarding certain issues. This is seen clearly when First Nations are asked to come to the table with scientists and technocrats to find solutions. Yet, First Nations' participants are excluded from the process simply because their 'view' of interpreting the issues at hand is deemed unacceptable since they also bring into being the social considerations and question well known 'facts' by combining them with values. A prime example of such would be the cases that Paul Nadasdy (1999, 2005, 2003) *Ruby Range Sheep Steering Committee* (RRSSC) in the Yukon and Stella Spak (2005) the *Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board* (BQCMB) and the *Gwich´in Renewable Resource Board* (GRRB) illustrated in their work. Each of them showed how the First Nations groups assembled their social assemblage differently than the state biologists, by including animals in their political community and consequently, combining what the First Nations believed to be facts and values. In the case of the RRSSC in Yukon the First Nations members based their facts on the value they believed in, that is the right of older rams to associate themselves with younger ones to flourish (Nadasdy 1999, 2003). This example shows the limitation of strictly distinguishing between facts and values. Since values only come after the facts have been created, the circulation of information and who is

involved in creation of facts becomes "short circuited" (Latour 2004, 106), which means a lot of people's knowledge is being ignored. But combining facts and values as described by Latour (2004) requires a broad consultation that shall not be "accelerated" (110) otherwise the outcome will "become too easy" (110). Certainly, a broad consultation would be in line with what both Sen and IG theory proposes but the point is not necessarily just about the quantity of voices, but rather the quality of the process of the decision making. Is the process sensitive enough to include different knowledges and disregard power differences to collectively find an acceptable solution? Such consultation would require input from stakeholders, such as fishers in the early stages of scientific work, or when one is establishing the facts which should help us to understand the issue at hand on a deeper level. We still have the problem of scales, power and the inflexibility of westernized democracy. Such obstacles are difficult to overcome when the power disparity is still great between different groups.

The problem with 'westernized' democracy is as Wedeen (2007) rightfully pointed out that it is too fixated on the minimal definition of democracy where political engagement and subjectivity merely entails becoming a voter. In one of his rallies for the Democratic presidential nomination campaign in 2016 Bernie Sanders urged Americans to stand up by saying, "[…] Political revolution is about revitalizing American democracy and making sure that every American understands that yes, football is a spectator sport, democracy is not a spectator sport! […]"[4]. And yes, Bernie is right that democracy is not a spectator sport but as Graeber (2013) repeatedly pointed out, it is sometimes treated as such. The more interesting point Graeber made in his book *The Democracy Project* was that many European settlers became fascinated by the First Nations' political institutions that allowed for more equality and deliberation than could be

[4] https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc-quick-cuts/watch/sanders-democracy-is-not-a-spectator-sport-641701443555

found in the old European institutions. However, somewhere in the formation of capitalistic social relations, the lessons got lost. As Peter Kulchyski (2013) observed, "[…] our old friend capital, private interest, needs certainty in order to "invest", in order to continue to tear up the land at its unsustainable pace […] (108). The only way to do so is to push any democratic processes to the margin. Inclusion of more voices in decision making would only slow the process down. Again, the First Nation's notion of democracy clashes heavily with the 'westernized' democratic processes. In *Like the Sound of a Drum* Peter Kulchyski (2005) illustrates the clash when the Canadian government is attempting to bring First Nations to the table, which usually function by state's vision. To quote Kulchyski, the "[…] mode of consultation must be appropriate to the community and culture, not to the Canadian State […] (16). This is crucial because for many First Nations groups, political engagement and subjectivity first and foremost exists to open a space for everyone to share their opinions, regardless of status or education and where full agreement is necessary rather than general agreement (P. Kulchyski 2005; T. Martin and Hoffman 2008). This creates a feeling as a Dene community leader, George Barnaby described to Kulchyski (2005) when he said, "[…] I can't stay in a government like that, doesn't serve the communities, doesn't recognize community rights" […] (173). Here what is contradictory, as Harvey (2003) pointed out is that in most 'westernized' countries, Canada included, it seems acceptable that land is "[…] governed by experts and elite […]" (66) thus relying "[…] upon undemocratic and unaccountable institutions to make key decisions […]" (66).

The clash between politicians and bureaucrats on the one hand and fishers and First Nations on the other highlights different enactments of democracy that are invisible to Amartya Sen when he talks about political deliberation and public reasoning and to the IG theory when they talk about interaction between the two systems. This clash ultimately diminishes people's 'political pleasure'

as Graeber would have said it, because why would people keep going to meetings, or in the cases of Co-management Board, attend when they know that State, or the Province, will not accept different ways of knowing? This results in no trust between the actors. This is exactly the reason for a failure of co-management settings in environmental politics because it is stuck in hegemonic dualistic conceptions of the environment. To combine facts and values and to expand political processes has another important function. It should help First Nations to protect the rights that are guaranteed in section 35 in the Canadian constitution. However, as the Lake Winnipeg case illustrates, current politics prevent many treaty fishers from protecting their livelihood, simply because they have limited opportunities for controlling their own destiny.

Chapter 3: A reflection of an anthropologists muddling through uncertain times

As I began my journey, I realized that a challenge to examining small-scale fisheries on Lake Winnipeg was that it has never been an attractive destination for an academic inquiry. Indeed, inland fisheries in general have often fallen into the shadow of oceanic fisheries. My first meeting with George, a fisher in Gimli in 2012 epitomizes this feeling when he straight out asked me, what on earth was I doing on Lake Winnipeg and why did I decide to conduct research on the lake? I asked him right away why he asked me that question. He thought about it for few seconds and then said, "well…Every time I tell people I am a full-time fisher on Lake Winnipeg I always get the same surprised look and people say immediately 'oh…I thought people only fished for hobby there. That is why I am surprised to see you here, researching commercial fishery". Certainly, inland fisheries are often overlooked even in academic circles. If one reads 'Manifesto for the marine social sciences' (Bavinck and Verrips 2020) one can see that not once are inland fisheries mentioned in the document. There is limited existing literature on Lake Winnipeg which is also a very restricted point of reference because it focused mostly on one particular issue at a time. Even though Lake Winnipeg is not prevalent in the scope of academic study it nonetheless plays an immense role in supporting rural communities in Manitoba. Lake Winnipeg is the largest freshwater lake in Manitoba, and it supports by a large margin the largest commercial fishery in the province. The lake produces over three million kilograms of fish annually (Water and Conservation Stewardship, 2017) and contributes over $55 million to the Manitoba economy (MNP 2019). The impact of the commercial fishery on the Lake Winnipeg area should not just be measured in dollars but also in its overall social and political importance for the small communities all around the lake. The lake is bordered by towns with populations of Icelandic and Ukrainian ancestry such as Gimli, Riverton, and Hecla Island and First Nations such

as Fisher River Cree Nation, Dauphin River, Berens River and Norway House. Commercial fisheries link those different communities. In my MA thesis, *Where the Past Meets the Present* I solely focused on fishers in Gimli. My intention was always to broaden my research by including other communities to be able to give my results more weight. In this research I placed most emphasis on fishers from Gimli, Riverton, and Fisher River Cree Nation.

The structure of Lake Winnipeg commercial fishery

In some ways, Lake Winnipeg is not a conventional small-scale fishery as per the UN definition of small-scale fisheries: "[…] fisheries involving fishing households (as opposed to commercial companies), using relatively small amount of capital and energy, relatively small fishing vessels, making short trips, close to shore, and mainly for local consumption. They can be used for subsistence or commercial" (FAO 2015). No small-scale fishery fits the bill perfectly as they all have own unique characteristics that make them special, which makes them such a challenging entity for politicians and bureaucrats to govern. In the case of Lake Winnipeg, the embeddedness of the fishery within complex family structures and community cohesiveness makes it a classic small-scale fishery. On the other hand, however, the fishery's export market reliance distinguishes Lake Winnipeg's fishery from many other small-scale fisheries.

The commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg is broken down into three different seasons. There are open water seasons (spring and fall fishery) where fishers all around the lake operate their 16 – 20 foot open skiffs. These are one person, one boat operations. The technology for the open water season is simple and traditional. It has not changed significantly since the fishery began in the late 19th century. Fishers still use stationary nets that many fishers continue to haul in by hand. Since the gillnets are stationary, fishers are completely reliant on the fish themselves to move. The two variables that fishers can modify are, (1) the location where they set the net and (2)

how deep they want to lay the net. The depth of the net really depends on what kind of species the fisher is attempting to catch. If one wants to catch a walleye, one needs to set the net closer to the surface. If one wants to catch a whitefish, the net needs to be closer to the bottom of the lake. This is just a rule of thumb, since the fishers will get bycatches of sauger, pike, goldeye, walleye and whitefish however deep they set the net. The fisher also decides how big or small net mesh size to use depending on which size and species of fish are most abundant in the lake. Before regulatory changes in 2019, fishers in the south basin of Lake Winnipeg could use minimum 3-inch mesh size nets while fishers in the North Basin had to use minimum 3.75-inch mesh size nets. The idea with gillnets is that the small fish can easily swim through the net and the bigger ones would bounce off. The thought process of which size to use depends on the pricelist and abundance of fish in particular areas. The fisher traditionally needs to use bigger mesh size for whitefish while small ones for either perch or walleye. The spring fishery runs usually from the middle of May to July 10th, but the start of the spring season fluctuates, depending on when the ice breaks up and on the spawning rate of the walleye. The spring season cannot begin until walleye have completed 80% spawning (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015). The fall fishery, however, runs between September 1st to October 31st. The fall fishery is different as it is the time for tullibee and whitefish to spawn, and for the past few years, FFMC has given fishers a good price for tullibee roe, especially since tullibee have been in abundance.

There are two different sets of quotas that a fisher can hold; whitefish fleet quotas, which are large (c. 15.000 kg) or open skiff walleye quota that range from 2,270 kg to 7,940 kg. I have discussed the origin of the quota system elsewhere (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015) and I will not do so here as the quota system is not the focus of this thesis. However, it is important to keep in mind that only a fisher who operates the boat can hold these quotas entitlement and co-ops

and so far, private corporations cannot. This was done to make sure that the fishers are the ones who get the benefit of their catch.

Commercial ice fishing in the winter season distinguishes Lake Winnipeg from many other inland fisheries. The winter fishery starts as soon as the ice has solidified on the lake to the point where it is safe to go out on it. The season lasts until end of March. The winter fishery has the challenges of cold and the much more sluggish movement of fish compared to the open water season. Not all fishers fish during the winter season, as not everyone holds enough quotas to fish year-round. Winter fishing is also relatively more expensive, since the fishers need to operate both snowmobiles and the larger Bombardier tracked snow vehicles. The only advantage of fishing during the winter season is the fact that historically the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation has given fishers a premium for the fish during those months to maintain their market position.

The embeddedness of the fishery in the social fabric of each community around the lake is the cornerstone of the fishery, as the lake side communities rely on the fishery for economic and other reasons. Families plays a large role in fishers' idea of a good life, as I will examine further in later chapters. As I illustrated in my previous work, family was one of the most important aspects for fishers to live a good life, and evidence of that sentiment remained true for the fishers interviewed for this thesis. The fishers see fishing as their means to support their families, emotionally and financially. Families also play a crucial part in how the fishing is structured, especially in the South Basin such as Gimli or Riverton.

After 1986, as quota shares became transferrable, quota ownership grew in the South Basin where many fishers were able to buy quotas from the North Basin which helped certain fishers to expand their operations. As an example, in Gimli, there are five big fishing families where family members who hold quotas get together to pool their resources to increase their economic

efficiency. However, smaller fishers also tend to work together especially during the winter to pool resources, mostly for safety and to share the burden of a heavy workload as winter fishery can be very dangerous and physically difficult. Often, these smaller fishers who decide to work together are kin. I experienced this firsthand in my fieldwork with first cousins Lenny and Kenny, with whom I often went out for winter fishing. Both of them are relatively small fishers, with only a couple of quotas each. By working together, however, they share the workload and manage to save on some expenses.

A key difference between First Nations fishers from places like Fisher River and Norway House and non-Indigenous fishers in communities such as Gimli or Riverton is their location of their fishing areas. The largest portion of First Nations fishers fish in the North Basin, which is larger and has deeper water than the South Basin. The North Basis is more dangerous, especially during the open water season. First Nations fishers have few other employment opportunities other than fishing and the First Nations communities are more reliant on fish for local consumption than the communities in the south. The quota around the North Basin is not as concentrated as in the South Basin as many fishers only hold one or a couple of quotas. Many fishers therefore do not fish during the winter season simply because they do not have enough quota to do so. Fishers who cannot fish all year round are more dependent on Employment Insurance to subsidize their fishing. It is not only the difference in the place where fishing occurs between First Nations fishers and non-indigenous fishers but also the difference in the historical relationship that First Nations have with the Crown and the federal government. The First Nations have their rights to fish for both commercial and religious purposes guaranteed in the section 35 of the Canadian constitution, which on a daily basis are referred to as treaty rights. That is, those rights were derived from the

fact that the First Nations were here first, and the treaty rights are a part of the agreement that various First Nations made with the crown (Asch 2014).

Gimli and Riverton

Gimli and Riverton are small communities on the west shore of the South Basin of Lake Winnipeg. Both communities have Icelandic roots as immigrants from Iceland first settled in the area in the 1870s. I did my MA thesis work in Gimli between 2012 and 2013 when I investigated social and ecological determinants of well-being among fishers (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015) but due to the limited geographical and topical scope of that study, my findings required the further attention of the research for this study. The Gimli area for a long time has been considered one of the main hubs for the commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg. Just to clarify, when I talk about Gimli area, I am including smaller communities such as Sandy Hook, Winnipeg Beach and Petersfield, that are located south of Gimli. Since the quota system was established in 1972, a large amount of quota has slowly been accumulated to a few fishing families in town, but there are still considerable numbers of smaller fishers who only hold a couple of licences. As I pointed out in my previous work, almost 24% of total allowable quota for Lake Winnipeg is located in Gimli (See figure 1). Due to their closeness to Winnipeg, fishers in Gimli have easier access to retail markets in the city than other fishers.

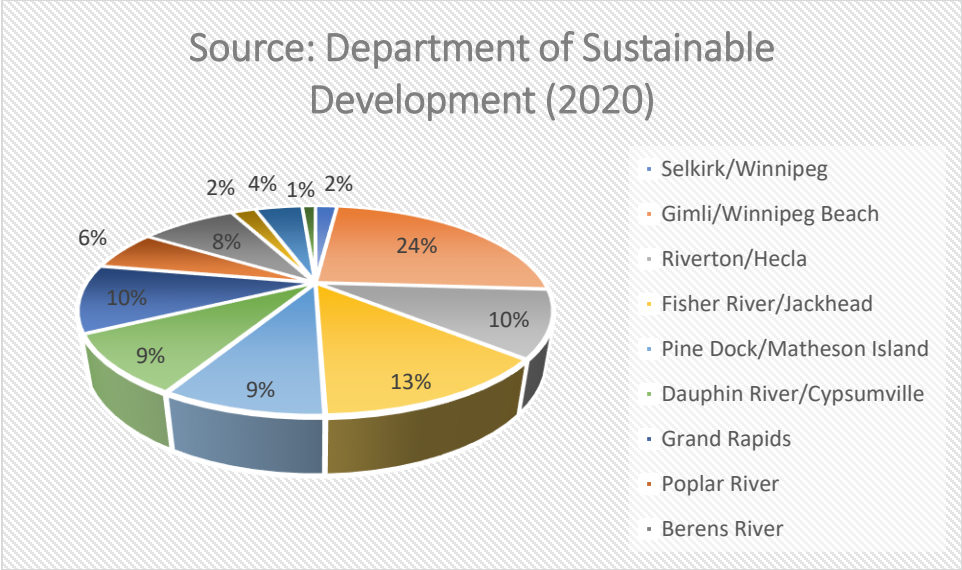

Figure 2: Total Quota Allowed (%) by communities

Many of these fishers sell directly to restaurants and individuals in the city. They also are in a better position to capture the tourist market. Thousands of people visit Gimli during the summer, and it is a common sight to see signs advertising pickerel [walleye], whitefish fillets or smoked goldeye for sale in private yards all around Gimli. Those personal sales make the fishing on Lake Winnipeg special because it allows the public to not only buy fresh fish directly from the fishers, but it give the public a glimpse into fishers' daily lives (Pálsson 2019). When buying fish from the fishers, it is common for the buyers to engage with fishers as they go about their day. As my research participant Johnny consistently reminded me, people are interested in what the fishers are doing but fishers also feel pride when their costumers praise them about their fish.

Riverton is similar to Gimli in the way that the fishers have more chance to sell their catch to retail stores and individuals in Winnipeg than their counterparts in the North Basin. Unlike Gimli, the quota in Riverton has not accumulated at the same rate or scale. Riverton is a part of area 3 with Hecla Island. In the area 3 there are 71 commercial fishers who hold approximately 10% of accumulated allowed quota entitlement as can been seen above in figure 2 (Department of

Sustainable development 2020; Pálsson 2014). Riverton does not have as many big fishing families as Gimli. Most of the fishers hold fewer quotas, though there are couple of bigger fishing operations that have managed to expand and are looking toward creating new opportunities for selling their product after the Province opted out of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (see 4 & 5 chapters below). There is one crucial distinction that we need to keep in mind between Gimli area and Riverton with First Nations communities. Gimli and Riverton have opportunities available for employment other than fishing, such as work in retail, automobile and machine repair, or carpentry while such opportunities are limited in other First Nations communities.

Fisher River [Ochékiwi Sípi] Cree Nation

Fisher River Cree Nation or Ochékiwi Sípi in Cree is a Treaty 5 community on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg, 97 km north of Riverton. Fisher River Cree Nation was actually part of Norway House but due to economic hardships in the 1870s, a large group of people relocated to this area close to good farming land and better fishing. Currently, Fisher River is divided into two sections numbered 44 and 44A. These are, respectively, the reserve where 1945 people live and on the off-reserve area with 1934 people.

Today, Fisher River has very stable leadership. For the past three decades there have been three chiefs. The current chief David Crate has served for 25 years. Prior to that, Lorne Cochrane and Sam Murdock had served as chiefs for four and two years respectively and all of them still work together for the benefit of the community. However, Fisher River was going through remarkably interesting times during my stay on Lake Winnipeg, during which time Fisher River Cree Nation began its journey to self-government to take more control of its own affairs. Current arrangements through the federal Department of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development place heavy restrictions on the community leaders' efforts to bring new businesses or opportunities

to the community since the ultimate power still rests with the Federal government. The process to negotiate a self-governance agreement is a long one which can take decades. Despite being still in the process of gaining self-governance, Fisher River is slowly becoming more self-reliant and consequently received a Provincial commendation for their environmental consciousness. Fisher River built their own solar-power farm which opened formally August 2020 and the community´s effort in protecting the Beaver Creek watershed were among programs that contributed to Fisher River receiving the 2018 Sustainable Community award.

Fishing has always played a significant role for Fisher River as a source of fresh food in the community but also as the main employment opportunity. The Province of Manitoba divides Lake Winnipeg into 12 areas. Fisher River belongs to Area 4 with Jackhead and Peguis, both also First Nations communities. In all of Area 4, there are around 170 fishers who hold 13% of the total allowable quota (Department of Sustainable Development 2020). There are two things that are important to keep in mind. First, not every fisher who is a member of Fisher River Cree Nation fishes from Fisher River. Some fishers fish from Jackhead and another number of fishers operate out of their neighboring community, Peguis First Nation. Secondly, not every quota entitlement that is located in Fisher River is owned by an individual fisher. Fisher River´s Macbeth Co-op owns and operates a few licenses as a community group. Those licenses are first and foremost considered for fishers who do not hold many licenses to supplement their income further. Macbeth Co-op is slowly playing a larger role for the members of Fisher River. When the Province of Manitoba opted-out of the FFMC in 2016, the Macbeth Co-op made an agreement with FFMC to sell their fish to the corporation. In 2017, Macbeth Co-op decided to build its own processing plant in order to have the capacity to process their catch to consumer-ready standards and sell a portion of it directly to buyers.

There are, however, some issues that fishers from Fisher River Cree Nation and other First Nations on Lake Winnipeg feel more acutely than fishers in other communities. Inland fisheries are stuck in a sticky situation between the federal and provincial governments; a situation which is born out of inherent injustice that leaves First Nation fishers especially caught between the two jurisdictions.

3.1 Between a rock and hard place

An example of the particular dilemma experienced by First Nations on Lake Winnipeg (and elsewhere) began in 2016 when Fisher River began to build a new wing for the town's retirement home. The construction turned into a bureaucratic maze for the town's leaders. Fisher River received funding from the Federal government to do the construction, but the Provincial government was responsible for updating the building procedures and regulations, and ultimately, needed to give their stamp of approval for opening the wing. Every time Fisher River made changes that were required by the provincial government, the Province added something more to fix and Fisher River was then obligated to ask the federal government to pay for the alterations. The experience illustrates a broader pattern where Fisher River finds itself caught between two jurisdictions. This is similar to the situation that Lake Winnipeg fishers find themselves, but First Nations fishers do have an additional burden of the arrangement between the Federal Government and the Provincial Governments. First Nations have a treaty with the Crown but gradually, the Crown and the Federal Government has delegated more power to the Provinces without consent of the First Nations.

Inland fisheries, Lake Winnipeg included, fall under both Federal and Provincial purviews, but different levels of government have different responsibilities. This is a result of the Natural Resource Transfer Agreement from the 1930s when the federal government transferred many of

its stewardship responsibilities for natural resources over to the Provinces. Currently, the federal government oversees and regulates issues such as conservation, fish habitat and governance of fisheries that can be considered as 'the bigger picture' issue. Yet, the Provinces hold the responsibility of day-to-day governance which includes regulations of fish sales, processing, and licensing. This distinction is emphasized in Bill C-68. Bill C-68 commonly known as *Modernized Fisheries Act* which was passed in June, 2019 is supposed to "[…] strengthen and restore lost protections and incorporate modern safeguards to the Fisheries Act […]" (Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2019). The intention of the Bill was to move the Federal responsibility for fishing towards a role emphasizing more environmental protecting of fish habitat and fish stocks. Nonetheless, the clear distinction of responsibilities is problematic for two reasons. First, it creates a confusion over jurisdiction which leads to complications. Good examples are, for instance, Manitoba's decision to opt out of regulated fish marketing or to initiate quota buy-backs, both of which could be considered as 'big picture' issues, especially for the First Nation's fishers. Secondly, the Federal government has throughout history arbitrarily delegated various responsibilities to the Provinces without the consent of fishers, especially First Nation fishers. This delegation has resulted in jurisdictional issues that make it more challenging for them to defend their 'way of life'.

Most of the fishers, at least in Gimli and Fisher River, have never had the chance to study any of the details of these delegation agreements between the federal government and the Province of Manitoba. In fact, there have not been many opportunities to do so, but there is hope within purview of Bill C-68 since the intention of the bill is to make those agreements available for public registry. Nonetheless, at the time my fieldwork was conducted, the current governance arrangement was that the provincial Ministry of Sustainable Development administered the quota system of Lake Winnipeg, oversaw the index net program, hosted the Secretariat for the Co-

management Board, and administered fishing and dealers' licenses. Basically, the Province held responsibility for all lakes within Manitoba. One of the department's key administrative documents for the rules and regulations governing Lake Winnipeg is the Lake Winnipeg Administration Procedures. Throughout the dissertation however, I will use the Foucauldian term 'Code of conduct' for the document because it essentially highlights the acceptable behavior on the lake to which fishers need abide so they can hold onto their licenses. For example, the code of conduct of Lake Winnipeg states which areas of the Lake Winnipeg are allowed to buy quotas from each area. As an example, fishers in Gimli who are part of area 2 cannot buy quotas from area 9. The Code of conduct also states which mesh-sizes are allowed in the North, channel, and in the South Basin, and the process of adjudicating a license suspension. My experience on Lake Winnipeg showcased the struggle the Lake Winnipeg fisher encounters in having their voice heard throughout the process of dealing with the many rule changes on Lake Winnipeg. However, the fundamental difficulty the fishers have with the Province underscores a much deeper problem, that of injustice.

First Nations fishers and other fishers did not have any opportunity to approve the delegation of responsibilities to the Provinces by the Federal Government, despite the implications of this transfer of power for fishers' capacity to protect their way of life. The delegation was especially detrimental for First Nation fishers such as those in Fisher River Cree Nation because their relationship with the federal government or the crown is fundamentally different. First Nations fishers have a more formal agreement with the crown and Federal government in form of Treaty rights. In the following chapters, as I refer to rights, I am first and foremost referring to treaty rights, which are as Peter Kulchyski (2013) emphasizes in his work, supposed to protect First Nations since "[…] colonialism has left many indigenous people in the position of being minority in their homeland […]" (21). Treaty rights are therefore not just another human right as

Kulchyski (2013) pointed out. Treaty rights derive from the fact that First Nations were here in Canada first and the purpose is to protect the distinctiveness of First Nations' culture or First Nations' way of life (P. Kulchyski 2013) which " […] may extend to, among other things, economic practices, protection of spiritual practices and landholdings […]" (Asch 2014, 10). It is important to note as J.R. Miller (2009) exemplified, the negotiation between First Nations and the crown included that First Nations wanted to "[…] protect access points for their fishery by keeping those economically important sites out of the treaty concession […] (101)". Such provisions often did not make it to the final version of the treaties. However, Tough (1997) illustrated similar intention on Lake Winnipeg regarding Treaty 5, "[…] when we made this treaty, it was given us to understand that although we sold the government these lands, yet we might still hunt in the woods as before, and the fish and the waters should be ours as it was in our grandfathers […] (Tough 1997, 254). Moreover, the point Tough (1997) is making is simple. The understanding of the First Nations has always been that the First Nations only "[…] acknowledge giving up land and <u>not water resources</u> […]" (254) [My emphasis]. This is crucial for discussing governance of Lake Winnipeg because (1) First Nations originally negotiated with the federal government, not the Province of Manitoba and the First Nations never approved such a massive transition of power or the extinction of any ownership of water but now they have to deal with a partner that was not supposed to be in the role that is has now. (2) The treaties are applied by the Canadian state but the Provinces have undermined the treaties by interpreting them in a way that resulted in "[…] political subordination of the Indigenous parties to the government of Canada […]" (Asch 2014, 90). This is simply done through various political projects, such as neo-liberalism, to change the nature of the relationship between First Nations and the state that is no longer about true partnership as the spirit of the treaties emphasize but rather a downgrading of First Nations to just

another political subject. The political turmoil on Lake Winnipeg exemplifies this process, not just for First Nation fishers on Fisher River but other non-First Nation fishers.

Non-indigenous fishers can be said to have a more privileged position than their First Nations counterparts since they do not live under the same restrictions. The non-Indigenous fishers certainly have their human rights, and they do as well have "the right to the production of space" as Harvey (2000) might put it. That is, the right to the production of space derived from their belonging to a certain community location and through their contribution and dependence on the space for livelihood, should earn fishers the right to have their voice heard when new uses are proposed for the space. Such a right is not a legal document such as a treaty right but is nonetheless a democratic right. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups hold rights to the production of space, or to have a say in how their space or area ought to be organized. The rights to the production of space and treaty rights are certainly not mutually exclusive as in some cases go hand in hand. As the case of Lake Winnipeg exemplifies, both groups have been denied the right to the production of space, despite the offer to fishers of a 'democratic' voice in the political process. The Lake Winnipeg case illustrates how the production of space by the Province and the Federal Government systematically undermines treaty rights and First Nations' attempts to produce their own space and livelihood.

3.2 Adapting to rapid regulatory changes.

In the middle of August 2016, I was about to finish my thesis proposal when I received the news that the newly elected provincial government in Manitoba was planning to hold a news conference in Gimli, declaring their intention to opt out of Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. It was a big news in Manitoba, since the FFMC had played a significant role in the Province since end of 1960s. The decision, consequently, had a profound effect on plans for my fieldwork since

it dramatically changed the context for my field research. This chapter is an account of my experience as an anthropologist navigating stormy waters in Manitoba and how I adapted to an ever-changing situation in order to enhance our understanding of the present. Lake Winnipeg and Manitoba are in no way or form similar to what has been happening in Brazil and the challenges that anthropologists there are facing (Neiburg and Thomaz 2020). Brazil under the rule of Jair Bolsonaro has experienced a quick and direct attack on the social which has left many disoriented in trying to understand the present. Neiburg and Thomaz (2020) emphasized how ethnography became their salvation in understanding the present. In some ways, I experienced the same challenge. I certainly did not experience any threats and me being in Manitoba as an anthropologist was not met with any contempt by politicians or bureaucrats, but the similarity goes to the fact that I was attempting to examine and explore an environment that has not yet created facts with the help of public ethnography. I needed to 'muddle through' a period of chaotic changes by writing as I went, trying to make sense of the situation. The long-term implications of the policy changes between 2017 and 2019 are largely unknown, but my work will shed a light on the environment in which those decisions were made to help us gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between fishers and the government.

I began my field work in the end of November 2016, immediately after the end of the strike of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association and after I received the approval from the board of ethics[5]. I had moved back to Gimli a couple of months earlier to prepare myself for the fieldwork, but the first couple of weeks caught me by surprise. Shortly after I arrived, I sensed a vastly different atmosphere around the lake than during my last research in the area. Whenever I ran into a fisher or other residents of Gimli, they had truly little to say other than how the fishing

[5] This research was approved by Research ethics and Compliance in November 28, 2016. Protocol #J2016:093(HS20212.)

was going. There was a cloud of uncertainty hanging above the lake, which was epitomized in my first interview at the end of November 2016. I decided to interview an old friend of mine, Lenny, with whom I had often gone out fishing. Just like in my MA thesis, the plan was to continue to collect fishers' 'core capabilities'. Concentrate on what fishers wanted to be or what they needed to do in order to live the life they deemed as a good one. The idea of such questions is first and foremost to understand fishers' aspirations and then compare them with fishers in different towns, such as Gimli, Riverton, and Fisher River.

I saw it as an extension of my MA thesis where I applied the Person Generated Index and the Governance Relationship Assessment developed by Sarah Coulthard et al (N/D) and the WeD group (McGregor 2007). Those questionnaires concentrate on asking interviewees (1) what they need or what they want to do in order to live a good life, and (2) rate their satisfaction with their lives in relation to what they have achieved. The toolkit had a major advantage in the sense that my interviews were very structured, and it was easy to measure and compare fisher's satisfaction. In my previous work Pálsson (2014) and Johnson and Pálsson (2015) I heavily relied on those comparisons to illustrate, not only what the fishers deemed to be important but how satisfied with their social relationships they were. The interview schedule included reference to relations with the Province of Manitoba and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. It was a heuristic way to gauge the dynamic of fishers' visions of how the good life should look. However, those toolkits have an epistemological problem in measuring such achievement. First, as both Sen (1988) and Sugden (2006) observed, such an approach has the danger of falling into the 'adaptive preference' hole. In short, a well-off individual can be unhappy with not having fulfilled his desire yet while a less well-off person can be happy with what he/she already has. Secondly, the questionnaires do not do justice to the complexity of life. What does it mean if a fisher scores his satisfaction with

life as 5 while someone else might score his satisfaction as just 3 despite giving the same reasons as the one who gave the score 5? Surely, one can argue that people have different expectations, but a score is nonetheless misleading, and it does not give us deeper explanations behind their reasonings as to why one aspect of life is more important than other aspects. As an example, in my MA thesis, the fishers scored their satisfaction with the Province of Manitoba as 2.63 and FFMC 2.91 respectively, but a larger conversation around these institutions was largely missing (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015). These were the issues that I wanted to address in my doctoral dissertation which meant I needed to adjust my questions before I began my fieldwork.

I decided to shift my attention away from satisfaction-based questions and instead gauge fishers' dissatisfaction by asking them to re-imagine what the social relationships they deem to be important should look like. This line of questioning could include relationships with the Province, the market, or even the environment. I was looking forward to officially resuming my research on the evening I drove to see Lenny who lives outside of Gimli. After I met Lenny at his house and sat down to talk with him at his dining table, I realized something was missing. Lenny is usually not a much of a talker. He is a hard worker who likes to make his work do the talking. Nevertheless, when you ask Lenny a question, he still will give you a straight answer. That night was different. I had to work extremely hard to get detailed answers from Lenny. Whenever I asked him about the good life and how the decision of opting out of FFMC would affect his idea of a good life, he simply answered "I do not know*"* or "I am on the fence on this particular issue". On my way home, I thought about how difficult the interview had been and I already had the conversation in my head, questioning whether the questions were appropriate to the current moment. I decided to stick with the plan and keep asking those same questions for the next few weeks. The more I asked the fishers the questions, especially the ones that dealt with the good life and the decision to opt out of FFMC,

I got extremely limited information because none of my interviewees had any idea of what was going on. They gave me an opinion on the decision, but how the decision would ultimately affect their capabilities or functioning was very unclear. The problem was that they had extremely incomplete knowledge of what the new market arrangements in Manitoba would look like. None of us even had seen the draft of the Bill 23, which dealt with the new market relations for commercial fishers within Manitoba. This uncertainty forced me to stay longer in Gimli than planned, just to see if what was going on would continue for the next few months.

The atmosphere of the chaos was illustrated well in the months between August 2017 to January 2018. In October 2017 I was in Johnny's driveway, just outside of Gimli when another fisher came to us, rather agitated. The Province of Manitoba had finally introduced the new Marketing Act bill (Bill 23) a few weeks before to the Legislative Assembly and had scheduled the committee debate of the bill in the middle of October, which is the busiest month of the fall season. The fisher was terribly upset that the Legislative Assembly would go ahead with the committee debate in the middle of the fishing season. For the ones who are not familiar with the procedure, the committee debate is the only chance for the public to share their opinions of each bill. Johnny and the fishers were discussing whether they should quit earlier the day of the committee meeting, and therefore lose a little bit of their income. The fishers also turned to me and asked if I could go to the committee meeting as well.

3.2.1 Data collection during uncertain times

Between November 2016 and March 2020, I collected data on the Lake Winnipeg fishery, mostly from fishers in Gimli, Riverton, and Fisher River Cree Nation but also from other fishers and governmental officials outside those settlements. I split my data collection into two phases. The first phase was concentrated first and foremost on interviews while the second phase was more

concentrated on participant observation in both meetings and public debate on Lake Winnipeg in an addition to more interviews.

3.2.2 Interviews and informal conversations

One of the main methods to collect data was semi-structured interviews but by doing interviews I gathered a lot of information within a couple of hours and more than often those interviews where in my informant's houses which made them even more relaxed. I interviewed 40 fishers in Gimli, Riverton, and Fisher River Cree Nation. Most of these interviews were between an hour and 90 minutes in length. On a few occasions the interview went well beyond the 2-hour mark. The interviews were all similarly structured, that is, I asked the fishers about their ideas of a good life and how they themselves re-imagine how the fishing and institutional arrangement should look like on lake Winnipeg to fit best their vision of the good life. I wanted to put more emphasis on the political possibility, that is their re-imagination, instead of focusing on just the negatives that a current institutional arrangement might hold. Additionally, I asked the fishers about the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board, and I would interview those who were members of the board in more detail than others. The only difference was when I interviewed fishers in Fisher River Cree Nation, but those fishers are Treaty 5 members, so I added questions regarding their treaty rights and how the decisions of opting-out of FFMC or the building of the channel might affect the ability to fish that is guaranteed in section 35 of the Canadian constitution. Furthermore, I asked them how the Co-management Board might prevent or enhance their ability to protect their rights to fish. In fact, I adapted some questions according to what was happening each time I interviewed fishers. I spent more time asking questions regarding FFMC in the first 20 interviews while the latter interviews were more oriented towards sustainability and the issues of minimum mesh size and the buy-back quota program.

I limited the number of interviews to 40 during my time on Lake Winnipeg because the more I interviewed fishers, the more I recognized similarities in the answers, and the issues that the fishers brought up were just slightly different. The fishers in Fisher River Cree Nation as an example were more interested in discussing the channel and the buy-back quota while the fishers in Gimli or Riverton were more interested in the issue of mesh sizes. Overall, those answers were similar, but I found it more effective to talk to the fishers informally. I went to many meetings, as I will detail later, in Winnipeg, Fisher River Cree Nation and Gimli and usually in those meetings fishers around the lake would attend in numbers. In those meetings, especially in co-management meetings I would have informal conversation with fishers all around the lake, from Dauphin River to Grand Rapids, Norway House to Berens River. I probably had well over 250 informal conversations both with fishers and government officials to talk about fishing. Those informal conversations were deep because the fishers themselves wanted to tell me what was going on in their own communities, and the fishers controlled the conversation completely. Many of them were simply happy that someone would actually just sit and listen to their concerns. Those conversations often gave me a better understanding of what was going on, simply because they were not in a constructed setting where they had to answer the questions I already had planned to ask them.

As was the case in my MA thesis I both conducted semi-structured interviews and had informal conversations with government officials and representatives of FFMC, just to get their perspective on Lake Winnipeg. That is, with the government officials, I asked what for them entailed a sustainability of the lake and how in their view the Co-management Board had been working as a bridge between the fishers and the government. However, my interview with representatives of FFMC were focused on the price structures of the corporation, the challenges of the corporation after losing the monopoly within the Province and how the minimum mesh size

changes would affect the corporation as well. What I did different from my MA thesis was that I conducted a few interviews with representatives of environmental groups here in Winnipeg to get an insight on their visions of sustainability of Lake Winnipeg and explore whether they would make the connection between commercial fishing on the lake and the environmental issues.

3.2.3 Participant observation on public deliberation

Sen's enthusiasm for public deliberation and democracy really intrigued me, especially after I had dinner with one of my friends, Teddy, who lives in a small settlement south of Gimli in his house. This was at the beginning of 2017 as he invited me for a walleye dinner. Among the guests were Teddy's father, Patrick who had been a fisher for a long time as well. As we were enjoying the walleye, the discussion on the table quickly turned into the topic of the day, the decision to opt-out of FFMC. As we had finished and we were walking to the living room, Patrick tapped on my shoulder and he said, "Solli, do you know why they [the Province] established the FFMC in the first place?" I of course replied, "yes, to prevent further exploitation of the fishers". Teddy was quick on his feet and said, "right! But what is puzzling for us today is to see our politicians use the same arguments of freedom, increase in income and rationalizations. They are using the exact same reasons to dismantle it [FFMC]". As I drove back to Gimli that night, I had Patrick's words in my mind the whole way and the first thing I did when I got back to the place I was staying in town was, I turned on my computer and immediately looked up the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and began to go through the historical collections of the Hansard and go through each session from the 25th Legislature in October 1958 to the 42nd Legislature in September 2019. To make my search more efficient and on point, I looked up few key words in every Hansard. The key words I looked for were 'competition', 'fish', 'freedom', 'free market', 'Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation', 'Lake Winnipeg', 'Manitoba Hydro', 'Marketing Act',

‘‘treaty rights’, and ‘quota system’. This search gave me hundreds of pages to read thoroughly but I used the software Atlas.ti to help me organize all the Hansards by assigning codes to each of the key words in the documents. I then created quotes and memos for the sections of the debates that were mostly relevant to Lake Winnipeg in relation to the issues that were also being debated in the Assembly at the current date. This was not supposed to be a part of my dissertation originally, but it became a necessity for me, and I believe for my readers to understand the historical trajectory the new regulations were headed towards and how those new regulations illustrated the change, not only in morality but how the political debate/deliberation was intentionally dismantling the social.

As I dove into the debate on the establishment of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation in 1968, I kept monitoring the debate on the Bill 23 in the Assembly but the more I read, the more I understood that I needed to expand my search, so I added two crucial components. First, I did a similar examination in the House of Commons by looking at Hansards on the debate on the establishment of the Marketing Act (establishment of FFMC) to explore deeper the political deliberations on the Federal level. Secondly, I began to understand how intriguing the period 1930s to 1970s was here in Manitoba for the establishment of Marketing boards, prior and after the establishment of FFMC. I therefore looked up a few other keywords in both Manitoba Legislative Assembly and the House of Commons Hansards to broaden my search; words such as ‘beef marketing’, ‘Chicken Marketing Board’, ‘Dual marketing’, ‘Hog marketing’, ‘marketing boards’, ‘Milk Control Board’, ‘Canadian Wheat Board’, and ‘Hog Marketing Board’. Manitoba was not the only Province I was interested in. I also looked up the debate in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to analyze the debate they had when Saskatchewan decided to opt-out of FFMC in

2010. I kept coding the Hansards for each key word and creating memos and quotes for the sections of the debates that were most highly relevant for Lake Winnipeg and the current debate.

Last but not least, marketing boards were not the only issue that I needed to analyze in the debates in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. The whole disagreement between the commercial fishers and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation forced me not only to see how the representatives in the Assembly spoke about sustainability and what solutions were available, but also the debate surrounding the Portage diversion project and the emergency channel that was built in 2011. Again, these concerns were not planned to play a big role in my original Ph.D. research proposal, but the way things evolved in the field, I was forced to change gears. It actually was Michael that opened my eyes for the connection between sustainability and the construction of an emergency channel. It actually was in our first encounter that he brought this issue to my attention, which was not only important for fishers in Fisher River but other fishers in Dauphin River, Grand Rapids and Norway House. We had decided to meet briefly before the General meeting of FFMC that was held in Winnipeg in November 2017. As we both stood outside the banquet hall in the Canada Inn hotel in Regent Avenue, Michael asked me about my research, and he became very interested in the project as soon as I explained to him that I wanted to analyze how fishers talk about sustainability and the role of FFMC. Then Michael asked me if I knew something about the Portage diversion and the emergency channel that was built in 2011. I told him that my knowledge of those projects only extended to some vague information in newspapers that covered the flood of 2011. Michael turned to me and said, “Alright, but you know what. The newspapers are not interested in the whole story. After they built that channel, we had thousands of fish deaths, and nobody is talking about it! Can you believe they want to build a permanent one? And then they are talking about sustainability. We need to let more people know about this”. Certainly, this

connected with the buy-back quota program and the increase of minimum mesh size, but both of these projects were underpinned by the politicians as 'enhancement' of sustainability. It was therefore intriguing to analyze the debate in the Assembly by looking for key words like, 'emergency channel', 'Environmental Act', 'First Nations', 'sustainability', 'Portage diversion', 'flood 2011' and 'Lake St. Martin' and 'treaty rights'. As usual I coded those same words in the Hansards and created memos and quotes of the debates that tied with how politicians deliberated about the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg and the effect of the Portage diversion infrastructure. By doing so, I am hoping to highlight how sustainability has been shrunken by and emancipated from the already dismantled social and the failure to connect environmental issues with fisheries policies.

3.2.4. Participant observation at meetings

To analyze political deliberation on papers can only go so far. The need for understanding what is happening on the ground during a turbulent time is decisive and as I mentioned in the introduction, something that was not done last time when the commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg went through a similar transition at the end of 1960s and beginning of 1970s. Just as in my previous work, I continued to go on fishing trips with fishers to participate in fishing and talk to them in an environment that they are comfortable with. I certainly did not go with every fisher I know or had the pleasure to get know for past few years on the field. I only went with fishers that I trusted and knew would give me good guidance on the lake, which is not always easy to navigate for an inexperienced fisher. Once in a while I went for fishing in the spring or a fall, but it is not always the best way to have a conversation with a fisher since the boat is small and barely fits two grown men and the catch of the day onboard. The best way was to go with fishers is during winter seasons because often fishers go more than one together to fish. The people I went out fishing with

had their nets quite far from any settlements which meant car rides for at least a couple of hours each day. Those car rides between the fishing grounds and places to drop off the fish were more than often a good venue to discuss fishing and what was going on in the Legislative Assembly, and the decisions that were made there.

Despite enjoying going out fishing and working alongside fishers, it was not always the place to be in those times. There were consistently meetings, in Gimli, Fisher River or Winnipeg where fishers met with governmental officials to tackle various issues that needed to be discussed. Those meetings were the perfect setting to explore the negotiation of social values and many other political questions, such as sustainability and moderate living between the fishers on one hand and the government on the other. The turmoil on the political level that was presented through the opting out of FFMC and the buy-back quota program opened up a space that Sen (2009) examined but never really had any case studies to back up his arguments. Amartya Sen argued for the importance of democratic deliberation of public reasoning to set up a common criterion for social justice or what should be consider a good life and those meetings between the fishers and the government theoretically should have concentrated on those big political questions. Unfortunately, as the Lake Winnipeg case will show, the democratic and public reasoning are not as clear cut as Sen himself makes us believe, rather such processes have further complications, resulting from policies and political practices.

The Province of Manitoba and commercial fishers on Lake Winnipeg agreed to revamp the Lake Winnipeg fishery Co-management Board in a meeting back in 2012 but the board did not start working fully until in 2013, or about the time I had finished my MA thesis fieldwork. Therefore, I did not pay much attention to the institutional arrangement of decision making on Lake Winnipeg in my previous works (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015), however, this

time around it was inevitable. I attended my first Co-management meeting in the spring of 2017 mostly as an observer, that is, I did not participate actively as I did in later meetings. In fact, my first two Co-management meetings, in the spring and winter of 2017, were first and foremost an opportunity to allow the representatives of the board to get to know me and my intention of being there, as well as to familiarize myself with the processes of the board and the board members themselves. The more meetings I attended the more active I became in those meetings, which was certainly not my plan in the beginning, but the circumstances somewhat opened a space for me to do so. Slowly I gained more trust from Sam, who was at the time the co-chair of the Co-management Board and is an active participant in his community of Fisher River Cree Nation. After my second board meeting, Sam asked me to take notes for him and the fishers of what was going on, both in the fishers only in-camera meetings and then the actual board meetings between the fishers and the government officials.

The board meetings were of course interesting in a sense that it gave me a chance to explore what both parties were thinking and how the dynamic between the groups influenced what was being discussed. More than often, the big political questions were not being discussed which meant that I got more from fishers only in the in-camera meetings. A setting where no governmental official was present allowed the fishers to discuss those political questions among themselves which helped me immensely to understand their ideas of not only the good life but how they, as a collective unit re-imagine what the governance of the lake should look like. Even though I worked most closely with fishers in Gimli and Fisher River Cree Nation, at those fishers-only in-camera meetings I got to know what other fishers in different communities around the lake were thinking and the challenges that they were facing. It was those informal conversation with the representatives who helped a lot because they often told me in great detail what was going on in

each community and how they would have liked to see certain decisions being made or being discussed. All of my experience of these meetings were greatly detailed in my notes, which after the meetings I wrote up digitally in my computer before I coded the notes in Atlas.ti to examine what themes were discussed and how the process was conducted when deliberating those issues. I also compared my notes on the actual board meetings with the minutes from the Province when I received them. Overall, I attended five Co-management meetings, and just as many fishers-only in-camera meetings but every Co-management Board meeting was a two-day event.

It was not just the co-management meetings I attended to, but days of other meetings between fishers and the provincial representatives that were informative as well, shedding a light on the difference in how fishers and the Province talked about the environment and the good life. As an example, every spring the Province and FFMC are invited into communities to discuss the state of the lake, and the price list for the upcoming year. I attended those meetings in Gimli and Fisher River Cree Nation and at least once in Riverton. There were other meetings, such as emergency meetings after the Provincial decision to introduce the buy-back quota program and increase minimum mesh size in Gimli, Fisher River Cree Nation and in the city, hosted by the Metis Federation and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The meetings were not always focused on fisheries, but on environmental issues, such as on the proposed permanent channel, future of FFMC or the Canadian Waterways Act, and were usually held in Fisher River Cree Nation. There were other social functions that I attended that allowed me to have informal conversation with many actors within the industry. All those accumulated hours and kilometers driven along the shores of Lake Winnipeg gave me an unprecedented view of a turbulent period of Lake Winnipeg which had it challenges. I will talk about the difficulty of writing an ethnography when you do not have

all the facts in front of you, but you are basically writing on the go and only the future can tell how it all turned out.

3.3 Coda: Surviving uncertainty in ethnography

The most challenging aspect of this dissertation was the act of collecting data and simply being in the moment, to savor it and reflect on it and then share my informant´s and my own thoughts and experience through a particular moment. In those moments there is a lesson to learn more about people´s lives, aspirations and how they negotiate their values with other people or in this case, with the market and the state. I wanted to know the fishers' struggle with the Provincial government of Manitoba, the Federal government of Canada and the market by experiencing their trials and turbulences in those relationships – the anger, disappointment, frustration and sometimes the hopelessness of not being heard or simply being ignored was felt and hopefully it can be felt through my words.

In those few years on Lake Winnipeg, I witnessed how the burden of "muddling through" was placed on the fishers 'shoulders, who were more than often left in the dark, asked to figure things out while the politicians shifted their attention to other issues. While the fishers were in the dark, I felt I was there with them, walking through a dark tunnel, trying to grab something to hold onto while I was walking. It would have been an easier path to take had I decided to take a snapshot of the black tunnel and just go back the same way I got there. This was the question in my mind when I drove from Jonny´s house after a short discussion with him and another fisher. I could have just let a year of fieldwork suffice; it probably would have because opting out of FFMC is a profound effort to completely dismantle the social from the economy, a complete moral transformation. Yet, in my mind- and I had no idea of what kind of political storm was brewing over Lake Winnipeg- I had the intuition that I could not just walk away while fishers on the lake

were trying to understand themselves, what was happening. This meant that new issues popped up like waves, drowning you with new information and you still had limited perception of how to solve the jigsaw. Whether it was the issue of late payments to fishers from private buyers, the tension between the commercial fishers and the nature of sustainability, the buy-back quota or the dissolution of the Co-management Board, almost every 6 months something big happened which made it more challenging to keep walking the dark tunnel, without a handrail to hang on while the worst was going over. Sometimes it was difficult to keep going, and sometimes the thought of just dropping it all and walking away came up in my mind because the intensity and the amount of information made it almost impossible to sit down and write. Here I found some salvation in public ethnography.

Slowly, as we were all trying to understand what was happening on Lake Winnipeg, I found a few reliable allies who could help me walking through the darkness. Here, Sam and Fisher River Cree Nation helped immensely by allowing me to bounce my ideas and what I was thinking with them. The better I got to know Sam, the more we started to work together; usually it was through composing letters to the Federal and Provincial Ministers. Those meetings or phone calls where we were discussing the issues in hand, whether it was the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg or dissolution of the Co-management Board, helped me greatly to bounce my ideas and experiences to the fishers to see if they were sharing the same feelings. Such engagement gave me more depth because in those letters to Ministers, we attempted to convey values the fishers hold towards certain political questions. Once in a while, I shared my findings or ideas on what was going on in meetings, whether it was a Co-management Board setting or a meeting regarding Canadian Waterways Act in Fisher River. I even gave the public in Winnipeg a small glimpse of my ethnographic evidence when I answered one of Dr. Forbe´s articles in Winnipeg Free Press

(Pálsson 2018). Such an effort to allow the public to see the raw ideas you are developing can be a double- edged sword because your findings can be affirmed or you can be ridiculed for your position, your informants could talk back to you, or in worst scenario, both (Fassin 2017). Not everybody agreed with my op-ed, and comments that I should not take a stance against a University professor, or I should listen to science popped up. Again, it was the engagement with the fishers that helped me the most by affirming that I was on the right track, and after the op-ed was published, I sometimes was referred when someone was introducing me to new fisher, as either the "guy who defended us in Winnipeg Free Press" or "the guy who wrote the Winnipeg Free Press article". The best indication was when the fishers themselves allowed me to share my ethnographic observations to Minister Squires in a Co-management meeting. Those kinds of engagements with fishers publicly helped me to sort out the information that I was receiving. They could tell me if I was completely off or if I was on the right track. Such engagement probably would have never been possible had I left the field after just one year. Extending my fieldwork and being constantly on the move helped me to cultivate my relationship with Fisher River Cree Nation as an example, and other fishers who were in the Co-management Board.

The following chapters represent, each and every one, a different momentum during my fieldwork. The chapters illustrate my own reflection on each time and what ideas I had been bouncing off with the fishers at that particular time. Some chapters can be seen as contradictory or confusing in that I am citing many different scholars in each chapter, but such practice should show the messiness of the situation because I am figuratively writing as I go in a way that I am working a place where I do not know all the facts. The facts have not yet been established that we do not have qualitative measurements on those particular policies. This dissertation should not

focus on the outcome, rather, it should highlight the process or the failure of the process of allowing the voice of the fishers to be heard. This is just as much as their work as it is my own.

Chapter 4: Marketing boards and freedom: political possibility and re-imagining the realization of surplus value.

On August 16, 2016, Jeff Wharton, the Minister of Education for Manitoba, Rick Wowchuk, MLA for Swan River, James Bazan, MLA for Selkirk (all members of the Progressive Conservative Party), along with Ron Evans, former Chief of Norway House, announced the plan of the newly elected Conservative government to opt out of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC). It was a monumental decision since Manitoba had been a participant and a driving force of the crown corporation since its establishment in 1969. It was a decision consistent with the Progressive Conservative's platform. For the past couple of provincial elections, the Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba has had it on their agenda to opt out of FFMC. Nationwide, the party's agenda to dismantle marketing boards in the country has been one of the cornerstones of their economic policy for years. Stephen Harper, former Prime Minister was well-known for his dislike of marketing boards which crystalized in how his policy slowly undermined and later privatized the Canadian Wheat Board during his tenure as Prime Minister from 2006 to 2015. "[…] Whether it takes a little time or a lot of time, it's going to happen […]" (CTVNews 2007), were Harper's words to the media when implementing one of his policies to undermine the Wheat Board by removing barley from the purview of the board. In the larger scheme of things, it might not be surprising that the Progressive Conservatives decided to opt out of FFMC. However, FFMC has been strongly rooted in Lake Winnipeg (and elsewhere in Manitoba), as I showed in my previous work (Pálsson 2014, Johnson & Pálsson 2015). I will be

revisiting that research in this chapter and adding more depth to my previous arguments. Nonetheless, to many fishers, the news of opting out of FFMC came out of nowhere. Carl, a commercial fisher said, *"*I was sick! I could not sleep for days*"* when I asked him for his reaction to the news. Another commercial fisher, a good friend of mine, George, expressed his feeling by stating *"*No!*"* when I asked him if he was satisfied with the decision, and he continued *"*[a]s far as I am concerned it was the wrong decision. Bad, very bad decision*"* and then he added:

> It [the decision to opt out] makes fishermen vulnerable to exploitation again by the fish companies and it creates chaos, uncertainty, and possibility of big losses in values of our catch and equity in the fishery. It creates instability in every sense of that word. Why and to what end? [My emphasis].

There is a lot to unpack in my friend's remarks and it touches upon topics that will be discussed later in the chapter. Especially, I want to focus on the question that he posed. Why did the Province of Manitoba decide to opt out? His remarks, however, illustrate how one group interpreted the decision from an historical context. Other groups of fishers, on the other hand, felt the news was a breath of fresh air for Manitoba fishery.

When one looks through local papers in Manitoba the day after the announcement, one might see headlines such as the one in Interlake Enterprise (August 17) which read *"*The crowd erupted in hoots and applause*"*, another one which stated, *"*Independence for Manitoba Commercial Fishers*"* et cetera. A couple of commercial fishers that were quoted in the papers even expressed the exact opposite feelings towards the decision as Carl and George. From their point of view, the feeling was one of relief, and hope. Amanda Stevenson, a commercial fisher on Lake Manitoba and a well-known critic of FFMC in Manitoba highlighted these feelings to the Express Weekly News on the day of the announcement, "I don't have words almost for how excited I am*"* (2016, 8). Barry, a commercial fisher on Lake Winnipeg also mentioned that the decision would rejuvenate the Manitoba fishery in the Interlake by stating "[t]here is enough

companies out there that are really short of fish. It´s just wide open…I´m really happy that the provincial conservatives can see what is the right thing for the fishers*"* (2016, 9). Amanda Stevenson shared the same sentiment as Barry by saying "[…] This is the most amazing economic opportunity for all the fishers in Manitoba. There is excellent marketing in very short-order […]*"* (2016, 8).

This is only an appetizer for the contested visions that fishers hold towards the provincial decision and the reader will get a better sense of the contrary views on Lake Winnipeg as we travel through the history of marketing boards in Manitoba in this chapter. Those contrary views run much deeper than a different sentiment towards FFMC or marketing boards in general. The contestation between the groups and Canadian politicians revolves around an ancient debate about the good life and how we should organize the market to support our image of the good life. The debate is about values and how those values are represented and reflected in the marketplace. It is about whether people themselves are realizing the financial rewards they produce for the market to support their idea of the good life. The story of the fishers on Lake Winnipeg, and other Manitobans I am conveying in this chapter illustrates how people, even in the same space, can disagree on the means towards the same end goal, that is, the good life. In this chapter, I will examine not only how the fishers of Lake Winnipeg disagree upon the means to the same goal, but also the antagonistic relationship they have with the current economic system. This system is riddled with contradictions and yet often upheld as a moral compass among politicians. The story I will relate is an illustration of how fishers got dis-embedded from not only their natural settings, but from the market, to become fully embedded in the market through cooperation, to eventually be on the brink of losing their grip again. The chapter also shows us how our current economic

system seems designed to dismantle any attempts at co-operatives. To my mind, the chapter's lesson is the need to find new alternatives that fit better with people's ideas of the good life.

4.1 The free market

Human markets are ancient, but different societies have engaged with the market differently at different times, as David Graeber has shown both in Debt: First 5,000 Years (2011) and Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value (2001). Markets have been tremendously important in human history as a device to bring people with different skills and abilities together to exchange commodities that they otherwise might not have access to. This obviously enhances one's capability to meet one's material needs. On the surface, the market is an egalitarian device since it treats everyone the same. Nonetheless, the market's strength can simultaneously be its weakness as David Harvey put it neatly in an interview with Richard Wolff:

> In a perfect market situation, there is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal……but if you start off much better endowed than me then bit by bit the gap between us goes higher and higher[6].

This is not a new observation, as Harvey mentions. Karl Marx made the same point in his work in what happens when a market is left unchecked. Unequal power is a big problem with the market as, for instance, when a big corporation transacts with an individual or small cooperative. The bigger entity is in a position to take advantage of the smaller one due to its financial, informational, and political power. Due to the tendency of the market to turn into an uneven playing field, the morality of economic relations becomes a concern: how should markets operate? How much intervention is acceptable? To associate the free market with capitalism is theoretically incorrect. Markets are always constrained in various ways. However, what makes capitalism and the neo-liberal wave so interesting, and also so difficult to resist, is that it has developed a

[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv1PNliOCBE

supporting justification based on a utopian world that is held together by moral arguments (W. Brown 2019; Graeber 2011).

4.1.1. Contradictions and morality

As both David Graeber (2001, 2011) and David Harvey (2014, 2003, 1990) have strongly indicated, capitalism revolves around a few economic but mostly moral principles that contradict each other. David Harvey (2014, 7) observed seventeen contradictions within the capitalistic system: (1) use value vs. exchange value, (2) the social value of labor vs. representation by money, (3) private property vs. capitalist state, (4) private appropriation vs. common wealth, (5) capital vs. labor, (6) capital as process or thing, (7) contradiction between production and realization, (8) technology, work and human disposability, (9) division of labor, (10) monopoly vs. competition and centralization vs. decentralization, (11) uneven geographical developments vs. production of space, (12) disparities of income and wealth, (13) social reproduction, (14) freedom vs. domination, (15) endless compound growth, (16) capital´s relation to nature, and (17) the revolt of human nature and universal alienation. These contradictions then result in a troubling situation for the general public. I will take Graeber's and Harvey's arguments as a theoretical point of departure to shed light on (1) the antagonistic relationship that fishers have with the current economic system and how their values clash with the larger economic and political system and (2) how the same moral principles contradict the theory of capitalism.

I want to start with what I mean when I talk about moral principles. Graeber's (2011) treatise on the moral grounds of economic relations comes in handy for that task. We must keep in mind that when Graeber talked about moral grounds of economic relations, he strictly applied it in the context of debt. However, his treatise has some potential for what I want to do here because it frees me from talking about ownership and allows me to think more about appropriation of

value/wealth. However, I realize that I need to tweak it a bit for this purpose. First of all, Graeber described three main moral principles on which economic relations can be established as communism, hierarchy, and exchange. As Graeber (2011) himself conceded, these principles "always coexist everywhere" (113) and we tend to switch principles according to different situations. So, yes, in simple terms, all moral principles coexist everywhere but the weight of the different moral principles change over space and time. This is similar to what both David Harvey (2003, 1990) and Neil Smith (1984) meant by uneven geographical development, but we will come back to that later in the chapter. Nevertheless, according to Graeber (2011), communism revolves around the principle of "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" (94). This is a fundamental principle, and as Graeber pointed out, it is no fluke that the principle of communism is applied consistently during crises, simply because it is efficient. As Graeber (2011) stated "[…] if you really care about getting something done, the most efficient way to go about it is obviously to allocate tasks by ability and give people whatever they need to do them […]" (96). This is, however, not always true since in many cases, societies choose through calculations to simply leave groups of people to fend for themselves (Fassin 2009). Nonetheless, Graeber furthermore, calls this "baseline communism" where:

> […] If the need is considered great enough, or the cost considered reasonable enough, the principle of "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs will be assumed to apply […] (Graeber 2011:98).

For my purpose, however, the same principles translate into how surplus value flows two ways or reciprocates in order to meet people's/producers' needs. That is, it is seen as reasonable that the majority of the surplus value goes back to the people, or the producers in this case, to meet their needs. I am not talking about communism in a political sense, or in a context of ownership. I am following a point that Graeber (2001) adopted from Mauss who perceived primitive

communism as based on "principles of access and distribution" (158). In the case of Lake Winnipeg, I am discussing the distribution of the surplus value from the production. The politics of ownership is therefore a completely different theoretical debate.

For simplicity's sake, I will combine hierarchy and exchange into one moral principle: the capitalist principle. When we talk about capitalist principles, it translates that the flow of the majority of the surplus value goes to the capitalist or retailers while the smaller slice of the pie goes to the small producer. That is, the surplus value goes from a primary producer, who in the end only sees the value he produced largely realized by someone else in the chain: transnational corporations, banks, retailers et cetera, depending on the context. This is where the tension is created within the system and often clashes with people's ideas of the good life. Here the work of David Harvey (2014) on the contradiction of capitalism helps us understand the gap between the reality of our current economic system and the utopian version of it.

David Harvey has written extensively about contradictions within the capitalist system and with his work. He not only has introduced Marx's work to people, but he has challenged us to think critically about the assumptions that capitalism relies on. The contradictions that Harvey has identified illustrate not only the internal contradictions of capitalism, but also shed light on the antagonistic relationship fishers have with the market, that is, their idea of how the market should operate in order to support their ideas of the good life. As mentioned earlier, David Harvey (2014) has identified seventeen internal contradictions to capitalism. For the purpose of this chapter, I will be using three of them to convey the story of Lake Winnipeg and the role of 'compulsory' cooperation in the province as a strategy to survive capitalism.

The contradiction of production and realization of surplus value is of particular relevance to the Lake Winnipeg fishery. As Harvey (2014) has observed, the one who is doing the production

is not necessarily the one who realizes the largest portion of the fruits of their own production. Marx, and consequently, David Harvey, realized that other classes of capitalists often usurp portions of the surplus value; merchant capitalists, banks, landowners, and others take pieces of the pie in forms of rent, interest and disparity between the initial and retail price. Moreover, and this is more relevant today than in Marx´s time, the surplus value is not necessarily realized within the same space; instead it is more than often realized across spaces. Harvey (2003) has elaborated extensively on how free trade agreements have made this observation the rule rather than the exception. As an example, creation of value often takes place in South America or Southeast Asia but in the end is mostly realized in North America or Europe, usually by multinational corporations. Neo-liberal capitalism has accelerated or deepened the contradiction between production and realization of surplus value, especially on a smaller scale and therefore for primary producers such as small-scale fishers. Not only has the neo-liberal political project increased the flow of money between countries, but it has also reorganized the economy, or in other words, how growth is accomplished and who appropriates wealth.

The growth of production is limited. As both Zizek, Harvey and others have pointed out, we are already at a tipping point where we can no longer push natural extraction for more growth unless we create further natural catastrophes. In fact, economies have steadily been shifting from nature based to more financial and services industries. David Harvey (2018) notes that this has led to the rise of anti-value which means that future value creation depends on debts and other fees. David Graeber highlighted the change of how the economy works by pointing out that

> General Motors and General Electric in America, for example – now derive all, or almost all, of their profits from their own financial divisions. GM, for example, makes its money not from selling cars but rather from interest collected on auto loans (Graeber 2018: 128).

Graeber notes that banks such as Goldman Sachs derive their profits not only from interest, but also from late fees and other such penalties for not paying instalments on time (Graeber 2015). This is how small enterprises, larger corporations, and most importantly, individuals are forced to operate to be able to participate in the economy. The credit system is the one that holds everything together. No credit, no access to the market. This certainly puts people between a rock and a hard place since credit does capture the future production or income as Graeber (2011) and Harvey (2018) have observed.

One might ask, what does this have to do with small-scale fishers on Lake Winnipeg? Well, the location does not matter. This might as well be applied to fishers on Lake Erie, small-scale fishers in Iceland or farmers in Kansas. The struggle goes beyond borders. It is the struggle of everyone who does not belong to the 1%. Small-scale fishers are no different. Additionally, to meet basic living such as mortgages and food, they also need to make sure that they can afford to go out on the lake to make an income, which includes buying nets, motors, a boat, transporting the fish to the market and so on. Often, they see the price that they are receiving, and compare it to the much higher prices that the big retail stores are charging. Not only do the small-scale fishers see banks, or car dealerships realize a portion of their income or their surplus value, they see retail stores do it as well. It is common to hear one say that we should not pay too much attention when fishers complain about prices, because 'they always complain about not getting higher prices' as politicians or economists tend to argue. And yes, it is true. Fishers tend to complain about prices, which they did during my previous research (Pálsson 2014) and in the research for this dissertation as well, as one will see later; but to dismiss such dissatisfaction as just unrealistic demand or greed is a grave mistake. To dismiss such a point means that we automatically accept that our current economic system is working properly and therefore deny a glaring defect in the system. That is,

the realization of the surplus value and what I talked about in the last chapter and in this one as well, the problem of money as a representation of value. What Brandon, a commercial fisher told me, "it all comes down to money" was spot on, because that is how the system is set up. As Marx and Engels (2009) pointed out, money serves as an intermediary *"*[…] between man's need and the object, between his life and his means of life […]*"* (136). We will return to this point later, but in the meantime, it is important to remember that the power of money lies in its ability to transform an imagination into an existence or a thing. This is, as I said in the previous chapter, important to acknowledge as we conceptualize the idea of a good life. In the current economic system, money does serve as an intermediary, and it does put constraints on what people can do (Harvey 2014). In theory, money in current form has no limitation on its growth, and that is the case for the one percent who need no enhancing in freedom when all necessity has disappeared (Harvey 2018; Polanyi 1967). However, the opposite is true for the rest, when the "power" of money becomes restrictive because someone or something else usurps it and the capacity to accumulate wealth becomes limited (Harvey 2018). Small-scale fishers have limited interest in accumulating wealth, but rather as I showed in the second chapter, and I will return to later, fishers want to direct their energy to establishing or maintaining their relationships, and with their families or community in particular. One way to maintain these relationships is to spend time and effort in those relationships, which means one must make a living to be able to do so; make enough money to support one's family. That is why it is a constant struggle for the fishers to get what they believe is a fair price or a fair share of the surplus value; one might feel like a dog chasing its own tail. The attempt is ineffective because no matter what the price is the contradiction between realization and production combined with the conundrum that money as representation of value brings, means that someone else will realize the higher portion of the surplus value. Moreover, as long as money

is the primary value regime and holds the features of a commodity, fishers and others will be stuck in an eternal loop.

The second and third contradictions merit our attention in this chapter. Harvey (2014) observed that within capitalism, there are contradictions between monopoly and competition on the one hand, and between freedom and domination on the other hand. These are contradictions that are the heart of the moral principles of capitalism, and in fact, freedom and competition are the moral principles that the neo-liberal project holds so dear (W. Brown 2019). The case of Lake Winnipeg and the deliberation surrounding the decision of the Province of Manitoba to opt out of Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation was the center of the debate. Competition and freedom often go hand in hand. The FFMC was an obstacle for the realization of neo-liberal morality in Manitoba, since it supposedly hindered freedom of choice and competition within the province. As we will see, politicians use those moral arguments against marketing boards, while on the contrary, the fishers themselves who were against FFMC did not use the moral argument but, rather the argument of return. They believed the FFMC could no longer guarantee them a fair share of the surplus value as it once did. However, the neo-liberal project and politicians perceive the lack of choice as something morally wrong (W. Brown 2019; Harvey 2014; Baumann 2000). This is something that can clearly be seen in economic textbooks that often project the reality through the consumer´s eyes, rather than those of small-scale primary producers, such as fishers. The textbooks assume that food processors are large scale producers who are "[…] obliged to increase their efficiency, which will allow them to sell at lower price than other sellers […]"(Carrier 1997: 2). The problem is that it contradicts the welfare of the small-scale producer, who is working hard to make a living, and in the current economic system, a small producer needs the price to be high,

otherwise she/he will struggle since he/she is not realizing the largest share of the fruits of their labor. That is where the contestation of meaning of both competition and freedom arise.

I spent quite a bite of time in the second chapter, talking about freedom and the problem that Sen's notion of freedom creates. Freedom is an important capability for everyone (Sen 1988, 1999). However, the problem that Sen did not think through, is that freedom is multifaceted, and not everyone will have the same idea of what freedom should look like. It is not just political beliefs that determine what people think freedom should look like, but also the power of collective memory (history) and the struggle of making the ends meet that are vital parts of how one perceives freedom. Marx´s and Polanyi´s stance of freedom is more preferable since they focus on the idea that, "[…] [t]he realm of freedom actually begins only where labour [sic] which is determined by necessity and of mundane consideration ceases […]" (Marx 1972). What is more, the contestation is apparent in the means to achieve that freedom as well. As mentioned in the second chapter, this clash between raw individualism versus collective life highlights how many see freedom but also how the market should work. This is where the debate on the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation comes in.

When politicians talk about freedom, as in the case of the FFMC they tend to do it in terms of the individual. That is, the individual has the "freedom" to choose and bargain individually their own contracts with whomever they want. However, as it will become apparent, many people, especially keeping history in mind, might see freedom as only achieved through collective measures. That is, competition between individual fishers is pushed aside and a collective effort to bargain prices becomes the main objective. This is closer to Marx's idea of the importance of cooperation. Nonetheless, when we talk about freedom, we will see the contradiction between freedom and domination as Harvey (2014) observed. The problem with freedom, according to

Harvey, is that "[…] there is no such thing as freedom that does not in some way have to deal in the dark arts of domination […]"(Harvey 2014, 285). This is the contradiction that neither capitalism nor the neo-liberal project has resolved. The problem is that one can demand more freedom in some aspects of one's life, only to realize that it has opened a space for "[…] either old or new forms of domination […]"(Harvey 2014: 285). In cases of small-scale producers, more freedom could include domination of the law of supply or demand, or big foreign importers. This is precisely what Theodor W. Adorno (2006) meant when he observed that more freedom can destroy freedom. Here, we are at the point where the contradictions intersect, that is between freedom vs. domination and monopoly vs. competition. The theory of neo-liberalism, according to David Harvey (2005) and Wendy Brown (2019), is that markets shall operate with competition as their central function and free from any forms of political compulsion. This, as I briefly mentioned above, assumes that competition leads to efficiency and lower prices for everyone. This leads to the belief that any state intervention in the market is perceived as morally wrong since it is supposed to be born out of spontaneity but as Karl Polanyi (1967) pointed out;

> Planning and control are being attacked as a denial of freedom. Free enterprise and private ownership are declared to be essentials of freedom. No society built on other foundations is said to deserve to be called free. The freedom that regulation creates is denounced as unfreedom (256).

As we will see, the Canadian state did use planning and control to overhaul not just inland fisheries but also the market for wheat in order to redirect majority of the surplus value back to the producer. As part of its intervention, the Canadian state eliminated competition, and today, this is something that neo-liberal policy does not tolerate. The problem with competition between 'free enterprises' is, as Marx (2009) pointed out, troubling, because competition is simply not in the DNA of capital. Capital needs certainty and what is the best way to secure certainty in the marketplace? Monopoly! Marx pointed out that with the coercive law of competition, inevitably,

capital will concentrate in fewer hands (Marx 2009) which undermines the promise of competition. As we will see, many fishers have different views on competition and how important a role it should have in the market. However, this chapter will show that there are of course different monopolies, but some monopolies are considered morally "better" than others, which will spark once again the debate between raw individualism vs. collective freedom.

4.1.2. What lessons can marketing boards teach us?

Initially, marketing boards in Canada were not supposed to play a big role in this dissertation. I had written a bit about the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation elsewhere (Johnson and Pálsson 2015; Pálsson 2014), and the plan was only to talk about the decision of the Province of Manitoba to opt out and how that decision affected the fishers' ideas of the good life. However, a conversation with a farmer at a barbeque party during the Icelandic Festival in Gimli changed my approach to this particular chapter. Jerry, the farmer who approached me was still upset with the Canadian Government for selling the Canadian Wheat Board in 2015 for only $250 million CAD to Global Grain Group (G3). I was sitting at a table with my friend, Amanda and we were waiting for the dinner to be served when Jerry sat down beside me and asked "Solli, you are researching Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and the decision of opting out, right?". Naturally, I conceded the fact that it was part of the reason for me being on Lake Winnipeg. Seconds later, Jerry went on a ten-minute-long monologue of how well the Canadian Wheat Board had worked, that is, he always had a buyer for his wheat and how upset he was still about how the Harper government had undermined the Wheat Board for years. Jerry ended his monologue by explaining how the Canadian Government had kept the farmers out of the decision-making process and finally he asked me "why do you think they decided to sell the board to the Saudis and the Americans?" In all, my conversation with Jerry lasted for 30 minutes or so but left a profound

mark on me. His question of why the Canadian Government wanted to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board rather than allow the farmers to take control of it was stuck in my mind. So, a few questions popped up: (1) why does the state find it easier to allow "free enterprise" to hold the bargaining power than a crown corporation? (2) What can we learn from marketing boards? and (3) What does the experience of marketing boards tell us about our current economic system?

The origins of capitalism have been traced to the 15th century (Patel and Moore 2017), and we are still looking for an alternative, from democratic socialism in the Nordic countries, to the workers' co-operative movement in Argentina and Mexico, and many have forgotten the experiment that happened in Canada from around 1930 to 1970. This time is better known for the domination of Keynesian demand side economics where the state was encouraged to stimulate demand in times of stress. However, Canada went a different route in some areas of the economy, especially in relation to primary producers. When one reads the Hansards from either the House of Commons or the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, one can see how many elected officials doubted the effectiveness and simply the fairness of the so called 'free market'. The doubt manifested itself in various ways but the most obvious one was the legislative response to the market conditions in either farming or inland fishing. The establishment of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC) is of particular interest here, for obvious reasons, since it completely overhauled how inland fisheries in Canada was organized. Nevertheless, and I hope the reader will bear with me with this point, it would be a mistake to solely focus on the FFMC and disregard other marketing boards such as the Canadian Wheat Board, the Manitoba Hog Marketing Board or the Natural Product Marketing Act. We must keep in mind that both Natural Product Marketing Act and the Canadian Grain Marketing Act can be seen as blueprints for the establishment of the FFMC. In all cases, the objective of the acts was to (1) increase income for

primary producers, (2) re-organize who would receive the majority of the surplus value and (3) force producers who already were not working together to work collaboratively under the umbrella of the state. The third point is especially intriguing, because obviously, it was not voluntary co-operation as in Mexico or Argentina (Panayotakis 2009), but it was not state socialism either since the marketing boards were self-sustaining entities relying on either the farmers' or the fishers' productivity. The value of considering other marketing boards helps us shed a light on how the moral principle has changed through the decades in Canada. As stated earlier, the Federal Government of Canada had already privatized the Canadian Wheat Board, and Manitoba added 'flexibility' in the hog industry in the 1990s. When those changes went through, the Canadian politicians or the proponents of the changes used the same arguments about the constraining factor of the compulsory aspect of the acts and therefore positioned themselves as defenders of individual liberty and freedom. Even though the Federal Government of Canada has not yet decided what to do with the FFMC, it is on the same trajectory as all the other marketing boards that have been stripped of their monopoly. This will further help us understand the reasons and the politics behind the decision of opting out of the FFMC. Moreover, the demise of the marketing boards in Canada has not been situated well enough in the larger context. The downfall of the marketing boards is often explained by broad-brush explanations or common phrases such as 'they have become ineffective' or the small producer have "become more sophisticated and entrepreneurial" (Quesnel 2012:11) and hence completely ignore the contradictions in our economic system. To make it clear, marketing boards in Canada have been in no way perfect institutions, a point to which I will return later. They are riddled with big problems, such as mismanagement in the case of FFMC and democratic deficiency. Nonetheless, the marketing boards offer us valuable insights into not only

the contradictions of capitalism but also how our current economic system denigrates alternatives that are based more on collective action.

The story of marketing boards and FFMC is divided into two parts. The first part of the story is a brief historical review on the rise of the marketing boards in Canada. The concentration will be on the debate surrounding the Natural Product Marketing Act, the establishment of the Canadian Wheat board and the FFMC in both House of Commons and the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The debate surrounding those bills sheds an important light on the moral stance of members towards the market and consequently the role of the state to secure not only the surplus value to the small producers but to maintain participation in the market. The second part will be focused on how the moral stance among many politicians changed during the 1980s to the 2000s, where the state determined to push the marketing boards out, since they believed they crushed any individual freedom to a point that the domination of the marketing boards (the state) derailed the small producer's capability to maximize their income. However, I will illustrate the complexity of freedom as a capability that shows best in the contradiction with domination. Freedom is often used in a political rhetoric as a justification and legitimation for making drastic changes to re-organize the market, but such changes create a tension between groups.

4.2 Loss of control and the birth of marketing boards

In volume 1, 2 and 3 of *Capital*, Karl Marx analyzed capitalism in an extraordinary way, so extraordinary that scholars are still debating his work. As Harvey (1990, 2003, 2013) noted, one of the most crucial notions of capitalism that Marx identified, was that capitalism is "value in motion". This is an observation that we need to keep in mind throughout this chapter, but as Harvey has shown through his concepts of "flexible accumulation" and "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2005), capital needs constant motion. It needs expansion and fails if it stays idle. Capital

needs therefore new, untapped resources to extract surplus value and as soon as the particular resource has been exhausted, the capitalist looks for a new but cheaper deal to make his capital keep growing. This practice explains well the proneness of the capitalist system to boom and bust cycles, and spatial tension between the state, the capitalists and various groups (Harvey 2005). We saw how worker co-operatives in Argentina attempted to resist these destructive practices by taking over factories that had been abandoned by capitalists around 2001 to restore production (Panayotakis 2009). That is one way to look for an alternative to capitalism, or at least a way to break down the capitalistic circulation of money, which we will be talking about later in the chapter. The same can be said of Canada's response to uncertain market conditions in the 1930s and even up until the end of the 1970s, but the only difference is that a state power was directed to break up the circulation of money. There were a few issues or contradictions that the Canadian politicians and officials observed regarding the so called "free market". All of those issues are interlinked in one way or another. The first issue that gained attention was the contradiction of money as a representation of value and consequently, how uneven the distribution of surplus value was within the economic system. Secondly, competition and what Marx and Harvey called anti-value (Harvey 2018) did not enhance people's freedom, rather it left them exposed to the whims of the market. To break the circulation of money and reverse the realization of surplus value, Canada established marketing boards to control supply. In 1971 there were 121 marketing boards operating across Canada! As I stated earlier in this chapter, these were not state-run enterprises and the purposes were not profit seeking, but rather to make sure of a higher return for the primary producer. The marketing boards posed a theoretical problem when writing about money circulation and surplus value. As Harvey (2013) pointed out, Marx never included state intervention in his analysis of money circulation and instead he constrained himself to perfect competition. He "lays

state intervention to one side" (17). This will then be one attempt to shed light on what happens to money circulation due to state intervention with the marketing boards in Canada as an example.

The debate in the House of Commons surrounding the Natural Product Marketing Act and the re-establishment of the Canadian Grain Board between 1934 to 1936 shed an interesting light on a fundamental issue, that is, the "law" of supply and demand and the question of, what is an equilibrium price, or a fair price? Of course, capitalism operated slightly differently during this period since North America and Europe were slowly getting back on their feet after WWI and the Great Depression and slowly working to reduce protectionist policies. Moreover, the triangle of free trade, as Michel Rolph Troulliot (2001) called it, was not formed as it is today to speed the circulation of money even further (Harvey 2013). Nonetheless, the objective of the capitalist system was still the same, that is, expansion and profit but obviously, production of material goods played an even bigger role than it does today (Harvey 1990). Just like today, people thought it was blasphemous when one suggested intervening in the "law" of supply and demand and therefore disrupting competition. Words such as "hands off" or "do not interfere with the principle of free production and free marketing by the individual" were frequently mentioned by the opposition to both the Grain Wheat Board Act and the Natural Product Marketing Act. The reason for the introduction of these bills was that people thought they were not getting a fair share for their work. As a member of the Liberal Party in Alberta, Mr. Gershaw, mentioned in one of his speeches regarding the Grain Wheat Board Act in 1934, *"*[…] can we continue to grow wheat at 40 to 45 cents a bushel when it is costing us at least 60 cents a bushel to produce it? […] (HC Deb, 1934: 111)*"* He did use similar arguments from beef producers in the country who were not getting a good enough price. In that situation, many members of the House of Commons recognized that drastic changes were needed to make the economic system more efficient as Mr. Brown strongly

indicated in one of his remarks about the Natural Product Marketing Act that the purpose of the legislature was:

> Instead of working with the economic system we have, for example, we must entirely dispense with it, overthrow it and establish an entirely new system. (HC Deb, 1934: 2266)

Moreover, the problem with the "law" of supply and demand or free market was that you have 200 hands, as honorable Mr. Bury put it "working from different directions and for different ends" and therefore something had to be done to bring "steadiness and progress" (HC Deb, 1934: 2575). But it was not always about supply and demand, or fair price, but also about moral principles about the claim on surplus value, especially in the context of wheat. Farming is and always will be important for Canada, and especially Manitoba, and therefore state intervention has never been anything new, even prior to 1935. In 1919, Canada established the Grain Marketing Board to stabilize the wheat market and make sure that the price would not rise too high so the general public would be able to buy wheat. However, that was just a contemporary solution in times of war, but after those cooperatives were established in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba against powerful grain companies with limited success. Even the government helped to establish the Canadian Cooperative Wheat Producers Limited, which operated on a voluntary basis under the direction of Mr. McFarland. It was certainly an uphill battle for McFarland since he not only bought wheat from farmers, but he had to stabilize the whole wheat market in Canada, which was mostly conducted from the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. The problem that the Canadian Grain Board was supposed to address was twofold. First, of less relevance here, is that a big surplus of grain because farmers could not sell everything out of the country due to quotas and other factors that limited transactions of wheat between countries. The second problem was, however, pertinent to this chapter since it revolved around the moral principles of the distribution of the surplus value. The farmers were not getting what was believed to be a fair price, and as Mr. Gardiner pointed

out, the farmers were "[…] subjected largely to the whims and policies of the elevator companies and policies […]" (HC Deb, 1935: P. 3599) and to push back, a couple of cooperatives were established. The feeling was that the farmers were not realizing the largest share from their own production, but the majority of financial reward was going to the representatives of grain companies. Farmers could see that in Winnipeg as Bernard Munroe Stitt a member of the Conservative Party from Nelson, Manitoba put it:

> When I drive around Wellington Crescent and down by the river and see the great mansions there, all taken out of the sweat and blood of the farmer, as far as I am concerned, I find very little difficulty in deciding on which side I am going to line up. I aim to support this bill [The Canadian Grain Board] with all that I have. (HC Deb, 1935: 3627)

It is noteworthy that it was the Conservative Party that supported the establishment of a marketing board, given the shift at present in the moral principles of the distribution of surplus value that now guide the party, as we will touch upon later in the chapter. However, it was not just the fact that the grain companies were allegedly usurping the value of the farmer's production, but it was also being realized by other actors in the economy: middlemen, speculators, profiteers etc. This is the contradiction between the use and exchange value as Harvey´s (2013) analysis of the US subprime mortgage crises where exchange value reduced use value through speculative bubble. Prairie farmers saw their exchange value of their production appropriated by mortgage companies. Two thirds of farmers in the west were heavily in debt, but also speculators affected the price of the wheat as Mr. Gardiner from the district of Acadia in Alberta noted:

> […] The farmers of the west object and have objected ever since I have been a resident of western Canada, to the speculator determining very largely the price that they will receive for their commodities. I quite realize that under the present method of handling our grain <u>the speculator is very essential part of the proceeding</u> […] (HC Deb, 1935: P. 3600) (My emphasis)

The last sentence of Gardiner's quote is essential, especially when reflecting upon moral principles or claims to the surplus value. As Gardiner pointed out, speculators were important

players in the grain trade, but in a negative way. One of the objectives of both the Natural Product Marketing Act and the Canadian Grain Board Act was precisely to eliminate speculators or middlemen because a big portion of members of the House considered it an illegitimate profit, or the creation of "false wealth" (HC Deb, 1934: P. 108) as Joseph Napoleon Bourassa, an independent from Quebec, put it. Furthermore, as Gardiner conceded

> […] the crux of the problem that we have before us, namely, the reason the present economic system is not functioning efficiently. My judgement is that because of the profit nature of the system, the concentration of wealth […] (HC Deb, 1934: P. 103).

This in fact was not a new stand that many members of the House of Commons took, similar notions of immoral or ill gained profit or surplus value have been upheld throughout history, even prior to the introduction for these two bills. It is often forgotten that in China in 9 AD, Wang Mang intervened on the market in a case that was considered illegitimate profit seeking, when predatory lenders were usurping the farmer's land (Graeber 2011). The importance of these two Acts are quite remarkable, especially for us, since it laid the groundwork for the foundation of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. Moreover, these two Acts showed that, as Graeber (2011) emphasized, it might be a mistake to see state intervention of the state as the devil since when the state is still promoting markets, and the state is only attempting to reverse how surplus value of production is being distributed. As we will touch upon later in the chapter, the Wheat Board got its monopoly in 1943 at the same time as farmers got more of a voice within the board. While these debates were happening in the house, similar things were happening on Lake Winnipeg and in other inland fisheries in Canada.

4.2.1 The stifling competition – race to the bottom.

The legislative changes mentioned above made it possible for fishers in Manitoba and other inland fishers in Canada to pressure politicians and government officials to intervene in what one

might call the "free market" and regain some bargaining power from powerful buyers in the United States. The process of turning the inland fishery from being an *"*[…] atmosphere of pessimism and doom […]*"* (10) as McIvor (1966) described the feeling among many fishers towards the industry between the 1880s to 1960s to one where fishers actually could make a living was hard fought battle. Nonetheless, we are still debating the means to the end. That is, what is the best alternative to secure a vibrant market, but a market that simultaneously reflects fishers' values and one where they can hold some degree of control of their own livelihood? This is where we touch upon the core foundation of capitalism and more recently the neo-liberal utopian world. Previously, I have talked about the moral principle of the claim to the surplus value, and in the previous section, we saw how the Federal Government of Canada took a stance by saying that the farmers should be the ones realizing a larger share of the fruits of their labor, not speculators or the grain companies. It is not only the flow of the surplus value that is important here, but also the means towards the end goal. This is where the utopian world and capitalism/neo-liberalism clash. Throughout, not just this dissertation, but the works of Karl Marx, David Harvey (2003, 2014), David Graeber (2011, 2018), Eric Wolf (1982) and more, there has been an emphasis on how our current economic system requires compound growth and therefore capital can never be idle. At the same time, to reach the growth, the moral principles of freedom and competition must be respected. Without free interplay between supply and demand and freedom of choice, capital cannot truly move freely (Carrier 1997; Harvey 2005). The problem with this, as Harvey (2014) pointed out, is that the utopian version of capitalism and then reality contradict each other. Competition can lead to concentration of economic power into few hands, and freedom of choice results in the very elimination of that freedom of choice. The case of Lake Winnipeg highlights these contradictions. On the one hand, many fishers see, as liberating what others might perceive as constraints on

freedom and competition. On the other hand, another group of fishers envisions freedom in a more neo-liberal way. More buyers and fierce competition will lead to a higher price. They feel they are not realizing the value they deserve under the guidance of FFMC. The problem though is that the reality of competition or "free market" does not always meet the promised utopian vision. This is the struggle or antagonistic relationship fishers have with the market that I will be concentrating on. As discussed in the second chapter, we need to change our theoretical point of view when we deal with freedom. We can no longer only focus on the process of freedom and dismiss the historical processes and politics of life which Sen´s conception of freedom does not address since he was too concentrated on the freedom of choice. Emphasis on historical processes and politics of life will enhance our ability to understand the complicated relationship fishers have with freedom and the concept of the free market and competition.

4.2.2 Disembeddedness from the market

Fishing has always been an activity in Manitoba, especially in parts of rural Manitoba where fishing is often the only viable option to make a living. In fact, fishing has been an integral part of life for people in Manitoba for thousands of years; First Nations groups fished for sturgeon or lake whitefish for subsistence long before arrival of the Europeans (Tough 2000, 1984). Furthermore, fishing saved the Icelandic immigrants from starvation in the 1870s when they were struggling to adapt to the harsh winters of Manitoba (Arngrímsson 1997). Even though First Nations sold some of their catches to fur traders, the commercialization of Lake Winnipeg fishery only dates the period between 1870 and 1880, depending on the sources. As Frank Tough (2000) pointed out, it was reported that Indigenous people began to exchange their catch for various commodities around 1886 and reports also indicate that the Icelandic immigrants began to look for an economic opportunity for their catches, especially in the city of Winnipeg. Shortly after the

1880s Lake Winnipeg became known to American buyers and other fish traders (Mochoruk 1957). The transition from a use value economy to an exchange one on Lake Winnipeg was rapid, which caused a lot of friction within the communities (Tough 2000).

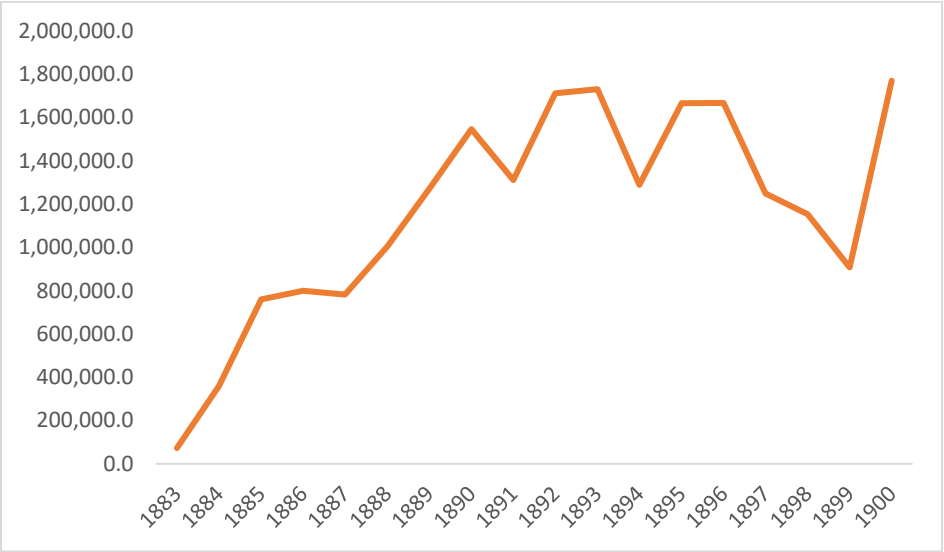

Figure 3: Lake Winnipeg commercial harvest for Whitefish 1883 - 1900 (Source: Manitoba Fisheries Branch 2012)

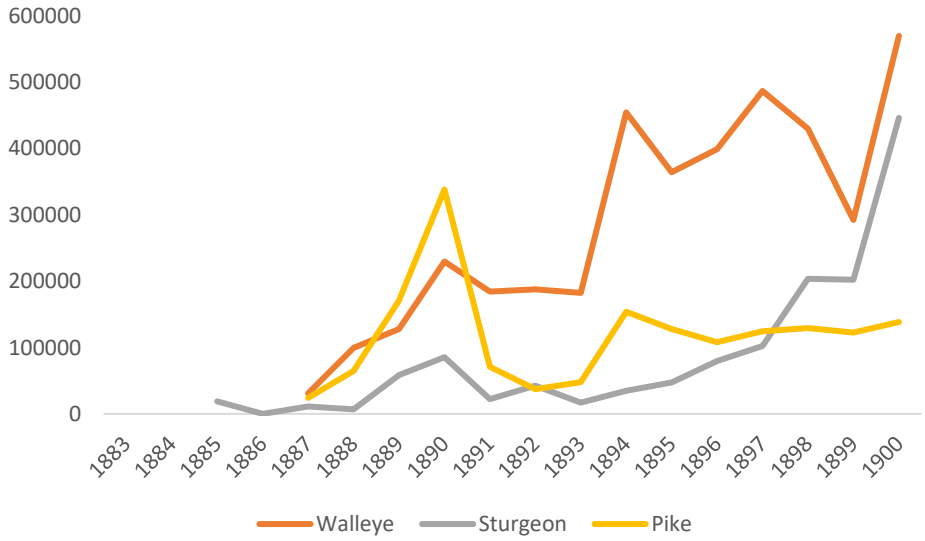

Figure 4: Lake Winnipeg commercial harvest 1883 - 1900 (Source Manitoba Fisheries Branch 2012)

As can be seen on both figure 3 and 4, the catch for Lake Winnipeg grew rapidly from 1880, and same goes for walleye, sturgeon and pike. Suddenly, Lake Winnipeg was full of steam boats, freighters transporting fresh fish from the lake either to a growing Winnipeg or to the

markets in Chicago, Detroit and New York (Tough 1984; Mochoruk 1957). This sudden influx of capital and rapid growth of the catch on Lake Winnipeg created disgruntlement among both First Nations fishers and Icelandic fishers alike. Both groups felt they were in a tough position and were losing control of the lake. The First Nations fishers on the lake were in a bind. They were the original guardians of the lake who suddenly faced pressure to participate in the new money economy of the lake. First Nations and Métis felt compelled to participate in order to obtain other commodities, but more importantly, they hoped that their involvement in the fishery might help them maintain some control over fishery (Tough 2000). This sense of impending loss of control is reflected in the frequent First Nations and Métis complaints to the government that the companies on the lake might exhaust the fish completely (Tough 1984, 2000). Moreover, First Nations and Métis fishers were worried as well about the price disparity between what they were receiving and what the companies were receiving in export markets in the United States (Tough 2000). Their Icelandic counterparts raised the same concern in their attempts to retain some control as well. The Icelandic fishers were unhappy that they were not the ones that were realizing the value they created, instead it was the fish buyers in Manitoba or the fish companies in the United States that were realizing most of the surplus value of the fishery. The Icelandic-Canadian newspaper, *Heimskringla*, reported in 1923 that the fishers only received 3 cents of the export dollar compared to the 97 cents that the companies were receiving (Pálsson 2014). The Icelandic fishers responded to this disparity by establishing their own cooperative, the Fishermen´s Protective Union (Sigurdson 2014). It did not last long, however, since it did not have the financial muscle to compete with companies on Lake Winnipeg, which had financial security due to their ties with larger parent companies in the United States. It seemed whatever petitions, or complaints First Nations, Métis or Icelanders put forward, the Federal Government, then responsible agency as the

Transferable Act had not yet been signed, showed little concern with the disparity between prices or the fact that it was American buyers who realized the largest share of the value of the fishing industry at the expense of local people (Tough 1984). Such disparity was highlighted in McIvor's (1966) report but according to the Commission calculation, the Canadian freshwater fish industry only received half of the retail price. It was the fight between the fishers, the fish dealers and the Canadian exporters for any surplus value that was left. The commercial fishers reaped only sixteen to twenty-eight cents, while the fisher dealers usurped thirty-four to forty-seven cents, but the Canadian exporter received between fifty to sixty-four cents, depending on whether the fish was sold fresh or filleted.

The situation on Lake Winnipeg worsened every year, but the situation on the lake was nonetheless close to a liberal economic utopia. Usually with capital penetration, as Taussig (1980) describes, the result will be that a couple of big international companies take over the market. On Lake Winnipeg however, the capital penetration led to more buyers entering the lake and suddenly, the fishers had multiple choices of buyers for their fish. As Clinton Whiteway from Matheson Island reminded us at the public hearing of the Bill 23 (FFMC bill), just on Matheson Island alone, there were a dozen fish companies or buyers operating. There were more companies in settlements such as Gimli, Norway House, Riverton, Selkirk and elsewhere on Lake Winnipeg. This is what McIvor (1966) noticed in his report but he estimated that there were ninety-three exporting outlets in Canada during this period, thirty two firms in the prairies alone. George McIvor also pointed out that twenty exporting firms had a good grasp of the market and thirteen of these companies were located in Manitoba. In Manitoba alone, there were one hundred and ninety-eight dealers or one dealer for every seventeen fishers. The fishers in Manitoba had plenty of “freedom to choose” and according to an economic textbook, the fishers should have had a strong bargaining power to

drive the price up. Unfortunately, for the fishers that was not the case. In fact, Lake Winnipeg showcased how the market, despite being egalitarian in nature, can become repressive when left under the purview of capitalism and turns into a situation of structural violence. Here I want to clarify what I mean by structural violence. Ontologically, I would have to follow the footsteps of David Graeber (2012), by employing the feminist version, that is to perceive it rather as structures of violence, *"*[…] since it is only the constant fear of physical violence that make them possible, and allows them (structure) to have violent effects […]" (Graeber 2012: 113). To an extent, markets that are organized by capitalistic logic are backed up by the threat of violence and by imagining a capitalistic system without violence, would be an illusion. Just as David Harvey (2005, 2003) has emphasized in his work, capitalism would not work without violence, that is people are stripped of their rights and are forced out of their own land to make space for accumulation. As I briefly mentioned, the late fees of banks and car dealerships represent the same idea, that is, if one does not pay on time, they will be penalized, and it is the constant threat of violence that makes the late fees powerful because if one decides not to pay, the consequences will be harsh (Graeber 2015). Of course, I am both talking about physical and psychological harm. In the case of Lake Winnipeg between 1900 – 1960, the violence or threat of violence was more psychological than purely physical. The situation prior to the establishment of FFMC got to the point where the limits were posed on fisher's freedom. That is, many fishers felt disoriented and the feeling of loss of control was apparent since their needs were not met.

I will never forget a meeting I had with a retired fisher and a friend of mine a few years ago in the Salisbury House restaurant in Winnipeg. I mentioned this meeting in my MA thesis (Pálsson 2014), but I think his words weigh just as much if not carry more weight now than a few years ago. Before Tommy passed away a few years ago, I met him often at barbeque parties or any

other social events in Gimli and every time he saw me, he began to talk fishery with me. More often than not, the conversations turned into a history lesson. In the Salisbury House restaurant, I finally decided to record some of his stories, and he told me a few stories that his father, and grandfather had told him. Many of the stories evolved around how the market on Lake Winnipeg was once "fixed", or "unfair", and limited fishers' capability around the lake to make ends meet. Tommy described the situation in a simple but a powerful way:

> It was very difficult, very difficult. I know, grown men at the end of the year that would fish for four or five months of the year and when they got settled up and when they realized that they got nothing, they were crying! Grown men! Because they had nothing left after maybe four or five months of hard work, and fishing is a hard work and it is not an easy trade (Pálsson 2014, 53).

Longford Saunders, the former president of the Norway House Co-op and now a Norway House counselor, had a similar story about fishers in Warren Landing (just south of Norway House)

> When I look back at 1929 when there was four fish buyers in the Warren Landing, where our fishermen was not even paid dollars. Instead, they were being given a piece of paper and say you can take this to the co-op and you-your credit- that´s your credit, not knowing how much their fish was being bought. (MLA 2017, Deb: P. 428).

The root of the problem was the hierarchical nature of the relationship fishers had with the American fish buyers and the Canadian dealers. The fish exporters through their fish agents (dealers) exercised great power over the fishers. The fish companies provided loans to fishers to enable them to rent boats, nets, and other necessary equipment. Additionally, the fishers got loans for food, helpers and oil, and in return for selling the fish to that particular company. The fishers had no avenue to leave this relationship without paying their debts which resulted in many fishers becoming indentured labor with no bargaining power (McIvor 1966). Even politicians acknowledged the problem on Lake Winnipeg, and in fact, not just on Lake Winnipeg but in other inland waters in Canada. As Leonard S. Evans from Brandon noted at the Manitoba Legislative

Assembly, the bind the fishers were in was due to an "outmoded business practice" and if the fishers needed or wanted new equipment, they had no choice but to become indebted, which led to the notion that "[…] the equipment is still owned by the fish companies, and heavy indebtedness to the companies have given the fishermen no choice but to sell their fish to the companies which financed them […]" [my emphasis] (MLA 1969, Deb: P. 137). The problem was of course that the companies or fish buyers knew that if a fisher threatened to quit, the threat was empty because the fishers had no other training or employment opportunities and were therefore forced to accept whatever price they were given. As McIvor (1966) observed, it really did not matter if a fisher had a positive balance or not. Every fisher received a low price for their fish. The fishers only got enough back to be able to go back out next season. Fishers really never knew what they would get for their fish. Tommy paraphrased the typical perspective of the buyers when the fishers had to settle up in the end of the season as: *"*Well, it has been a tough year, we couldn't sell the fish as much as we wanted to in Chicago, Boston, Detroit and down south, we have to pay you less!". Clinton Whiteway from Matheson Island had a similar story, which he shared at the public hearing of Bill 23. *"*I remember my grandfathers and forefathers speaking that they would be promised 50 cents a lb….in the morning*"* and Mr. Whiteway continued:

> Well, if you weren't the first three or four boats to come and fill their [fisher buyers] freezer, by the end of the day – you might have been the top producer of the day, now you get two cents – he has nowhere to sell it, nowhere to put it. (MLA 2017, Deb. P. 430).

This speaks of how the American importers held great economic power over the Lake Winnipeg fishing industry. First of all, there was no competition between the American importers. One of the reasons why the power went to the US importers was simply because they were few and some of importers had a monopolistic power in their respective territories. As an example, it was reported by the McIvor (1966) commission that only one importer had seized control of "the

entire flow of freshwater fish from Western Canada ”(90) to Detroit. Moreover, only two importers had about 90% market share in another big market for freshwater fish, Chicago. What strengthened the American companies’ power was the fact that they were few and far between and sometimes they financed some of the Canadian importers. The problem on Lake Winnipeg, and in many other inland lakes in Canada, was that there were only a few local buyers who had the equipment and the capability to handle a certain amount of fish to export a quality product. As William Gordon Ritchie, a member of the Progressive Conservatives and a representative of Dauphin in the House of Commons pointed out in 1968, because there were so many buyers of different sizes with different capabilities it resulted in a “failure to supply a uniform product” which “detracted from the saleability of the fish” (HC 1968, Deb: 4141). Moreover, because of a lack of “first class” companies, who had adequate facilities to handle all the catch the fishers brought in, it often turned into a race between fishers to bring in fish before the freezers were fully stocked, as Clinton Whiteway pointed out. The problem with freshwater fish is that it deteriorates quickly if it is not iced properly and as Mochoruk (1957) observed in his work, it often happened that fish dealers or the Canadian exporters simply did not have enough space or ice for the fish, which in the end had to be thrown out. The limited capacity of storage among Canadian fish dealers and exporters helped the bigger import companies in the United States to take advantage of smaller export companies and fish dealers in Canada. The US importers were financially secure enough and they were equipped enough to handle the flow of freshwater fish from Canada. The smaller fish dealers and exporters in Manitoba, on the other hand, were too small and did not have the financial ability to process and store an excess of fish. The Canadian dealers and exporters were therefore in a lot of distress to ship their fish as fast as possible south of the border before the fish would deteriorate.

The American companies, however, waited patiently to bargain for a low price since they knew that the Canadian companies could not afford to wait (McIvor 1966).

McIvor (1966) also pointed out that a lack of knowledge of price signals in the US among smaller Canadian dealers and exporters were a major contributor in strengthening the US importers position in negotiation of prices. They supplied the American market with freshwater fish regardless of demand. The American companies bought the fish nonetheless because they had the capacity to store it, unlike the Canadians (McIvor 1966). Not only did the dealers and exporters in Manitoba play the fishers against each other by buying fish from them on a first come first served basis, but the companies also made the fishers take all the risk. As the McIvor (1966) commission concluded, the fishers "did not even know the price of their fish at the time of delivery" (96). By not setting clear prices, the companies, the exporters did not commit to any price to protect themselves from any uncertainty. Uncertainties included, (1) the product was denied entry to US due to quality, (2) payment from the US importer was delayed, and (3) the product had to be stored due to market condition in US. And if the marketing condition was good in the US, the Canadian exporter and his fish dealers got the benefit of it, while the fishers got nothing. As the McIvor (1966) commission pointed out, a good market condition in 1965 resulted in six to eight cents premium for the fish, which the companies usurped while the fishers themselves did not know about this increase in price. In short, the fishers were kept out of the price structure, the Canadian dealers and exporters did not gain much while most of the surplus value was realized in the United States (McIvor 1966).

The fishery itself was spiraling down as well, as can be seen in figure three. The catch for the three major species was steadily going down, especially the lake whitefish and walleye. This is another indication of the lack of control the fishers had within their own industry. The fishers

went out on the lake simply to pay their debts with the companies, and it was the companies who decided how much fish they would buy. Most importantly, they were in deep need of trying to make ends meet, and the only way to do so, was to go out and catch some fish and hope that the price would sooner rather than later pick up. Moreover, the availability of fish decreased as well, as can be seen in figure 5, and the effort of catching fish increased proportionally. Closer to the end of the 1960s fishers had almost fifty to sixty nets in the open water (compared to four to five today) and one hundred and fifty during the winter season (twenty nets today). As Tommy reminisced "[y]ou would be considered lucky if you caught forty pounds of fish after a day lifting"(Pálsson 2014, 53).

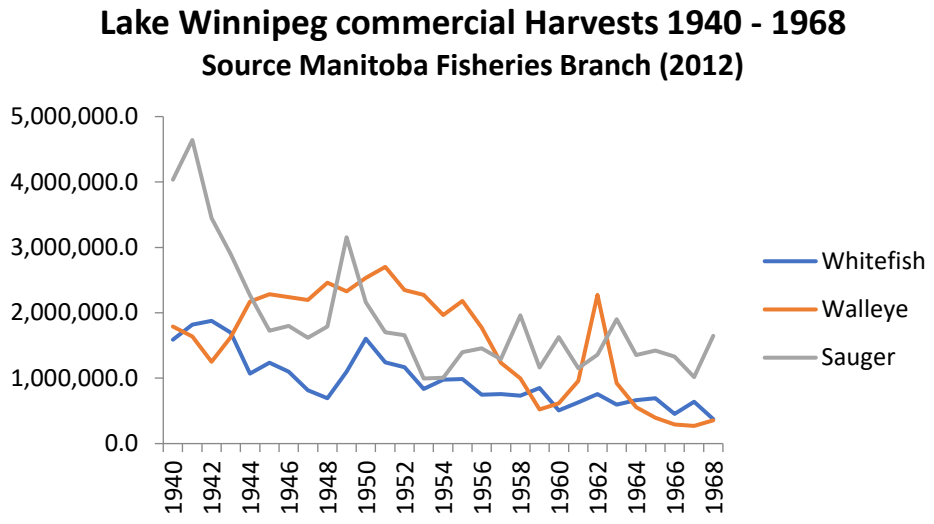

Figure 5: Lake Winnipeg commercial Harvests 1940 - 1968

It was evident that something had to be done to bring the power back to the local level. Even a report in 1934 concluded that the fishers were "in a most unfavourable [sic] position" and "co-operative collective action between all parties interested in the Manitoba fishing industry is essential to its maintenance" (HC 1968, Deb). As I mentioned above, the Icelandic fishers established a co-op in 1928, both Norway House and Matheson Island founded their co-operatives in 1962 and Fisher River Cree Nation around the same time. In total eight fishing co-operatives

were founded before 1969, and all were an attempt to influence prices positively for fishers and end their exploitation. The McIvor (1966) report argued for the power of co-operation as a mean to push back against the exploitation of fishers, concluding that *"*fishermen should participate in marketing, and that fishermen's cooperatives should be encouraged for this purpose*"* (96) [My emphasis]. Furthermore, the report added that fishers who were members of co-operatives had *"*freedom of choice in selling which is of financial benefit for them*"* (96-97).

4.2.3 The 'free market' questioned – birth of FFMC

The feeling that competition and the free market do not always work and should not be defended at all costs was apparent during the debate on the establishment of FFMC. I want to quote at length part of the Liberal-Democrat, Laurent L. Desjardins' speech in 1969 at the Manitoba Legislative Assembly regarding the issue:

> I think my position is quite clear that I favour [sic] the free enterprise system – not at all costs, I think when the free enterprise system is not serving the best interest of the people of Manitoba, when it is not going on right, for Manitoba or Canada, and so on, I say that then the government has the right and the duty probably to do something about it. I remember voting against a government-owned ambulance, and a few years after when it was brought in by the members of the NDP party I supported it because I felt that after trying so hard the free enterprise was not doing the work. And this is what I feel on this (MLA 1969, Deb. P. 1256) (My emphasis).

A government lead by Pierre Trudeau introduced legislation on the establishment of a crown corporation, the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation after extensive research conducted by George McIvor on the marketing conditions of freshwater fish. The main object of the bill was clear cut, increase fisher's standard of living by providing a framework that would allow a better return to the fishers. In short, as Otto Lang, a member of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan summarized "[…] by this means the achievement of higher and more stable prices from the catch: to provide fishermen with a better share of the market value of their fish […]" (HC 1968, Deb. P. 3464). In order to achieve those means, the newly formed crown corporation was only allowed to

buy fish directly from the fishers, so eventually, all the middlemen were eliminated. Secondly, the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation was, according to the bill, required to buy all fish that was legally caught. This was a big transition from the old system, which was basically on a first come, first served basis. Thirdly, and this point was the most crucial one, the FFMC was obligated to establish initial prices for each season for each species by grade. Again, this was an overhaul from the old system where the price was decided by the US importers. Moreover, if there were any profits to make at the end of the fiscal year, the profit would be distributed to all fishers according to a pool system.

To regain bargaining power back from the US importers with the bill, the House of Commons gave the FFMC a monopolistic power over exports, which was a thorn in the side of many Liberals and Progressive Conservatives. The compulsory aspect was seen by many as undemocratic or constraining one's liberty. James McGrath, a Progressive Conservative described the FFMC bill as a Stalinist agenda since it was inhuman because it would force a lot of middlemen out of the market (HC 1968, Deb. P. 4145). The Progressive Conservatives were in a peculiar situation in Manitoba during this period. They were actively pushing the Federal Government to rationalize the inland fisheries by using state power to establish some sort of marketing board. In fact, the Progressive Conservatives under the leadership of Walter Weir were in power in Manitoba, and they were the ones who introduced a bill to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly that would provide the FFMC the monopoly to export from the jurisdiction of Manitoba. However, after they lost the provincial election in 1969 and the New Democratic Party took power, opinions of many conservatives changed; they thought the bill was killing any spirit of free enterprise. As Sidney Spivak, a Progressive Conservative from River Heights in Winnipeg, emphasized, the legislation like the FFMC would challenge "fundamental and basic rights, and liberties and

freedoms of the individual ought not to be encroached upon by the state or anybody" (MLA 1969, Deb). The focus of the Progressive Conservatives shifted from the fishers to discussing the rights of the fish processors for compensation for loss of business.

The most pushback for the FFMC bill at the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba came from the Social Credit party, an anti-socialist party and their leader from Rhineland, Jacob Froese. During the debate around the FFMC bill, Mr. Froese consistently pointed out that the bill was a socialist measure, which would only make things worse for the fishers in the long run. Only true competition and the free market would do because as he said, in the end, the people will become losers at the expense of marketing boards. I think it is better to quote one of Froese's speeches in the Assembly to shed a light on his mindset and the fetishism of competition:

> I always feel that marketing boards are the haven for the lazy man, because there's no competition. The trade, the volume has to come to them, they don't have to make any effort in order to get the volume to come their way. It's just natural, it has to come their way. I feel that this is not healthy in itself, that we need competition; competition should always be there in order to maintain and retain a healthy organization. (MLA 1969, Deb. P. 392).

It is certainly interesting as well that Mr. Froese emphasized a well-known sentiment that the government or bureaucracy should not intervene in the market due to its tendency for expansion and ineffectiveness as he stressed "[t]he overhead will be so large and that inactivity because of no competition, inactivity will set in and that the fishermen will be less well-off than they are today" (MLA 1969, Deb. P. 393). What is interesting with Mr. Froese's last quote is that it is the same argument as many people who supported Manitoba´s decision to opt out of FFMC used as their argument for 'liberating' the Manitoba market.

As can be seen in the timeline in the introduction, the FFMC bill was passed in the House of Commons on May 1st, 1969 and a few months later, on October 10th, 1969, a similar bill passed the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that gave the FFMC monopolistic power within Manitoba.

The FFMC did operate with its monopolistic power within Manitoba until that power was revoked in April 2018 by the provincial Conservative Party. Like the Canadian Wheat Board, what makes the establishment of the FFMC unique is the decision of the Federal Government of Canada to intervene into the "sacred" law of supply and demand, with the argument that it did not provide a fair price. In both of these cases, the state decided that neither the fishers nor the farmers were getting their fair share, and others were realizing or appropriating the surplus value that belonged to the producers. In other words, the state judged it acceptable to intervene so the primary producers' needs were met so they could continue working according to their capabilities. Secondly, and this point is only applicable to the inland fishery industry in Canada, as we saw, there was heavy competition, especially locally, but as policy makers acknowledge, and David Harvey (2014) has pointed out, one of the contradictions of capitalism is that competition usually turns into monopoly. In the case of Lake Winnipeg and other lakes in Canada, the local competition led to a situation where all the bargaining power went to the US importers who had absolute power over the pricing and therefore power over supply and demand. More importantly, by those mentioned legislative interventions, the Canadians were raising a question, maybe not knowingly, on how essential a moral principle should competition be in our economic system? By passing those bills, the answer must have been, it should not be. At least, the experience showed that competition can lock some people into a poverty trap, as was showcased on Lake Winnipeg. The cooperation between the state (Federal and Provincial) power and primary producers is an interesting one, since it eliminated competition at the marketing end. This is in fact, nothing new, and it is sometimes forgotten that competition has not always been thought to be the essential component of the market. I did not realize this exact point until Graeber raised it in his book, *Debt: The First 5,000 years,* that philosophers in the near west in the Middle Ages, such as Ghazali and

Tusi, illustrated that the market should only be an extension of a mutual aid. As Al-Ghazali emphasized:

> Man's inability to fulfill his needs alone persuades him to live in a civilized society with cooperation; but tendencies like jealousy, greed, competition, and selfishness, can create conflicts. Therefore, some collective arrangement becomes necessary to check those tendencies. (Ghazanfar 2000: 877) [My emphasis]

This is exactly what the Federal Government did, simply because the market was not fulfilling the farmers' or the fishers' needs. What also makes the FFMC legislation monumental is the timing of it. When the bill was passed by the Federal Government and the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, the neo-liberal wave was just around the corner, especially if we date it to when Augusto Pinochet overthrew the legitimate president, Salvador Allende in 1973. Ironically, the flagships of neo-liberal policy are freedom and competition, which basically has served as a moral compass for governments for the past four decades. It is remarkable how long both the Canadian Wheat Board and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation survived, and one of the reasons is how well embedded those institutions were. However, the morality and the way neo-liberalism has changed the economic system has made both the Canadian Wheat Board and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation struggle which led, especially in case of FFMC, to disgruntlement on the part of some fishers and some tension among fishers about the role of competition in the marketplace.

Chapter 5: Freedom is just another means to an end: reconstruction of the market and the politics of value

As was seen in the last chapter, it was deemed necessary to exercise state power to intervene in the market for both wheat and inland fish to secure the incomes of small producers, in relation to what was perceived as a fair share of the market value. The reorganization of the market was seen as essential for the well-being of small-scale producers and the cost to middlemen was seen as acceptable. By creating marketing boards, the Federal Government of Canada, along with the governments of a few Provinces not only assembled a mechanism for producers to negotiate prices collectively, but it forced producers across Provinces to work co-operatively. However, shortly after the establishment of FFMC, the political climate changed worldwide. I am not going into detail of the reasons for those changes since Harvey (2003: 2005) and Brown (2019) have done so extensively elsewhere. Nonetheless, the marketing boards in Canada became more and more contested. State intervention came to be perceived as something that goes against natural laws or, in other words, it became a sacrilegious act. This perspective is evident in the following section from a speech against the establishment of the Hog Marketing Board of Manitoba in 1971 by the Honorable Malcolm Earl McKellar who was a member of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative party:

> […] what does the government think they can do when they preach if they had a hog marketing board, they could set their own price? It's just not right. <u>You can't set the price</u>…[T]his is fact of life: supply and demand rules all our markets, and all you do with marketing boards is interfere with that philosophy of supply and demand. You just can't – we on the North American continent, <u>this</u> <u>is our way of handling things – supply and demand</u> […]. (MLA 1971, Deb. P. 1085) (My emphasis)

We saw in chapter 4 how the FFMC was envisioned to be a mechanism to co-ordinate the supply side of the economy, but we also saw how American importers dominated the market, and they were the ones setting the price. One of the problems McIvor (1966) identified was that there

were too many actors in the market which resulted in fish being shipped, often to the US regardless of market condition, and due to lack of standardization, the result was diminished quality of the fish which drove the price even further down. More importantly, the fishers did not have any bargaining power to negotiate their prices where many fishers had to sell their catch to pay down their debts. As McKellar remarked, it was no longer, at least among some members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, acceptable for the state to intervene. The market was deemed as the best device to determined "fair price" and it should be allowed to do its work; supply and demand will eventually be balanced to an equilibrium price. The argument against exercising state power in the market in whatever capacity was suddenly morally intolerable, simply because (1) there is no possibility for the state actors to possess enough knowledge about the market and (2) any bureaucrat with state power is always ready to take advantage of being in a situation to influence the market (Harvey 2003). As McIvor (1966) showed, however, many private buyers and sellers in Canada struggled to read price signals in the United States, which should teach us that no one can possibly possess a complete knowledge of the market. Knowledge of the market is, I believe, not most important when we talk about the market and what values should be reflected in the market. The state as an active participant was identified as an obstacle to any progress as Polanyi (1967) remarked:

> Thus, nothing could be more normal than an economic system consisting of markets and under the <u>sole control of market prices</u>, and a human society based on such markets appeared, therefore, as the goal of all progress (250) [My emphasis]

This was the underlying message that McKellar was trying to convey in his speech. Namely, North America, or in this case, Canada was no longer "behind", that it did not need the *"*most draconian and outdated marketing system of the world*"* (HC 2011, Deb. P. 2417) anymore as honorable Ted Menzies, former Minister of State described the supply management system back in 2011. Any "progressed" societies should let value be determined by the abstract idea of market

price. Of course, this is influenced by the legacy of Hayek's and Friedman's economics, that states that any external influences on the market can only distort the process of finding the true "market value" which would make everyone worse off. The rationale behind this is that "free market" will secure individual well-being. This stance is a big leap from what members of both the House of Commons and the Manitoba Legislative Assembly called for in the wake of the establishment of the Canadian Wheat Board and the FFMC. At the same time members of the respective legislative assemblies questioned the ability of the so-called market forces to provide fair prices to small producers. However, with the beginning neo-liberal wave during the 1970s, ideas that were built upon pre-existing political orientations, especially those more concerned with fulfilling moral principles such as freedom or competition gained momentum, while issues of price or distribution of potential surplus value for small producers became obsolete. The idea is that by fulfilling these moral principles, the problem with the realization of any surplus value would be automatically resolved. The two main moral principles that guide the neo-liberal project to guarantee people's well-being in the marketplace are freedom and competition_(W. Brown 2019; Harvey 2014). Politicians are therefore not concerned about the prices that the primary producer is receiving, but, rather, how free the producer is, in his effort to get the highest price possible.

The main objective, according to many conservatives and neo-liberals in Canada is therefore to make sure that both farmers and inland fishers were free from state power, regardless of the price structure, or concern about how the monetary system works. Politicians' only concerns, as Harvey (2003) pointed out, were to protect 'the integrity' of money, and if people are "free", the problem of making ends meet will be resolved.

This line of argument, however, runs us into various problems. The arguments against the marketing boards in Manitoba and nationwide can be traced to two interlinked arguments, (1) the

compulsory and the monopolistic aspect of the marketing acts, which many saw as an attempt to crush any individual liberty or freedom and (2) the inability of the marketing boards to provide the producers with high prices. The crux of the matter is, how conservative and liberal ideologies have shaped how many politicians and "experts" perceive freedom, and consequently influenced the debate surrounding marketing boards in Canada. As Polanyi (1967) observed, political ideologies such as fascism or libertarianism struggled a lot with the meaning of freedom. The struggle was, either to *"*[…] remain faithful to an illusionary idea of freedom and deny the reality of society, or to accept that reality and reject the idea of freedom […]*"* (257). This is a crucial notion in its fundamental state which still speaks truth almost 50 years later. We are still looking for the meaning of freedom.

Certainly, as we will see, freedom is not a binary concept that can be dealt with by an either/or mentality. As Polanyi (1967) pointed out in his work, the problem the libertarian philosophy had with compulsion was that it should be considered "evil" because freedom cannot have any compulsion (257). This is still a highly contested point which is highlighted in the debate on marketing boards in Canada which ties neatly with Harvey's (2014) contradiction between freedom and domination. As both Harvey (2014) and Polanyi (1967) pointed out, domination or compulsion can never be eradicated in human society. We are social beings and to live without any obligations or responsibilities can only be considered as a dystopian experiment. As was stated in the second chapter, fishers spent time and energy to maintain social relationships and, their commitment to their relationship with their families and communities are embodied in fishing. These are the actions that we do, that we assign value to; that is what we deem to be the most important to live a good life. In the case of the Lake Winnipeg, many fishers do not value freedom just for freedom's sake, rather it represents their ability to maintain their relationship with both

their families and their community. Freedom should be looked through the relational lenses. This is a crucial point. Most of the fishers that I spoke to on Lake Winnipeg do not love their occupation because it provides them freedom, rather, fishing embodied their relationship with their community and how they maintain their relationship with the community and their family. Through fishing, the fishers become valuable members of the community, who contribute positively by providing their neighbors with fresh food. As soon as it has been established that we need each other, we need to keep David Graeber's (2001) words in mind that, "[…] [f]reedom largely means the freedom to choose what sort of obligations one wishes to enter into, and with whom" (221). One might think, *"*ahh…the commercial fishers and the farmers were forced into an obligation with the Wheat board or FFMC! Therefore, the freedom was taken away from them". However, as was mentioned in the first part, it was the fishers themselves who consistently petitioned and called for the government to established new obligations on their behalf, because the old ones with the private companies jeopardized their freedom since the fishers could no longer financially support their families. The fascinating effect of the compulsory marketing boards was that it brought fishers and farmers alike across Provinces together, working towards a same goal, or at least, the marketing boards limited competition between small producers. Equating freedom with less social responsibilities as it is sometimes done through either neo-libertarian or conservative lenses does create a big problem. Different societies are bundled with different social relationships, as Harvey (2014) pointed out. These social relationships impose restrictions on action and, therefore, getting rid of domination or compulsion unrealistic. The domination of the FFMC replaced the domination of American importers in Canadian inland fisheries, as described in the fourth chapter. Today, the wheat farmers are being dominated by large corporations while

the domination of Inland fisheries in Canada is up for grabs after the FFMC was stripped of its monopoly in Manitoba.

One area of contestation of freedom is the eternal struggle between collective freedom and individual freedom. To be clear, collective and individual freedom are not mutually exclusive, as both Harvey (2003, 2005) and Marx have observed. The distinction between individual and collective freedom rather highlights the ideological differences between political projects of neo-liberalism on one hand and socialism on the other hand. Individual freedom first and foremost focuses on guaranteeing the individual the climate to cultivate and allow one to secure his own freedom through one action; do whatever one wants to do. Collective freedom refers to a collective effort to break the shackles of the basic life necessities by securing for everyone those necessities, so people are free enough to do what they desire to do (Eagleton 2011; Harvey 2003, 2005; Polanyi 1967). The ideological struggle between collective freedom and individual freedom was apparent in the debate surrounding marketing boards in Canada and in fact, it has been going on since the 1970s. As Harvey (2003) has consistently pointed out, governments have often taken drastic steps to protect "possessive individualism" (69) while slowly dismantling any aspiration for a "meaningful collective life" (69). The classic historical expression of this trend is of course, the Reagan and Thatcher's well-known attack on the unions in the 1980s (Harvey 2005). This contestation between individual freedom and collective freedom sheds light, not only on the tension between political beliefs at the institutional level but also on the ground where most fishers perceive freedom in relational terms while disagreeing about the process needed to achieve it. This contestation between the two ideas of freedom shows, as well, the success of neo-liberalism to shape the narrative of freedom. That is, one cannot be perceived as a free individual unless one is

‘free’ to compete with other ‘free enterprises’; somewhat Al-Ghazali upside down where not only is competition is seen as liberation but a guarantee for one´s well-being (Ghazanfar 2000).

Through the neo-liberal lens the market is no longer perceived as an extension of the state, or mutual aid, but instead a guarantor of human liberty where individuals can participate without the shadow of state power (W. Brown 2019). The market guarantees freedom, but only if it is perceived as competitive. As Marx (1973) pointed out in *Grundrisse*, competition was gradually seen as final development of human liberty and a society can, therefore, not be considered free if it needs to impose regulations for “spreading and strengthening freedom” (Polanyi 1967: 257). As Polanyi (1967), David Harvey (2003, 2014), David Graeber (2011, 2015) and others have pointed out, this leads to a dystopian world created by conservatives and neo-libertarians. Many politicians see compulsory features and state monopoly as attempts to crush individual liberty.

Marketing boards in Canada provide a valuable counterpoint to this idealization of freedom and competition. The experience of fishers on Lake Winnipeg helps us understand the complexity of freedom as not everyone on the ground sees freedom from an individual point of view. Some fishers see freedom in the more collective way that marketing boards represent. The experience of marketing boards in Canada also begs another important question: why are not all monopolies equal? As Harvey (2014) and of course Marx have pointed out, capitalism does not create an environment for competition, but rather monopoly. Few politicians see anything morally wrong with big corporations such as Amazon, Toyota, Exxon Mobil or Walmart, even though those corporations hold monopolistic power. However, in the case of marketing boards, such as the Canadian Wheat Board and the FFMC, revoking monopoly was justified in the name of freedom. It is apparent that politicians are, as Polanyi (1967) put it, “less anxious to extend freedom” (254) to those who have limited freedom. This shows clearly in the reaction of politicians to marketing

boards as a means to "spread out income, leisure and security" (254). The dismantling the monopoly of marketing boards in Canada was justified by a different notion of freedom with the purpose of reorganizing market and society, as the Manitoba case shows.

Politically, freedom is a powerful weapon, and it triggers emotions because, who does not want to be considered free? As Harvey (2003) argued, freedom has more often than not been applied as a "justification and legitimation" (19) for reorganizing the market and to shift the power back to some "economic elite" (19). Many politicians are more comfortable having corporations in control of food supplies than small scale fishers or farmers. Withdrawal from the FFMC was only the first attempt by the Province of Manitoba to overhaul the market for fish in ways contrary to extending fishers' freedoms. As I discuss in the next chapter, the Minister of Sustainable Development's decisions to apply buy-back quotas and increase the minimum mesh size was only to 'enhance sustainability'. These actions also might pose a threat to the economic foundation of FFMC. The provincial government's decision in May 2018, to suspend the provision that buyers had to pay within 7 days had a similar effect on fishers' freedoms.

These debates about the place of marketing boards in Canadian society are rooted in politics of value. They highlight the contestation between groups, and especially between politicians and the people in deciding what value is and how society should be organized. This is the crux of the debate of what is a good life. I like to use Graeber's (2001) words when he argued that "[…] the ultimate freedom is not the freedom to create or accumulate value, but freedom to decide what it is that makes life worth living […] (88). This freedom to accumulate wealth and the freedom to decide what makes life worth living are in constant tension with each other. This will remain a perennial debate as long as we live in a world dominated by capitalism where exchange value is regarded as the highest of all values.

As I mentioned in chapter four, capitalism revolves around money and money is a medium between people's needs and desires. The struggle is, and this is something that many have not paid enough attention to regarding marketing boards in Canada, and that is how one value regime (money) can compromise another one (freedom). Money has the power to turn imagination or need into reality, which is why money plays a crucial part in our perception of a good life. On the one hand, money does help fishers and other people maintain their relationship with their families, in a way they can turn their hard work into concrete things: food, shelter, vacation et cetera. On the other hand, money, as Marx put it so neatly in *Grundrisse*, breaks "the ties of personal dependence" (73). Money creates the illusion that we are autonomous, that we can trade with whomever we like but the trade-off with being "autonomous" is, as Marx pointed out, that we become dependent on an abstraction: money. Even though money has the force of an abstraction, it is still a commodity and is treated as such to the extent that it can be manipulated by human creativity. Money or currencies are being bought and sold, and even investors place bets on the exchange rates. This is what Karl Marx (2009) and David Harvey (2018) meant, when emphasizing that "daily life is held hostage to the madness of money" (172). A fisher's income is dependent on the exchange rate between the US dollar and the Canadian dollar, and our power to purchase certain goods depends on the inflation, as an example. As a commodity and a representation of social labor, money creates, as David Harvey (2014) pointed out, a rift between monetary value and social value. Money does allow people to give meaning to our "own creative energies" (Graeber 2001: 67) to either influence our environment or simply maintain our social relationships. However, the point I am trying to emphasize in this chapter is how money, as a representation of value, undermines social values such as freedom. If one perceives freedom in a relational or collective way, the monetary system will surely dissolve one's bond with others or one's attempt to work collectively,

either through a co-op or at the federal level such as the Canadian Wheat Board or FFMC. Even though one might perceive the means to freedom in an individualistic way, it will nonetheless be undermined by the monetary system which makes us chase our tails in an effort to make ends meet, which results in a different kind of domination and an antagonistic relationship with the market.

5.1. "Freedom of choice" – decline of marketing boards.

On October 18th, 2016, Minister of Education in Manitoba and a member of the Progressive Conservatives, Jeff Wharton presented a resolution in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly where he laid down the intention of the newly elected majority to opt Manitoba out of FFMC. This plan would strip FFMC of its monopoly within the jurisdiction of Manitoba. According to Mr. Wharton, the plan of the government of Manitoba was to fulfill their promise to bring fishers "freedom to make their individual marketing decisions" (MLA 2016, Deb. P. 2145). By doing so, according to Mr. Wharton, it would "enhance marketing opportunities" and "enhance Manitoba's fishers' incomes" (MLA 2016, Deb. P. 2145). Mr. Wharton argued that the reason for stripping FFMC of its monopoly was because:

> We know that many marketing opportunities, both domestic and international, are available to Manitoba fishers, yet due to the <u>controls</u> and <u>restrictions</u> of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, FFMC local fishers are being denied market access. (MLA 2016, Deb. P. 2145) [My emphasis]

I will focus on two issues in Mr. Wharton's statement: (1) the apparent immorality of monopoly or "lack of choices" for both sellers and buyers and (2) the fetishization of money and the overestimation of the ability of the "free market" to distribute wealth. Mr. Wharton's statement crystalizes the change in perception about how the market should work among many politicians in Manitoba and Canada. The decision to opt out of the FFMC is only an extension of a larger political process of re-arranging the market and consequently shifting political and economic power and potentially create a new form of domination.

As I described in chapter 4, federal and provincial politicians decided to overhaul the market to shift power towards small producers by creating marketing boards. The marketing boards were a means to extend freedom and a higher standard of living to Canadian fishers and farmers alike; the strength of co-operation between producers and the state (provincial or federal) would result in better prices and therefore financial security and freedom. Mr. Wharton argued the opposite, that the FFMC's control hinders fishers in achieving their freedom and financial security. The only way to achieve those things according to Mr. Wharton is through individual entrepreneurship, the true meaning of freedom or liberty. But it is not just Mr. Wharton and his fellow members of the Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba that have used freedom or liberty as a way to push back against marketing boards in Canada and to gradually dismantle them.

Resistance to the marketing boards was not restricted to the 1980s and the 1990s but, as I pointed out in chapter four the Honorable Jacob Froese, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba at the end of 1960s, called the marketing boards a "haven for lazy man" (MLA 1970, Deb. P. 848). Commenting on the monopolistic features of the proposed hog marketing board:

> Then, too, I have never subscribed to the principle of marketing boards because they consist or comprise of a monopoly and that they cannot operate or cannot <u>compete</u> and therefore they require these <u>monopolistic features</u> and I do not subscribe to that. If they are not being able to compete, and I have said this so many times in the House, then they should not be in <u>existence</u>. (MLA 1970, Deb. P. 848) [My emphasis].

Once again, we see how politicians perceived the importance of competition in the marketplace, and the disdain towards the monopoly that the marketing boards held. And not just the importance of competition, but monopoly as the enemy of freedom. It is important to remind ourselves that just in 1971, approximately 121 marketing boards were operating in Canada, of which 11 were in Manitoba. What is intriguing in the debate about the marketing boards, is that freedom was associated with competition and "free entrepreneurship". This connotation can be

seen as early as 1970 in Manitoba when James Ferguson, a representative from a Gladstone and a member of the Progressive Conservative Party stated when also talking about the possibility of establishing the hog Marketing Board:

> […] At this rate of takeover, it will not take too many sessions or too many years until we've lost all of our freedom. I think you pretty nearly have to say that this is creeping socialism at its best. Over the years there's been a gradual erosion of freedom of choice and compulsory monopolistic companies have been substituted […] (MLA 1970, Deb. P. 2244) [My emphasis]

This small excerpt of Ferguson's speech summarized many conservatives' opinions on the increasing role of the state in the marketplace. Some politicians did not see how freedom could be achieved collectively, or through government effort. Honorable Lloyd Axworthy, a Fort Rouge representative and a member of the Liberal Party declared in 1975 in a debate in the house that it is only an illusion that the " […] imposition of more control ends up in more freedom….that somehow if the state and government itself takes over more control, that somehow the rest of us are going to get freer as a result of it […]" (MLA 1975, Deb. P. 3947). Here many politicians who associated marketing boards as an extension of governmental control of the economy. Even though more marketing boards such as the Milk Control Board (1983), the Beef Marketing Board setup (1983) and Broiler Chicken Marketing Board Act (1983) were all passed in the early 1980s, the pushback towards marketing boards was slowly taking shape. The groups fighting against the marketing boards relied on a classical argument, that monopoly eliminates "freedom of choice" and "marketing boards kill entrepreneurial spirits and therefore any attempt to get higher prices". These neo-liberal arguments taken from neo-liberal textbooks which state that choice is good because it forces competition, and any attempt to intervene in that competition can only be seen as an attack on liberty or freedom (Carrier 1997; Polanyi 1967). This could be seen in the debate in Manitoba in the mid-1980s when a newly elected Conservative government decided to strip the

Hog Marketing Board monopoly by introducing what they called the "dual marketing" scheme. Their reasoning for it was to 'liberalize' the hog farmers by giving them a choice of either dealing with the marketing board or establishing a contractual relationship with other buyers. This change was supposed to push farmers to be even more creative which would result in a higher income for the farmer. This was well highlighted in the debate regarding the Canadian Wheat Board and the FFMC in Manitoba.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the decision to remove the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly in 2011 was monumental for the FFMC in that it stimulated the possibility for politicians in Manitoba to seriously consider removing FFMC's monopoly in the Province. In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, Canadian politicians started to change the Wheat Board by removing important products from its control, including barley and oats. Even though the Canadian Wheat Board was mostly controlled by farmers in the sense that they were the majority of the board, the federal Conservatives under Stephen Harper believed that the state was too active in the marketplace and the Wheat Board was killing any entrepreneurial spirit. Many Conservatives described the Wheat Board as an oppressive or tyrannical entity that had a firm grip on the farmer's throat. As Brian Storseth from Alberta and a member of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons put it, *"*[…] [i]t is past time that we take the <u>shackles off</u> of western Canadian farmers […]*"* and time to put an end on farmer's reliance "[…] on the benevolence of government or its organizations […]" (HC 2011, Deb. P. 2257). The Conservatives saw the Canadian Wheat Board as a sign of the unfreedom for farmers. Wheat farmers had to sell their wheat through the Board, and sometimes it took, as Bob Zimmer a member of the Progressive Conservatives in the House of Commons pointed out, a year and a half to know the final price of their grain. Conservative politicians saw

freedom as the possibility of farmers to seek their own individual contracts with bigger producers and traders. To pick out another piece of Mr. Zimmer's speech in the House on October 20th, 2011:

> […] Western Canadian grain farmers want the same marketing freedom and opportunities as other farmers in Canada and around the world. The creation and additional use of futures contracts will allow producers to manage their own individual risk […]. (HC 2011, Deb, P. 2257) [My emphasis]

Many of Zimmer's and Storseth's Conservative Party counterparts echoed their view of the importance of freedom as the ability to seek an individual contract to maximize one's profit. Mr. Zimmer further stated that *"*marketing freedom*"* is when an individual farmer makes "decisions that are best for their own businesses" (HC 2011, Deb, P. 2257) [My emphasis]. By that, Zimmer and the neo-liberal textbooks mean that small-producers need to be "flexible" to read price signals (Harvey 2003), so one can take advantage of "special markets". Once again, the politicians in Canada emphasized that freedom entails being "free" to make any decision for one´s own enterprise as, if we pick out more of Storseth's speech when he said, "[…] we see that our western Canadian farmers do not have the ability to maximize their return on profit like any other businessman would have, and that is really unbelievable […]" (HC 2011, Deb. P. 2257). Furthermore, Storseth added:

> […] it will shock many who are not familiar with this issue to know that in our great country we have had two distinct classes of grain farmers: those who live under the oppression of the Canadian Wheat Board and are not allowed to produce and sell their own wheat and barley: and the rest of Canada that has complete marketing freedom, the freedom to maximize their profits and sell their property as they see fit […] (HC 2011, Deb. P. 2257) [My emphasis]

From this discussion, the Conservative view of freedom becomes clearer. One cannot be free, unless one can make contracts individually, regardless of what one's fellow small producers are doing. The only thing that matters is to maximize one's profit. And as the members of the Conservative side of the House, or at the Manitoba Legislative Assembly made clear, one cannot

do so, unless one has freedom of choice and, of course, one cannot have freedom without competition. For some members of the House, the monopoly of the Wheat Board to bargain for higher prices for its members is deemed unacceptable since it kills competition, especially competition between producers.

Politicians embellish the word competition by saying it will ignite "innovation" and put "new value industries" in place. One can see such a use of language in a speech by Mervin Tweed from Brandon-Souris and a member of the Progressive Conservatives who supported ending the Wheat Board monopoly because "[…] under marketing freedom, we can look forward to <u>increased innovation</u> and new value-added industries. The removal of the monopoly would allow Manitoba farmers to sell their grains directly to a processor […] (HC 2011, Deb, P. 2374) [My emphasis]. As from the competitive side of the market to strip Wheat Board of its power was to give the farmers options of different buyers but also to lead to "[…] freeing our farmers to innovate and grow their businesses. Our government understands that innovation is key to competitiveness […]" (HC 2011, Deb, P. 2382) as the former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labor, Kellie Leitch put it. These are the same arguments made for "flexible" marketing here in Manitoba for hog producers in mid 1990s. It was argued that a "flexible" marketing, or freedom would not only bring more choices for producers, but it would bring more industries to the area which would automatically increase the price for producers. This line of argument was used to legitimatize removing the monopoly of the FFMC in Manitoba.

As I will be discussing later in this chapter, and I have pointed out elsewhere (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015), there has been some disgruntlement among fishers on Lake Winnipeg with the FFMC. This dissatisfaction was mostly due to what fishers believe is the low price they are receiving and the internal politics within the FFMC. The debate about whether

Manitoba should opt out of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act is not new. The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba has regularly received petitions from a couple of groups asking for the possibility to opt out individually from FFMC to capitalize on a lucrative market outside of Manitoba (MLA 1980, Deb, P. 4524). Often the debate ignited when something happened with the FFMC, such as when Northern-Ontario opted out in 1974, or when Saskatchewan did the same in 2010; a petition or a question from a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba followed. Manitoba's 2016 decision to opt out was not controversial so much because of the decision to opt out, but rather it became controversial due to a lack of consultation with fishers. The fishers as a whole were not the ones who were pushing for the change, but the politicians and small group of fishers were. It was the way, and the legitimization used by the Provincial Government to opt out that enraged the fishers. I will turn to this point in chapter 7, but the fishers were upset that the Provincial Government did not seem to understand the impact of that decision would have on the fishers. It was clear that the Province did not seem to grasp the magnitude of their decision when they stated that they did not believe the decision affected First Nation's rights to fish for food, or commercially, and therefore were not obliged to consult (Friesen and Mohr, 2017). As I will show in later chapters, First Nations are the in the most difficult position. Nonetheless, the Government of Manitoba tried to speed the new Marketing Act bill through the assembly as quickly as possible. The bill to opt out was introduced to the Legislative Assembly on October 2016 and formally Manitoba was officially to opt out of the FFMC in August 2017. However, due to great resistance from the fishers and the opposition in the Assembly the bill was delayed until April 2018.

The Progressive Conservatives were well positioned when they introduced Bill 23, or the Amendments of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act. They had won the provincial election by a landslide in the spring of 2016 with 39 out of 57 seats. The logic of freedom of choice would

provide higher income provided a useful way to legitimize the changes. As with the Hog Marketing Board or the Wheat Board, freedom was framed through the lense of the individual and competition, and the problem of the realization of income would be resolved automatically. […] "It's about freedom" […] (MLA 2017, Deb. P. 1158), said the former Minister of Sustainable Development, Ms. Cathy Cox in a debate in the Assembly when discussing Bill 23 in April 2017. This is exactly how both Jeff Wharton and former Minister Cathy Cox framed freedom and the consequences of freedom of choice. It shows not only the extreme believe of competition as the main vehicle in the marketplace but also fetishizing the unlimited growth of money. "[…] It's about providing them [fishers] the opportunity to market their fish internationally or interprovincially and give them the opportunity to keep more money on the kitchen table" […](MLA 2017, Deb, P. 1158). Earlier, on April 3, 2017 Ms. Cox added that:

> Fishers will be allowed to choose where and how they want to sell their fish, the fish that they worked so hard to catch. They will be able to choose from buyers and processors who provide them <u>the best price</u>, rather than having only the option FFMC gave them. (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 1001) (My emphasis)

Cox argued that having multiple buyers would mean more markets and crucially, markets for "rough fish that have previously been priced too low by FFMC" (MLA 2017, Deb. P. 1001). By rough fish, Cox is referring to species such as the mullet and white bass that have been prevalent in Lake Manitoba and other lakes that are not close to Winnipeg. As Jeff Wharton added in one of his speeches in 2016 when introducing Bill 23, he stressed:

> [w]hen we were talking and consulting the fishers and stakeholders, that this would give them an option now to <u>increase revenues</u>, put <u>more money</u> in the pockets of Manitoba fishers and their families as they continue to grow their industry….With greater market freedom and market choice, this will give our fishers the opportunity now to market their fish to any market in the world, and of course, recognize better return on their investment (MLA 2016, Deb. P. 2146)[My emphasis]

Furthermore, Mr. Wharton added that with greater choices the fishers could "[…] choose a market that's going to best benefit them and their families […]" (MLA 2016, Deb. P. 2146). Cox's and Wharton's arguments highlight that FFMC was the main reason why fishers were not realizing more of their work and a 'free market' could overcome the challenge of realization of profit. As Cox emphasized "We know that competition is important, and it provides them to keep more money into their pocketbook [sic]" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 2461) [My emphasis]. This is the utopian project that Conservatives in Manitoba offered the fishers in Manitoba, that is, true freedom is a competition between entrepreneurs and with more competition the fishers would realize more of the surplus value. As I argued earlier, the contradiction within our capitalist system on realization has not been resolved since there are still actors within the value chain that will usurp some of the value that has been created. Secondly, not everyone has the same conceptualization of freedom as the politicians do since there are other historical facets that determine how freedom is being defined.

5.2 The complexity of freedom

Family, as I mentioned in the second chapter, plays a crucial role for most of the fishers on Lake Winnipeg that I talked to or interacted with. This is, obviously, not a breakthrough in social sciences. We seek our families for companionship, moral support, and essentially, we want to be part of something that gives our lives meaning. Family is something that we consider to be larger than life (Kymlicka 1991). In my interviews with the fishers on Lake Winnipeg, the majority of the fishers declared their relationships with their family as the most important relationship which gives their lives a meaning and they wish to support their families, not just morally but financially as well. Fishing is the activity that reflects their relationships with their family the best. Many

fishers choose fishing because they believe it is their best way to support their families, but it is also an activity that maintains their relationship with the heritage of their families.

Most fishers have a long lineage of family members working as fishers. It is common that a fisher on Lake Winnipeg takes over fishing from their father, and some wish to see their children taking over their fishing operation. As I described in the second chapter, fishers do feel they are, by fishing, giving part of themselves not only to their communities by providing fresh fish but also their family, by supporting them financially. Fishing gives their loved one the opportunity to live the lives they want to lead. Therefore, fish is not just a commodity, but it is a part of them. For fishers, financial security is not the accumulation of wealth but the financially security to pay bills, afford children's education, and to be secure enough to be able to take days off their busy schedule to spend time with their families.

This point resonates well with my previous work (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015) where family and financial security ranked the two most important aspects of a Gimli fisher's life. Health was also an important aspect, mainly because it relates to fisher's ability to be financially secure to support their families. Financial security is also important in its relation with freedom and independence. To be clear, I need to emphasize that in my MA thesis research and during my PhD. fieldwork, fishers used freedom and independence interchangeably. Fishers saw independence or freedom as a characteristic of their relationships with others. Fishers referred to freedom from bosses or the freedom to control one´s time independently from corporations or bosses. Freedom is not about dissolving relationships but rather to have the freedom or independence to cultivate the relationships they desire the most. Most of my informants on Lake Winnipeg see financial security in a relation to freedom, as I argued in my MA thesis (Pálsson 2014). In general, and what I found in my previous work, fishers perceive freedom or independence

as instrumental for achieving financial security. They want to be in position to maintain control of their own affairs to decide how much they work but also free enough to decide when to take days off when needed. It is therefore logical to see freedom in the tradition of Marx (1974); that is, "[…] the realm of freedom, actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and of mundane consideration ceases […]" (184). Here we come to the crux of the problem when we talk about freedom, and this is where the struggle shows the best, especially in the debate over marketing boards in Canada. Freedom as an idea is contested over what is the means to the end. The debate can be summarized as one between, "alienating possessive individualism" and "meaningful collective life*"* (Harvey 2003, 69). In Manitoba, this debate occurred in relation to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

As we saw in the chapter 4, the majority of the Provincial Government sees freedom as the freedom of the individual to compete and make his or her own marketing decisions. Any monopoly or government intervention is seen as a hindrance of individual freedom. Some fishers perceive freedom in this exact light. They believe that competition and individual marketing are crucial parts of freedom. Their perception of freedom is not just ideological, but also reflects their experience of marketing boards and the influence of the political elite. A certain group in the South Basin of Lake Winnipeg, many of whom were the bigger fishers in Gimli, expressed their desire to opt-out of the FFMC, even during the first years of FFMC´s operation. In 1976, a group of Gimli fishers encouraged Manitoba Legislative Assembly to opt-out of FFMC (MLA 1976. Deb). A year later, some fishers sent the Manitoba Legislative Assembly a petition, requesting the opportunity to individually opt-out of FFMC (MLA 1977, Deb). Those petitions usually expressed frustration with low prices and the too large corporate overhead, issues which continue to resonate today among some fishers. As I showed in my previous work (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015),

many fishers became disgruntled with the prices that the FFMC offered them – to the point that they began to look for new alternatives. Opting out of FFMC was one of the alternatives in their hopes for a better price for their fish. Even though a large portion of ´bigger´fishers were pushing for opting out, it would be short-sighted to say that the divide between the groups depended on socio-economic status because a portion of smaller fishers supported opting out, simply because they were frustrated with the prices.

The second group of fishers sees freedom in a more collective way, that is best accomplished through "[…] collaboration and association with others […]" (Harvey 2014: 280). And here is where freedom can get complicated because it is often overlooked that understanding of freedom results from historical processes. The division between those two groups was due to different political orientations and, more importantly, differences in collective memory. Many fishers who support the monopoly of the FFMC often cite the condition of the fishery before the establishment of FFMC and reminisce about the struggle that their fathers and grandfathers had to endure to make ends meet.

The struggle of competing perceptions is an ongoing ideological battle, especially between political parties to capture the people's imagination. This is the politics of value, what should constitute a good life. The problem, when we are debating the politics of value, and this part is typically overlooked by politicians, is that we have the dominant value regime: money. This is where the contradictions of capitalism become evident: The contradictions of capitalism that we are most concerned about are, (1) domination vs. freedom, (2) monopoly vs. competition and (3) production vs. the realization of surplus value and (4) money as a representation of value. Marketing boards like the FFMC were designed to address these contradictions, especially the third one. However, the marketing boards were an imperfect solution in a world where money is

treated as a commodity and simultaneously a representative of value. Money can be bought and sold which influences the exchange rate but also, the cost of living which can determine the realization fishers received for their fish. A low return from the FFMC was sometimes the result of unfavorable exchange rates between US dollar and Canadian dollar. In that case, money was not representative of the effort fishers put into their work because the realization did not match with what the fishers believed they deserved. Politicians capitalized on the fishers' frustration at not receiving what they believed was a fair price to achieve their political goal, to overhaul the market.

5.3 Frustration with FFMC

In 2014, Amanda Stevenson, a well-known fisher in Manitoba, and a few of her colleagues on Lake Manitoba got arrested for exporting fish illegally to the United States. Their activity captured the news headlines in Manitoba. Stevenson's action was a violation of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act, then still in force. Under the Act, fishers could apply for an export license under the FFMC. In the Stevenson's case, the corporation perceived her action as illegal, as the corporation claimed Stevenson and her colleagues sold their fish to one of the FFMC's own customers, an action for which a license could not be granted. The fishers on Lake Manitoba saw this case differently. As Frank Kenyon said in the committee debate about Bill 23, the aim of his daughter's act was to "draw the federal and provincial governments' attention to the problems and <u>ask for an open market</u>" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 421) [My emphasis]. As Amanda Stevenson described herself during the same occasion, "[…] [w]e sold ourselves over 750,000 lbs of mullet in that time period (2010 – 2014) and doubled the income for our member fishermen…. we were very happy […]" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 419). Amanda added further that "[…] all I can say is that having the opportunity to participate in the open market is going to change people's lives […]"

(MLA 2017, Deb, P. 419). Her father, Frank Kenyon echoed his daughter, arguing that the domination of FFMC was catastrophic for fishers and all what they were doing was "[…] trying to market their fish that the government is forcing them to dump. This is what's wrong with the situation […]" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 421) [My emphasis].

This is not the first time that Lake Manitoba Fishers Association showed their disagreement with FFMC. In 2011, the Lake Manitoba Commercial Fishermen's Association approved a motion to ask to be excluded from the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act. The reason for the motion was simple, they believed they could get a better price if they sold their fish themselves (MLA 2011, Deb, P. 2110). This underlined the problem of areas such as Lake Manitoba, the fisheries of which have been dominated by mullet and carp, which have been considered for a long time as low value species. It is not until recently that walleye started to return to the lake, as I will discuss in the next chapter. The problem Amanda and Frank described is twofold and highlights the challenges that FFMC faces. The first one is the obvious one, the belief that the individual is best suited to get a better return for their fish than a collective agency like FFMC. The second point is the fisher's frustration with the realization of their hard work or surplus value through the FFMC. Those issues go hand in hand and highlight well the trouble FFMC and fishers have with the economic system. I will be focusing on the second point first, before I move to the first point, because we must understand where the fisher's criticism on FFMC is coming from to fully appreciate how some fishers perceive freedom.

One of the criticisms that Amanda and Frank, and many fishers on Lake Winnipeg I interacted with during my fieldwork, had about the FFMC is with the corporation's price structure. For the past couple of decades, walleye have been by far the most valuable species that the FFMC has been selling to the US. For comparison, according to FFMC's pricelist for the 2019 spring

season, fishers are receiving $5.75 for headless medium walleye while they only receive $0.53 for headless mullet (See appendix A). That is a large disparity of price between species, especially when keeping in mind that not all lakes in Manitoba have the same abundance of walleye as Lake Winnipeg does. Lakes such as Lake Manitoba, have historically had more production of species like mullet and common carp. The prices of fish and particularly the non-walleye species that Manitobans call 'rough' have been a focal point of dissatisfaction for many fishers towards the FFMC, even in the first years of the FFMC's operation. The FFMC has often been criticized for putting too much emphasis on walleye, as Ed Connery, a member of the Progressive Conservatives pointed out in 1986, "[…] the feeling of the fishermen is that the Freshwater Fish Marketing Board, being so busy with pickerel, have not maintained the market for rough fish and therefore they've lost this market […]" (MLA 1986, Deb, P. 3136).

The realization of profit from a fishers' hard work, or surplus value, has been an issue for fishers since the beginning of the FFMC. As I mentioned in the last chapter, the sole purpose of the establishment of the FFMC was to secure the best possible final price for fishers' fish. The feeling was that the American importers were reaping the benefits to a point that it was deemed unacceptable. Fishers' frustration with the FFMC is born exactly out of their feeling that the FFMC is capturing too great a percentage of the surplus value of their hard work. Marty, a fisher in Riverton, and a critic of the FFMC, captured this dissatisfaction:

> Well…I think they should have had an accountability to return. See, the problem what happened was, when they signed on the FFMC system, there was nothing put in place of what percentage fishermen would get of the retail fish when FFMC sold it.

He was not the only one who mentioned the lack of accountability of FFMC of how much should be returned to the fishers. In my previous work (Pálsson 2014), some fishers reminisced about the time when they got tens of thousands of dollars in final payments to a time where they

only got a couple of thousand dollars in final payments and in couple of instances, none. Marty kept going:

> When FFMC first came to be, they returned over 70% of their selling price to commercial fishermen. Over their 47/48-year history, that went from 72% to about 28%. The cost of running the plant increased by two and a half for the same time, but the fishermen's cost increased too! But the only thing fishermen could do, was that he had to keep absorbing that cost and find ways to do their work cheaper. There was no more money so the way it was done is, for guys like me for a while was to buy more quotas.

Another FFMC critic, Dave, who fishes from Gimli, passionately shared the sentiments of his counterpart, Marty. One day, we were in his kitchen, talking about fishing and of course, FFMC was brought up. Dave's father was a big proponent for the FFMC as he told me, but he quickly added that his father would probably have said something if he had ever known that Dave would turn against FFMC. As Dave reminisces about his father's stories and the struggle of the past generations, he said with a smile that the times had changed. The fishers now owned their quotas, and they no longer needed the corporation since they were not receiving any special premiums or higher returns for their fish through FFMC, as he said,

> In 1980 we produced 57 million pounds of fish, FFMC sold it for $37 million and we received 25, meaning <u>65% of the returns</u> came back to us. Now we are catching half the amount of fish and only <u>getting 1/3 of the returns</u>. So, you can see that the balance is gone, and I think what is really gone is that there is no atmosphere or attitude that was created to pay us! [My emphasis]

Dave concluded his observation about the FFMC by pointing out, that the fishers were not paid fairly,

> So, we all know, every single fisherman in Western Canada that participated, instinctively knows that he has fulfilled half of the bargain that was created. We were to bring the fish and they were to sell it and pay us fairly.

This is a point that some fishers pointed out today, that the price of the fish they are receiving from the FFMC is simply not high enough. Frank Kenyon addressed the same point in his speech during the committee opening hearing for the Bill 23. Again, the situation has been

different for fishers on Lake Manitoba due to species composition difference with Lake Winnipeg. Mr. Kenyon's speech highlighted both Dave's and Marty's sentiments:

> […] Freshwater was created to help the fishermen, in 1969 was created – we had fish buyers and they took 50 percent of our income. So, the government created Freshwater, which is a good idea, to go ahead and make it better for fishermen. But today, Freshwater takes 65 per cent of our income. That's how it's turned around […].

This is where the FFMC has lost support or legitimacy, and some fishers, especially the ones who only hold one or two quotas, struggles to make ends meet. This is not just a feeling that the fishers have that they are getting less from the FFMC, but one can look at FFMC's annual reports and see that the return to fishers[7], at least from 2004 to 2018 has fluctuated between 40% to 60%, as shown in the figure 4:

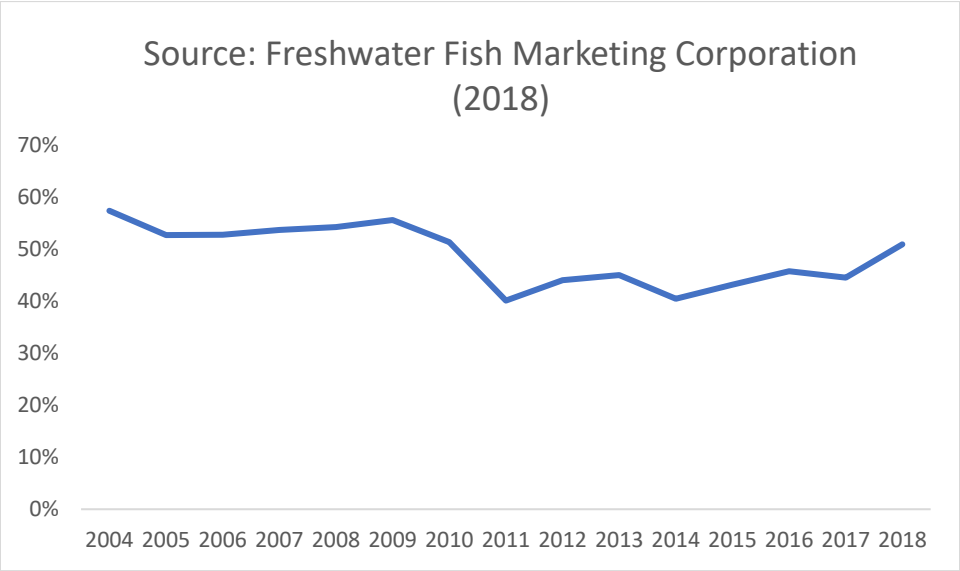

Figure 6:Percent return to Fishers (2004 - 2018)

As can be seen, the return to fishers was 57% in 2004 but fell to 41% in 2014. Some fishers argue that the organizational design of the FFMC is to blame. "[…] I mean, it is like any bureaucratic institution […]", Jalen, another fisher from Gimli, told me when we were sitting in

[7] The return to fishers is a total payment to fishers (initial prices + final payment)/ Net sales revenues (Gross sale revenue – cost of the marketing the fish).

his backyard on a nice day in May. Jalen who is one of the younger fishers in town kept going and said:

> When they first came in, they were fresh new place with new employees with all those aspiration and drive, so they did good. They sold the fish and sold it fresh back in the 70s. They sold all the fish fresh, and it was a good thing over the years. It started to grow and growing, and just became this big out of control monster where there was no accountability. [My emphasis]

The description that Jalen provided me of the FFMC as a bureaucratic monster is common. Many fishers talked about the staff of the FFMC as having lost their urgency or that they are simply not tenacious enough to secure the best prices for the fishers. Here, I want to let the voice of another fisher, Billy, who I have known for years, be heard. Billy was for a long time a proponent of the FFMC. As he said himself, he thought FFMC was a "great idea" but like Jalen, he felt the FFMC had turned into a governmental agency "full of bureaucrats and they just forgot who they were working for". Billy added, the bureaucrats get paid regardless of whether they do a good or a bad job: "You know what, if we start to lose money, we just cut our price back to the fishermen, but we still get a raise and our bonuses".

The reports back in 2012 about questionable expenses claimed by FFMC staff during sales trips in Europe (Pálsson 2014) did not help the FFMC's image among some fishers, especially those who were already against FFMC, and it inevitably created more adversaries. A couple of reports by the Auditor General of Canada in 2010 and 2017 (Sorenson 2017) did not help either, where the Corporation was said to have "hired unqualified staff" and "bought a freezer" that the corporation did not have any use for. One of the executives of the FFMC countered that the reason for the decrease on returns to fishers dates to the early 2000s, when regulations regarding retained earnings changed and the FFMC became obligated to retain 20% of its revenue to re-invest in plant equipment in an attempt to become more efficient. FFMC has been in a peculiar situation for

decades. The FFMC was supposed to be operating on a more co-operative level, that is, it bought every fish it was offered and made sure to return as much back to the fishers as possible. However, despite the co-operative nature of the FFMC, it was still supposed to be competing against private corporations worldwide that do not have the same mandate as FFMC which inevitably put some constraints on the FFMC's competitiveness. The FFMC could not buy other companies to eliminate competition or use a larger proportion of its profit to re-invest in the Corporation's infrastructure. This is not to take away from the mistakes that the audit reports have shown were made by the FFMC. The point remains the same, the different nature of FFMC is often forgotten, since it is asked to be run like any other corporation with efficiency in mind when the corporation does not have all the same tools to compete as a private corporation since it is supposed to return the profit back to its members. Additionally, the FFMC was used as a political playground where politicians competed to put their own people with their agenda in the Corporation. As an example, the Conservative cabinet placed their man, Donald Salkeld as a president of the company before the Liberal cabinet let him go just few months after returning to power (Beeby 2017). In summary. a portion of the fishers, or roughly 20% of my informants on Lake Winnipeg became increasingly frustrated with the FFMC because they felt that "bureaucrats" were realizing an inappropriate percentage of fishers' surplus value. This also helps us understand why many fishers started to associate freedom with individual liberty and competition, like those politicians I examined in the previous section.

5.3.1 Further complications of realization

There is one obstacle that the marketing boards cannot overcome completely, and that is the contradiction between unity of production and realization. The problem, as David Harvey (2014) elegantly stressed, is that the one doing the production does not always have either the

political or the economic power to realize a majority of the fruits of their labor. Economic systems always leave space for different actors, not just within the value chain but other actors within the economy, to extract a portion of the production. The difference between the capitalist system and pre-capitalist systems is that surplus values can be extracted across spaces more easily (Smith 1984; Harvey 2003). Secondly, fictitious capital and the characteristics of money today change how money represents value (Graeber 2001; Harvey 2018).

For decades, and even before the arrival of the FFMC, a disparity between the retail price and the price the fishers were receiving has existed. Shortly after the establishment of the FFMC, politicians continued questioning who was realizing surplus value from fish. Warner Jorgenson, a member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, pointed out in 1976 "[…] the fishermen are getting 60 cents a pound and the customer is paying $3.25 a pound over the counter, somebody in the middle is making a hell of a pile of money […]" (MLA 1976, Deb, P. 2243). Additionally, Mr. Jorgenson concluded "[…] [t]hat is the worst spread of any food product in this country…. There is definitely <u>something wrong</u> in that area […]" (MLA 1976, Deb, P. 2243). Jorgenson felt that the FFMC was not working hard enough to eliminate this discrepancy between prices. Even today, the fishers themselves are well aware of this gap between the prices that they are receiving and the retail price. As Jalen noted:

> It is just so funny how we are not getting a fair price when you go to the grocery stores and see what it is selling for, and you wonder where the money is going for in between. Like, we are seeing $1.25 a pound for some fish and then they are selling it for $18 a pound at Safeway. That is a big difference, and you wonder where the rest of the money goes. If it doesn't come to us, then whose is it going to? I don't know!

The price difference that Jalen mentions is exaggerated, since many fishers receive around $5.15 for medium walleye, but the point remains the same. The gap between prices is still wide, and there is a feeling that the fisher's hard work is being realized elsewhere. This is exactly Marx's

contradiction with capitalism manifesting itself. As Harvey (2014) points out, the surplus value from the circulation of money is not distributed equally among different actors. Retail stores, such as Costco, Safeway and Sobeys are formidable enough to pull a large portion of the surplus value to themselves. The retail stores, however, are not the only ones strong enough to extract the surplus value, but non-fishers such as banks or oil companies pull some of the surplus value to themselves. Commercial fishers on Lake Winnipeg are not capitalists, and the line between personal and productive consumption is often blurred. It is a family business, where one is working to support one's family.

Lake Winnipeg is in middle of the American continent, with no big markets for fish except for Winnipeg. The next closest big market, Chicago is still a couple of days away from the FFMC plant in Winnipeg. Moreover, as a couple of FFMC executives reminded me, the FFMC's mandate is not limited to Manitoba; the Northwest Territories is still under the corporation's purview. Thus, the FFMC has to transport fish over a long distance at considerable cost. Just in 2018, the corporation spent $2.75 million dollars on freight (FFMC 2018). Since the FFMC is only considered a marketing board, they are not legally permitted to develop a transportation unit within the corporation, which means that a third party is being paid for the service of transporting fish from places that are not always easily accessible. FFMC is really not paying for the transportation of the fish, but fishers themselves are the ones paying which is included in the fish price. Seeing transportation companies realize a portion of the surplus value has always been an issue for fishers, especially in remote areas. There are many communities in Manitoba, especially northern Manitoba that are not easily accessible in the wintertime and the only way to access those places are by plane, which often is more expensive than transport the fish by truck. The fishers in the

South Basin of Lake Winnipeg are in different situation, yet they see oil companies take small portions of their income since they have to drive the fish themselves to Selkirk every day.

Many lakes in both Manitoba and Northwest Territories do not have the abundance of walleye as Lake Winnipeg does. Therefore, many communities, especially in Northern Manitoba rely on species that are in less demand and quality than the walleye, such as mullet, northern pike, and white bass. The irony here is that the fish that are the most expensive to retrieve are worth the least. Fishers in those areas are dependent on provincial programs such as the Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance (NFFA) Program to ensure the viability of their commercial fishery, which is often the only employment opportunity in those communities. However, there are no communities along the shores of Lake Winnipeg eligible for the NFFA program, simply because they are not far enough from Winnipeg. This means that fishers in communities such as Fisher River Cree Nation, Dauphin River, Norway House and other First Nation communities are dependent on the FFMC to arrange transport of their fish to the FFMC plant in Transcona, Winnipeg. The price fishers have to pay for the transit varies by community, depending on the distance from Winnipeg. Many, but not all fishers in Fisher River Cree Nation fish from their co-op station at the Macbeth point, which is north of Kinwow Bay Park Reserve (See Appendix G) but to get their fish to the market in Winnipeg, they have to pay 36 cents per kilogram. In 2018 alone, based on their production for the FFMC, the members of the Macbeth Co-op paid almost in total $75,000 in freight. The same can be said of communities such as Dauphin River and Norway House. Dauphin River pays around 10 cents per kilogram while their counterparts in Norway house pay between 8 and 10 cents per kilogram. Fishers see a third-party transportation take a portion of the prices they receive for their fish. On one hand, fishers are irritated by the situation, but they also know that not every fish company would buy fish from

places such as Norway House or Dauphin River. The frustration traces back to the problem of the rising cost of living, which is directly connected to the transportation cost, especially for fishers on isolated communities but also for fishers on the South Basin.

From the beginning of the 1970s, there has been an outcry, both from fishers and politicians in Manitoba about how the rising cost of living often outstrips the price for fish. As former Minister of co-operative development, Harvey Bostrom (NDP) said in 1975 during a debate on the struggles of fishing co-operatives, the biggest challenge was:

> […] [A]tributed mainly to a matter of rapidly increasing costs outstripping prices. While cost of fishermen in Northern Manitoba in recent years have been increasing at 50 percent per year or more, the price of fish has only increased a few cents per pound…. The loss on operations in many of these co-operatives can be directly attributed to the inflation of costs, particularly transportation […] (MLA 1975, Deb, 1582).

This sounds familiar because many politicians after Bostrom have said the same thing in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. In the 1980s and the 1990s, politicians raised their voices when they saw prices for fish while the cost of living kept rising. Even 25 years later, in 2001, a former Minister of Conservation, Oscar Lathlin (NDP) expressed his concerns about the rising cost for fishers in Manitoba by stating that:

> […] These increased costs are becoming an overwhelming burden to northern fishermen to the point that these fisheries are becoming less and less viable and risk collapsing. These communities have few employment opportunities and depend in many cases almost solely on their local fishery for employment income […] (MLA 2001, Deb, P. 1060).

As Dave told me, he and a few other fishers who used to fish in the North Basin for whitefish simply stopped going there due to the increased cost. I think it is better to hear Dave's voice:

> So, the ships are at the dock, mine one of them, after catching at least million kg on it, for sure, it sits bankrupt and chased off the North Basin because of the price…My dad yelled at me when I quit going to the North Basin and he just said "go for nothing Dave!" and I said, "you know what? I would dad, except it started to cost me money!

This is a similar point that was raised in my previous work (Pálsson 2014), and the fishers themselves have been consistent in pointing out the disparity between the prices they receive and the cost of living. As can be seen in the figures 7 and 8, how prices for the two most important species for Lake Winnipeg, whitefish and the walleye, have developed since 2012 or after I did my fieldwork in 2013.

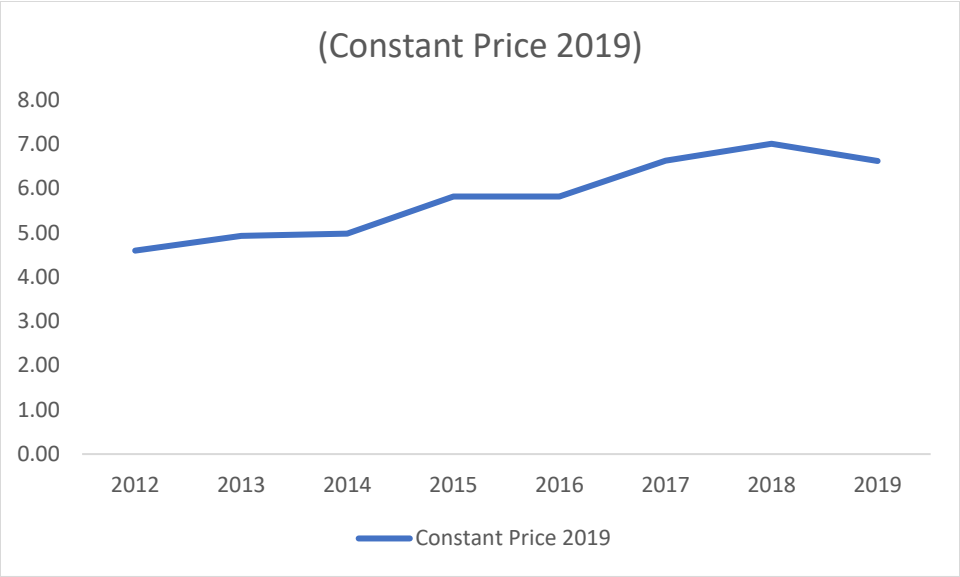

Figure 7: Average Medium Walleye Prices

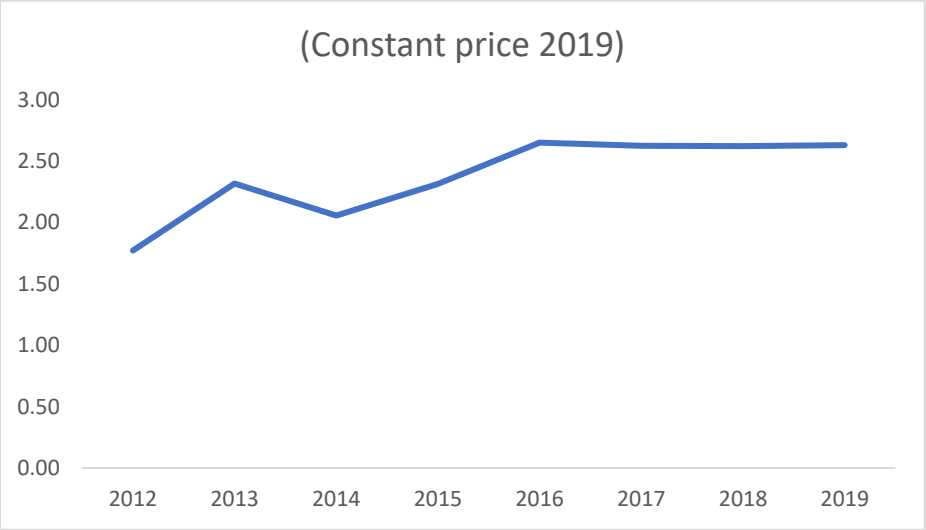

Figure 8: Average Medium Whitefish Prices (2012 - 2019)

As can also be seen, the price for both walleye and whitefish picked up a bit between 2014 and 2017, mostly due to good marketing conditions. However, the price for walleye decreased for the spring of 2019, due to an influx of walleye from Lake Erie to the market. However, the price for whitefish has been stagnant since 2016. The freight cost is not included in those prices, so the communities farther from Winnipeg receive less for their fish than their counterpart closer to the city. The situation among fishers varies by location. The fishers on the South Basin can deliver their catch either to the FFMC station in Selkirk (37 km north of Winnipeg) or Riverton (129 km north of Winnipeg) and most of the fishers I knew had to pay between $40 to $100 per day for gasoline, depending on how far they had to travel for their fishing spots. Some fished close to Gimli or Riverton, while others chose to travel even further, to Frog Bay (102 km north of Gimli) for example. A conservative estimate for a regular fisher on Lake Winnipeg is that they would spend $280 per week in gas during the spring and fall season, but at least $300 during the winter season, assuming that they fish 5 days a week in winter but seven days a week during the open season. Scott, who fishes from Selkirk, told me that he was spending between $75 to $100 per day in gasoline, but he fishes 5 days a week during winter and seven days in the open season. Consequently, Scott estimated that he was spending at least $525 a week during the open season, and a least $500 during winter.

The situation is quite different from fishers from Fisher River Cree Nation. Fishers from both communities mostly fished during the open season. Fisher River Cree Nation and other First Nation communities are different from both Gimli and Riverton in, that their season is still traditional, meaning that they still travel to fishing camps, where they spend time away from their families until the end of the season. Patty, the president of the Macbeth Fisheries Co-op summed up the difference vividly when he explained “I start the season in a $2,000 hole”. Before the season

starts, he and his colleagues who go to the fishing camp on Macbeth point must buy not just the gasoline for the season but groceries and other necessary articles to be ready to stay for few weeks. The pressure on the fishers on the reserves is therefore great, not just to make up the $2,000 expenditure before the season begins, but also to hit the $12,000 income mark to be eligible for unemployment insurance for the winter. For fishers, both First Nations on reserve, or fishers off reserve, a line of credit within the banking system or accessibility to loans has become increasingly important, not just to cover fishing expenditure, but also to support their families. David Harvey (2018) and David Graeber (2015, 2018) have argued, the credit system in the banking system is designed to capture future labor or surplus value. In more Marxist words, one can say exchange value keeps the use value as a prisoner. In other words, fishers become dependent on prices for fish, at least to be high enough to be able to pay for their home, cars or fishing costs. By taking loans, the fishers are already tying their future income to mortgages or their own labor. Just to start a fishing operation, for example can easily cost around $250,000. Through interest, fishers see a portion of their income shaved off by the banks in forms of mortgage payments, or to the car dealerships in the forms of installments on a pickup truck. Access to loans is different between fishers. Fishers who live off reserve can use their houses or land as collateral for loans to buy either quotas or equipment, such as cars or boats. Fishers who live on reserve, however, may not do so due to treaty constraints. Nonetheless, reserve-based fishers have access to a credit line through the Communities Economic Development Fund (CEDF) or they can get a loan from Manitoba Agricultural Credit and Development Corporation. Regardless of where the fishers on the reserves get their loans, they will, like their counterparts off the reserve, see a portion of their future income in the hands of the banks or other companies that provides necessary services. We have to keep in mind that the average income for a fisher on Lake Winnipeg between 2001 and 2011 was $22,554

(Manitoba Water Stewardship 2012) but in 2015 the average income for a fisher rose to $23,337. Still well below the nationwide averages in 2015 of $28,615 according to the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters (2018). At the emergency meeting I attended in Fisher River shortly after the Minister announced her plans to buy back quota, the Macbeth fisheries co-op estimated a potential income for 3,630 kg quota to be around $22,709, not including the final payment or the potential unemployment insurance, a figure that indicates that incomes have not changed much in the intervening period.

This dissatisfaction with seeing others realize the surplus value of the Lake Winnipeg fishery triggered an interesting contestation of freedom.

5.4 Contestation of freedom

When I started the fieldwork for my MA thesis, in 2012, some fishers expressed their feelings of disgruntlement towards the FFMC, as I described in my previous works (Johnson and Pálsson 2015; Pálsson 2014). During my tenure in Gimli during the 2012/13 fishing season, rumors were floating around that a company in Ontario or a company in the United States was ready to pay twice the price for walleye than the FFMC. At the same time news about dubious expenses of the FFMC staff during business trips to Europe were not helping the FFMC to maintain legitimacy among certain groups of fishers, particularly bigger fishers in Gimli. During my MA fieldwork, there were a few fishers in the Gimli area who were opponents of FFMC, but they were a small minority. I remember one day back in 2013, I called one fisher that I knew was opposed to the FFMC but he did not want to go on or off record with his stance, simply because he told me that everyone would know it was him, and he said to me, “my opinion is not very popular here”. Since then, a larger and more vocal minority of fishers have voiced opposition to the FFMC. This was a space of contestation that I did not explore in my previous work, but the disgruntlement and the

following decision to opt out of FFMC opened a space to highlight the complexity of freedom. As I stressed in the second chapter, we tend to assume the meaning people assign to freedom, or the means to achieve freedom. This is certainly a measure of the success of the neo-liberal wave in shaping the narrative of freedom. I alluded to this earlier in this chapter, the image that no one can be considered free, unless one has the capability to compete and accumulate wealth (Harvey 2005). In previous sections, I have shed a light on how Canadian politicians have favored competition and individual marketing at the expense of collective efforts in the shape of marketing boards. In some ways, opting out of the FFMC shows this rift between groups well, but freedom is much more than meets the eye.

As Adorno (2006) pointed out, freedom is always limited because of our inadequacy to influence our own lives and therefore, it is "reduced to the possibility of sustaining one´s life" (6). Freedom has different meanings to different people across space and time. People do differ in the possibilities on how to sustain life. In other words, since we are social beings, freedom in the limited sense of the word revolves around the relationship and obligation one wants to have, not just to the other people but with the market as well. Here is where the fishers on Lake Winnipeg differ. As I have mentioned, fishers on Lake Winnipeg expressed their desire to maintain a relationship with their families, and that is the obligation they have engaged in. They want to spend their energy in both supporting their families financially and socially, and they see freedom as an essential part of achieving that goal. However, the fundamental difference revolves around the nature of their relationship with the market. One group, who had been increasingly disgruntled with FFMC, and in some cases are bigger fishers, feel freedom is only achieved through the individual freedom to compete for the best prices. The other group of Lake Winnipeg fishers sees freedom in a more collective way. They perceived the FFMC as the means to secure and maintain

freedom. For these fishers collective memory plays a vital part in forming people's perception of freedom. Freedom is the result of a complex historical processes, memories of struggles, as in the case of Lake Winnipeg the historical struggle to make ends meets. The Lake Winnipeg fishery case is a reminder of the complexity of freedom and the fact that we often assume the meanings people give to freedom. The lack of understanding of the complexity of freedom can result in tensions not just between groups, but between the government and fishers. As I will show later, freedom is applied mercilessly in political discourse to ignite emotions, for purposes other than extending freedom to those who need it the most.

5.4.1 Competition as freedom

When the few members of the Lake Manitoba Co-op were arrested for exporting fish illegally across the border, it sparked a group of Manitobans to send a petition to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly on December 1, 2014. The petition that the Legislative Assembly received read:

> *"*We urge the provincial government to rescind the Manitoba CETA restriction that protects the FFMC monopoly and allows Manitoba fishers to sell directly to the European Market.*"* (MLA 2014, Deb, P. 241) (My emphasis)

Cliff Craydon (Progressive Conservative) an MLA from the Emerson constituency presented the petition to the legislature and the reasons for the petition:

> "1. The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, FFMC, is not providing Manitoba fishers fair market price for their catch when compared to prices offered other fishers out in the open market. 2. The Province of Manitoba is trying to protect the FFMC, a draconian Crown Corporation, by placing a restriction under the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, CETA. 3. In exchange for support from the Province of Manitoba, CETA has provided the FFMC an exception which would jeopardize market access for all other Canadian commodities, producers and businesses. 4. The FFMC and the Province of Manitoba have used strong-arm tactics to undercut the hard work and efforts of local fishers in order to get them to follow FFMC regulations. 5. Fishers are feeling that the Province of Manitoba is denying them the right to sell directly to lucrative European Markets and 6. Manitoba fishers should have the same freedom as all

> other fishers in Canada to market their catch where they are able to find the best prices*”*. (MLA 2014, Deb, P. 241) (My emphases)

It is noteworthy to point out that this group of Manitobans requested the Province to abandon their support of FFMC to open a space for fishers themselves to market their own fish, for what they called, “lucrative European Markets”. One might say that this petition laid the groundwork for what was to come in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The petition also resonates well with what I observed in the previous section. That is, the feeling among fishers that the FFMC was no longer giving fishers the best possible returns. The central thesis is simple. A monopoly of FFMC, and thereof the lack of competition, does hinder fishers in making ends meet and their capabilities to support their families. The group only saw one solution to the problem; extending freedom to fishers in Manitoba. For them, freedom meant dissolving any monopoly, since competition will give the fishers the ability to look for the best price available. This is the same logic as the majority in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly used for Bill 23, basically arguing that a “free market” has infinite potential for growth. Some fishers on Lake Winnipeg, and groups on other lakes, do see it in that way as well. Here, I will share a few vignettes from a few fishers I interacted with on Lake Winnipeg who were big proponents of opting out of the FFMC. Some of these fishers had been supporters of the FFMC but had second thoughts on their stance due to the diminishing realization of surplus value, as I described briefly above. For them, competition should be the center and not just in the marketplace for them to fulfill their freedom. The potentiality or the performance of offering their fish to multiple buyers is in their opinion a freedom they envision, and the avenue to maximize their fishing operation. Something that in their opinion, FFMC has denied them for years due to a lack of competitiveness and urgency.

“Absolutely”, said Marty loudly to me when I asked him if he thought opting out of the FFMC would enhance his freedom, when we were talking about FFMC in his fishing shed in

Riverton. Another fisher in Gimli, Dave, said "you cannot just tell a Viking he has to wear handcuffs and shackles. It just does not work for me!" after the decision to opt out. Both Marty and Dave talked about the importance of having a choice of buyers and they believed that the monopoly of FFMC had restricted their freedom of choice. As Dave described to me, the meaning of opting out and the prospect of "free market" were important to him:

> For me personally, it means I get treated like all Canadian fishermen and I think that is important. I should not be isolated in the Province of Manitoba, subjugated to a monopoly that does not exist in the country and North America. We have strong history of serving our country in war, our small Icelandic community and I am very proud of that… I would not put on a uniform to fight for FFMC. And I would never allow my son to do that and there is no politician I have not told that to.

Marty was like Dave, irritated towards the FFMC, "we did not have freedom at all" he said, and continued, "Myself, I had applied for an export license three times and I have met all their criteria three times and three times I was refused an export license". And Marty was confident about the reasons why the FFMC had denied him, his request:

> I produce mostly pickerel [walleye] and they wanted it. They had no trouble selling the pickerel, so they were not going to give me an export license to sell something they wanted. Simple as that! I just fish walleye and I could have made it a lot better living for myself if I could have moved my walleye on my own. (My emphasis)

Here, Marty comes to the essence of the problem some fishers have with the FFMC: the corporation's prevention of an environment of freedom of choice and the corporation's inadequacy to sell fish in a way that maximizes fisher's income. The problem is, in their own words, that the monopoly 'kills' any competition which is important to keep a certain urgency within the fishing industry to sell the fish as quickly as possible and try to find the best prices. Robert expressed a well-known sentiment, "Government should not be in business. The government should set up good business and think about good business climate". This is an issue that I touched upon in an earlier section, the perception that the FFMC had become a bureaucratic institution with

bureaucrats that no longer care for the wellbeing of the fishers. For them, the reason is lack of competition. As Dave said,

> We have a sales team that always has $20 million worth of fish in the freezer, paying freezer cost. It is detrimental for the fish to be exported but they just have lost that anxiety. The anxiety is in me to catch that fish and to bring it to shore to deliver it, but we have lack of anxiety in the bureaucrat to fulfill that end of his bargaining.

Dave mentions here the freezer cost FFMC has, but every year, FFMC has to store a large amount of fish in the freezer, to prevent an overflow of fish to the market to keep the price for fish up. Some fishers do not see it in that way, as Dave continued:

> It is like FFMC are waiting for the phone to ring in the sales department, but if you go anywhere else in the world, the boys are beating the pay. They are calling and trying to move the product. It is not just for operating capital, but that is what the job is; you sell it – you buy it and you sell it! But our business, we seem to be running it for the freezer.

This is again, as some of the fishers themselves described to me, a symptom of FFMC as a crown corporation, instead of being run like a private company that must compete. Here I want to shed a light on Jalen's observation when he said that the FFMC had "become extremely complacent because they had monopoly" and therefore the incentive to find new markets were gone:

> They [FFMC] function essentially as a private corporation but, that being said, with no competition. Normally, private corporations, you know…if you do not perform, you are out the door! Here, they have that security of being a government outfit…. The salesmen, they would get their money at the end of the day. They make the same money, whether they sell all or whether they secure a new market for Tullibee as they would sit back and play solitaire on their computer.

Robert hammered on the same point, on the importance of competition, which as he says, gives one equity in what one is doing:

> I have guys who got some skin in the game, but you know, they are in the fishing business. Their livelihood, if they want to have a good life, they are competing. The guy who are buying my fish, is competing with other people to get ahead in the world. No one in FFMC had any skin in the game. You know, they had a job there. If the company did good or bad, it did not matter. They get paid the same.

This complacency of the FFMC as the fishers describe, gets in a way of fishers fulfilling their freedom in the sense that 1) the monopoly of the FFMC makes prices for fish a second thought and 2) limits their freedom of choice to look for the best prices. This is what Marty spent most of his time on when we talked:

> It was a point that FFMC could have a board meeting and the fish prices would not even been discussed because the fishers had no choice anyway! They could put whatever price they want… because there was no competition for the fish, they had no one really to compete with. What fishers were paid for the fish was not a big concern because we did not have other way to go. [My emphasis]

For some fishers, freedom of choice is a healthy competition between companies who will offer them the best price as soon as the fishers land their catch on shore. This is a similar performance of freedom as Tsing (2015) described as "open ticket" (75) in a sense that the fisher would have the power to negotiate prices and make buyers compete with each other. The hope for the fishers who supported opting out is that more than one company will settle in Manitoba to compete and generate the best price for everyone. As Marty said:

> Today, we only have three or four sales staff in their department [FFMC] so we have three or four salesmen in Manitoba selling Manitoba fish to the world…If 5 years from now, we could end up with 5 companies in Manitoba, buying fish, and if all have three or four salesmen, we suddenly would have 20 people looking to find sales in the world. Just the fact that we have a lot more people looking for sales, makes us more agile and they would be looking at a market that FFMC has ignored for years…. It would create a competition for supply, so the price will naturally go up!

The end goal of increased competition is to position themselves better to support their families better financially. An increased competition should in theory increase prices for their fish, or at least that is what it has been promised them by the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party when they introduced Bill 23 to the Assembly. It is not just the price they are seeking, but also the extended freedom to spend more time with their families and other things they themselves deem to be important. One thing that an "open market" has promised the fishers, is the potential for

selling fish round, which would mean less work for the fisher who could spent more time on other things. One way for fishers to make a few more dollars on their catch is to sell the fish privately, which means they need to spend hours in dressing fish for the customer. This is very tedious work, which takes a toll on one's body As Jalen said, "if they [private companies] *a*re going to pay me 30 to 40% more for my round fish, then I would not have to stand at that table and wear out my shoulders and my wrist*".* I remember one day when I was talking to Dave outside his fishing shed, he told me that one of the reasons he believed a free market would make a difference would be for his health. Like Jalen, he is hoping that a private company will buy more fresh fish and be quicker to move the fish from Manitoba. As Jalen said, as well "when I look at my old man, he has had one surgery on one shoulder, the other one is due for a surgery. You know, this is not an easy job, it is a physical job". By staying healthy, the fisher would ensure his ability for the long run to maintain their relationship with their families. The stories of Dave, Jalen, Marty, Robert, and others are just a one way the fishers on Lake Winnipeg see the enactment of freedom and how the marketplace should work. The other group that I will be focusing on in the next section sees freedom in a different way, a way that is often forgotten but is still nonetheless rooted in the historical process of Lake Winnipeg.

5.4.2 Collective freedom

I visited Dan in his fishing shed one day in November 2017, where he was with a couple of his sons and a hired hand, getting the nets ready for the upcoming winter season. The debate on Bill 23 was still ongoing in the Assembly and the hearings in the committee just finished a couple of weeks earlier so the FFMC was the main topic of the day. Dan was very passionate about how the Province handled the whole process, a topic I return to in chapter 7. Nevertheless, Dan looked at me and said, "Solli, people look too much at the dollar sign than at the actual sustainability of

the fish" and then he added that "people have become so cloudy that the whole FFMC debate is politically loaded. It is more about political ideology than common sense". We started to talk about the rumors that were floating around Lake Winnipeg about possible new buyers arriving at the Lake. There was talk about Chinese buyers coming in, but they had invested a slot in the Industrial Park in Gimli, where they were planning to set up a delivery station and the apparent plan was to buy all the rough fish to export it to China. Needless to say, the Chinese buyers did set up a delivery station, which is just an assemblage of containers but there is limited to no activity there. Another possible new buyer that was always talked about was the former FFMC president, Donald Salkeld, who ruffled a few feathers during his tenure and was fired when the Liberal Party came back to power at the federal level. Nonetheless, there was indeed some excitement, especially around the Gimli and Riverton area, because daily one would hear more about the possible influx of new buyers, and the possible price increase for fish. This is what Dan was not too keen about. He turned to me and said, "What is good for a few is not necessarily good for the whole". And here, our conversation got more intense because as Dan continued, he argued that there were certainly some people that would benefit from getting rid of the FFMC monopoly, while many others would suffer, especially the smaller fishers and communities that are hard to reach. "No one owns Lake Winnipeg! But someone is trying to grab ownership of it by pushing this bill through the Assembly". This was a vital observation. Dan mentioned how the lake was before the arrival of the FFMC, where the fishers had limited or no control of the lake and were under the control of the American importers. Dan's remarks give us insights into how many fishers on Lake Winnipeg perceive freedom differently from the politicians and from the group I mentioned in the previous section. It also indicates to us, how the memory of the lack of freedom in the past shapes how people think about freedom in the present.

For many fishers on Lake Winnipeg, FFMC is not seen as an apparatus for crushing individual liberty, but on the contrary, it is seen as a means to protect one's freedom or independence (Johnson and Pálsson 2015; Pálsson 2014). The dominant political view that comes from competition does not acknowledge other kinds of freedom. This is where FFMC poses a problem. The FFMC does flip the script about the narrative of monopoly and compulsion as hindrance to one's fulfillment of freedom. The reality is that some people perceive freedom beyond individual freedom.

In the second chapter, I mentioned when we talk about the good life, we are essentially talking about human flourishing and the politics of the means to get there. Sen (1999) observed that freedom is certainly an important capability for human flourishing. Classical economics argues that competition and limited government is the way to protect freedom and therefore human flourishing. As Harvey (2014) and Eagleton (2011) stated, Marx challenged this idea by pointing out that competition would not absolve us from our necessities but would instead make us dependent on abstract forces. Marx´s vision was that the true flourishing of individuals can only be accomplished through:

> […] collaboration and association with others in a collective drive to abolish the barriers of scarcity and material necessity beyond, which Marx held, the true realm of individual freedom could begin […](Harvey 2014, 279–80). (My emphasis)

This is the way many fishers see how a true flourishing can happen, through collaboration and association in the context of Lake Winnipeg. Currently, there have been two venues for a collective effort: 1) Through co-operatives; currently, there are 4 operating co-ops on Lake Winnipeg (Norway House Co-op, Matheson Island Co-op, Fisher River Co-op and Grand Rapids Co-op) and 2) FFMC. Both of those venues are of course, not mutually exclusive and in fact, work quite well together. The key words in Harvey´s quote above is, "abolish the barriers of scarcity

and material necessity" (279). Many fishers perceive FFMC as important to abolish scarcity and material necessity in a way that it provides fishers with financial stability and consequently pushes them into a space where freedom can be realized.

Here I will re-visit my previous observation (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015) on the importance of FFMC in providing financial security to the fishers. "To me, FFMC is great! I take my fish to Riverton and you have seen what I do there, and I get my cheque on Friday. Perfect*!*", said Kenny. Another fisher, Brian, whom I have known for years, has been successful in tapping into the local market, and selling a portion of his fish from his shed to both tourist and locals. Despite having a solid number of customers, he still relies on FFMC as his primary buyer. With the FFMC, he always has a buyer, and he knows the price before he starts his fishing season:

> My own personal experience…I have lived the good life. I have paid my bills, and I have been able to continue in an industry under a single desk marketing that a lot of other industries that has gone away from single desk marketing. People like me have gone out of the industry; they haven´t been able to pay their bills. The single desk marketing guarantees an income, guarantees us a price. It is a government cheque that actually pays our bills, it is backed up the loans that FFMC gets, are guaranteed by the government.

Yet, another fisher, Jamie told me, that the real upside of the FFMC was that "we always got a cheque for the fish! That is something that boys will find a little bit different [in an open market]". This feature of steady pay cheques and the reliability of the price list before every season is instrumental for both smaller fishers and especially for fishers in communities in the North Basin that are not easily accessible or close to the city of Winnipeg. Margaret, the Dauphin River representative in the Co-management Board, mentioned that this ability of the FFMC is important for her fellow fishers in Dauphin River. "Everyone north of Riverton relies on FFMC because that was the best option for them, as far as <u>guaranteed prices</u>, <u>guaranteed freight</u> and that kind of things" [My emphasis]. Her counterpart from Fisher River Cree Nation, Michael who has been in the fishing industry for over 20 years and knows the industry like the back of his hand, agreed with

Margaret. As I pointed out, fishers living on the reserves are at a disadvantage. Not only have they limited options to finance their fishing, but alternative employment is lacking. Historically, a few First Nations communities formed co-ops when the lake was under the spell of US importers in hopes of regaining control of the market (Tough 2000). Many of the co-ops are still active, and as Michael pointed out, a co-operation between their Macbeth co-op and FFMC is important:

> I would say it was a good experience because you plan your expenses before you actually drop a net to the lake. The fish prices were posted, you knew your expectations in terms of share of the profits. If we needed a start-up cost for the local co-op, if we say, needed a $30,000 in advance, just to get it started, it was here!

This was what Michael emphasized to me, whenever we got together, the ability for the co-op to have a concrete financial plan, that not only showed expected expenses but a solid estimation of income. By doing so, it enhanced the Macbeth Fishery Co-op's capability to apply for loans through the Community Development Fund as an example. For a small co-op like Macbeth, it is crucial to have a line of credit, not just to meet basic expenses but also to help their members out. As Patty mentioned, the fishers on Fisher River who go to the Macbeth fishing camps start the season in red, but the co-op can help by giving their members who need help a little bit in advance. For small communities like Fisher River Cree Nation and Dauphin River or bigger ones like Norway House, FFMC has the ability to pay fishers every week and it can arrange freight to move the fish to the market a couple of times of week. The representatives from the North Basin in the Co-management Board of Lake Winnipeg, consistently made the point in the meetings following the introduction of Bill 23, who aside from FFMC would go to the trouble of going all the way up north to buy fish? Or as Langford Saunders, the president of the Norway House Co-op said in a public hearing of Bill 23, "[…] who in anybody's mind will go up that far and buy fish where they can get it within an hour from Winnipeg? Doesn't make sense […]" (MLA 2017, committee, Deb: P. 428). Sam Murdock from Fisher River Cree Nation described vividly at

the public hearing of Bill 23 how instrumental FFMC is for First Nations. "[…] Many of these fishers [First Nations] would be financially "ruined" should they not be able to sell their catch to FFMC […]" (MLA 2017, committee, Deb. P. 425). In the worst case, as Sam pointed out, if the FFMC would get dismantled completely, it would cost a community like Fisher River up to six hundred thousand dollars every year in the form of an expansion of social programs. As Mr. Murdock reminded Manitoba politicians "[…] [I]t's our goal, and the leadership's goal, to try our best to have as many people as employed as possible […]*"* (MLA 2017, committee, Deb. P. 425), and then he concluded his words with a powerful, but harsh truth "[…] when you live on a First Nation community, that reality is very hard to come by […]" (MLA 2017, committee, Deb: P. 425). Langford Saunders made the same point as Sam did in his speech during the same occasion, when he pointed out that out of 6,000 people in Norway House, 1,500 people are employed in positions that fishing has created in one way or another (MLA 2017, committee, Deb).

It is not a fluke that Saunders called FFMC a "safety zone" for his co-op, up north and even for fishers down south, in the Gimli area, it is perceived as a safety zone as well. This is a point that Saunders made in the public hearing, and fishers have mentioned it to me as well consistently, that FFMC gives the fishers "freedom" to concentrate on aspects of life, other than fishing. By partnering with FFMC, fishers do not have to spend hours upon hours to chase a sale or make phone calls to buyers, or "chase down a payment" as Michael put it. One can ship his catch to one of the FFMC delivery stations or to a co-op and then their worries are over. Most of the fishers love their occupation, and they spend hours on the lake or in their shed, but they also want to spend time with their families. This is another point that I raised in my previous work (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015). The fishers do not want to spend all their time working, and the ones who support FFMC believe that the corporation is the most viable option for them to maintain their

freedom, freedom to control their time. I was talking to a couple who fish together, Randy and Mary, who have two young children. They mentioned how important it is for them and other fishers I know that have children, that they have some time for their kids. Fishing can take a few hours and filleting the fish a few more hours in the shed, but the advantage of the FFMC is that they do not have to process the fish too much. As Mary and Randy pointed out, "It is easier for us, the smaller outfits. I don't want to be filleting fish. I want to ship it to the board…Our days are long enough on the lake". The prospect of have to fillet fish for possible buyers, or asking others to help market their fish, is not viable either since a hired hand would "take the profit that we make" as Mary told me. The essence here is that many fishers see FFMC as vital to make an income, especially for those who live further away from Winnipeg but more importantly, it provides fishers the independence/freedom to run their own little outfits by working co-operatively either with others through co-ops or FFMC to support their families. That is the reason why I spent quite a lot of detail in the fourth chapter to highlight the problem of realization of surplus value before the arrival of FFMC. Freedom should not only be seen through the relational lens as I suggested, but as historical process as well. One needs to understand the power of the collective memory of Lake Winnipeg to understand why many fishers see their best option to achieve freedom is through collective measures.

5.4.3 Collective memory and freedom

One day, I went out fishing in February with Lenny and Kenny, which is not something new since I went out with them many times. But this particular day was very memorable due to the fact that I had an interesting conversation with one of Lenny's and Kenny's older cousins. We were at the FFMC station in Riverton, removing heads and guts after a long day on the lake. I was sitting in Lenny's truck, eating my late lunch, as I usually did, just to take a few minutes break and

have time to myself to write down some reflections. Siggi came to Riverton to help Lenny and Kenny out with the processing of the catch, and he saw me sitting in the car, so he joined me. As usual, we talked about the Icelandic fishery but surely, the conversation shifted to FFMC. I turned to him and asked, why do you think some fishers wanted to opt out of FFMC? He turned around, with a smile on his face, shaking his head and replied, "they have dollar signs in their eyes". Then Siggi reminded me that when there were companies here, they just offered the same price, and there was limited or no competition. Siggi concluded that *"*we have not experienced a slump in the fishery for many years and many only see the chance to make more money. But there will be no competition*"*. The conversation with Siggi reminded me of Taussig's work, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Taussig introduced how the belief in the devil should be perceived as a manifestation of people's response to changes to their way of life. Those beliefs, as Taussig pointed out, are loaded by historical meanings that symbolize the danger of losing "control over means of production and to be controlled by them" (Taussig 1980: 17). In the case of Lake Winnipeg, devil belief is substituted by collective memory. When older fishers, or a current fisher harken back to the old days, we should not be so quick to dismiss them as someone who does not want to work hard, or someone who does not want to "evolve" or "accept" that things are different today from 50 years ago. Collective memory in Lake Winnipeg gives us a vital insight in how freedom is shaped by many people and collective memory was used as a pushback against Bill 23 as an attempt to illustrate the possible danger of opting out of FFMC to allow private fish buyers to re-enter Manitoba after almost 50 years of absence.

In chapter 4, I highlighted how both politicians and fishers were frustrated with American importers who were seen to extract all the surplus value of the fishery. The fishers felt they were not free, since they could barely make ends meet to support their family. Secondly, the fishers

were kept outside of the price structure, that is, whenever there was any price increase, they were not the ones who reaped the benefit. As McIvor (1966) observed in his report, the American importers or the Canadian middleman took advantage of their superior position to grab any extra cent that was as available as possible. The image of fishers struggling prior to the establishment of FFMC is still strong today. Which manifested itself in the pushback against the Bill 23 and was used as a warning for losing the control of their industry and their freedom.

Things like, "Oh yeah…I would say FFMC is worth keeping but I know there is a lot of opposition. FFMC was brought in for a reason, and it was not because fishermen were getting rich from the fish companies" said by Jamie, as was typical of fishers who were opposed to opting out of FFMC would say to me. Jamie's grandfather and father were both fishers and knew firsthand how the situation was prior to the FFMC. The stories are still stuck in Jamie's mind, who kept going on to describe how little he trusts private fish buyers to enhance his ability to lead the life he wants. His opinion on the so called "free market" is based on how the companies treated his father and grandfather:

> If there is a fish company that could do it, and pay good price, better than FFMC, then great! But, you know, fish companies [in the past] could not pay the money that the fishers wanted because it was a "tight" market, and the first law of life is self-preservation. So, any fish company has to look after themselves first, and fishermen second, third or fourth. If they [fish companies] have the opportunity to pay more, they will say "next year might not be so good, we need to retain profit for ourselves; so, if the next year is good, then the next one might not be, and etc." I am just not <u>optimistic about dealing with corporations</u>. [My emphasis].

Many fishers, like Jamie, do not trust private companies to put the fishers' needs in first place, as history has shown them. Randy and Rose, who have only fished on Lake Winnipeg for a few years, have also heard the stories from the old days. "You do not want to hear what they [private buyers] have to say. You almost do not trust them" said Randy to me and he continued:

> I know from talking to the old fellows that used to fish, used to say that the private buyers did not do them any favors. They were so happy when FFMC came in.

George also had strong words for the possible private buyers, and he cited the history before the establishment of FFMC as one of the reasons why an open market would not benefit the fishers and therefore not extend their freedom as promised. "When there was no marketing board, and people were selling fish to independent fish companies, it was disaster! Fishermen had absolutely nothing" he said, and he continued:

> They had no idea what they were going to get paid, they owned nothing. The companies owned everything. The fishermen had no saying in what was going on. The companies colluded on fixed prices and all kinds of things, so I don't see anybody would expect to be any different than that now?

Here one of the facets of freedom appears among the fishers, that is, their ability to have their own little enterprises, without being dominated by external forces such as American importers, is crucial to their idea of the good life. Paul McKie from Unifor, a union here in Manitoba, made that exact point in his speech in the public hearings of Bill 23 when he explained the possible negative freedom of Bill 23,

> […] <u>But it also could mean the freedom to be taken advantage of by multinational agribusiness</u>, the freedom to figure out how to get your fish from the North to the processor, the freedom to be a small player and yet, try to <u>negotiate with international companies</u> […] (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 440) [My emphasis]

This is one of the reasons why FFMC is seen as a protector of freedom among the fishers. The arrival of FFMC broke up the domination of American importers and it was an attempt to level the playing field between fishers in different geographical areas. The complexity of freedom vs. domination is highlighted here. As James Allum (NDP), a representative for Fort Garry-Riverview observed in a debate of Bill 23, not every monopoly is the same. He argued that the purpose of the FFMC is to

> "[…] ensure a level playing field for all fishers in Manitoba. It's a monopoly to ensure an inclusive fishing market in Manitoba, and it's a monopoly designed to ensure that those who do not have the same capacity that others might have nevertheless have a fair opportunity to market their fish and to ensure that they can make a good living and live a happy and productive life here in Manitoba […]" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 1056/7).

This is a problem that not many conservatives or neo-liberals perceive of; how freedom manifests itself. Monopoly is seen as naturally bad and is supposed to be crushing to any individual liberty. In the case of Lake Winnipeg, however, many fishers do not see FFMC as crushing, but rather as a springboard for them to participate in the so called "free market". The fishers believe that the best option to achieve freedom or be an active participant in the world community is to do it through collective efforts. Either through co-ops or as for many fishers in Lake Winnipeg, through FFMC.

5.4.4 Freedom as absence of competition – freedom seen as collaborative effort

The economic textbooks tell us that competition is good. Competition provides us with choice, which should be seen as one of the facets of freedom (Carrier 1997). This is what I showed in the previous section on how politicians and some fishers see freedom, as an individual pursuit for the best contract for themselves. One group of fishers on Lake Winnipeg, envisioned their freedom as being fulfilled through competition. That is, they imagined the enactment of freedom as having multiple buyers, where they can seek out the best prices. This is the exact way the Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba perceived the performance of freedom as well. In their view, the politicians thought it was impossible for the fishers to participate in the "free market" under the purview of the FFMC. The fact is, many fishers do not share the sentiment of the Progressive Conservatives or some of their counterparts. Many fishers see their freedom only realized through a collective effort. They do not see FFMC as a hindrance for them to participate in the "free market" but more importantly, they do not see competition as the essence of freedom.

On the contrary, they see FFMC as the opposite of it. The FFMC allows them to participate in the world market without having to compete against each other and therefore, co-operatively bargain prices for their fish. Again, fishers see freedom in materialistic terms, that is, can they support their family and spend time with them?

Many fishers believe that they are just as free, or even freer, under the FFMC umbrella than outside of it. The way some opponents of the FFMC talk about the corporation and the monopoly it seemed that the fishers did not have any alternatives aside from FFMC and the corporation was forcing the fishers to sell them their catch. The reality though is not that black and white, and according to many fishers, the FFMC gave the fishers quite a bit of room to roam in their effort to sell their fish locally. Randy expressed that feeling, stating that him and his wife had been participating in what they called the "free market", "free market was selling to FFMC and if you wanted to sell fillets, you applied for a special dealer permit and you could sell to anyone within Manitoba. That is the free market! You did not have to sell your fish to them". As Randy pointed out, the fishers could sell to anyone within the Province if one had a special dealer permit. Originally, when FFMC was set up, the fishers did not have that ability to apply for a special dealer license but in the 1990s, FFMC and the Province of Manitoba created the program of a special dealer license that allows fishers to sell their fish to restaurants, retail stores or hotels. The fishers also can apply for an export dealer license that allows them to export fish to markets that FFMC is not selling to. A few fishers have the capacity to export the fish across the border or even to Europe. George made the same point as Randy, by expressing his opinion that the FFMC was not constraining his ability to participate in the "free market":

> I do not see that way [FFMC being a constraint] because we had a lot of freedom under the marketing board. We were allowed to sell to restaurants if we wanted. We were allowed to sell to individual consumers, or retail stores…The opportunity was there to take advantage

> of that "free market" place that they [Progressive Conservatives] are always talking about. I do not see any special advantage of that [Bill 23] because we can do it.

This is only two of many vignettes collected on how many fishers perceived the role of FFMC to cultivate, what they believe to be a space for them to participate in this idea of "free market". I have to harken back to the situation that the First Nations are in as well, to illustrate how some of the First Nations see FFMC as their extension to the so called "free market". This is a point that is not raised enough. Langford Saunders and Sam Murdock, both emphasized the challenge that the First Nations communities face. The communities that rely most on fisheries are the First Nations, but the problem is that most of the communities are located far from the main market in Manitoba, Winnipeg. Both of them spoke passionately about the role FFMC served in moving the fish from their respective location at the public hearing. To re-phrase Saunders' words, it is not like there is a line for companies to come up north to buy fish and export it out of the Province. "Oh definitely. They open the market for us. We do not have to worry about that. Once the fish hit the scale, and you receive your DCR, that fish is no longer yours or your responsibility" said Michael when describing the importance of FFMC in paving the road for Fisher River to markets that would not necessarily be in their grasp, due to their location. Margret in Dauphin River shared the same sentiment as Michael. "Nobody is coming up to my door to buy my fish, except FFMC" explained Margret and she continued:

> I thought, wow! Jeez, this is neat. My fish goes all over the world. I did not feel oppressed or anything by FFMC… I know that, when I sell to FFMC, my pickerel is going to the States, and my pike is going to France.

The danger that the North Basin representatives in the Co-management Board of Lake Winnipeg consistently pointed out during the meetings was if the FFMC would no longer operate or be viable, the free market would not open further market opportunities for them. Instead, due to their location, the "free market" would more likely reduce their options and take away from them

the market that they had under the purview of FFMC. As they pointed out, some of the communities simply do not have a reliable internet connection to compare prices, and more importantly, limited capability to keep a dependable communication channel with markets locally and abroad. This puts First Nations in a position of great disadvantage to compete compared to other fishers. In fact, both First Nations and smaller fishers are in a vulnerable situation where they have to compete with each other and have to negotiate their prices with bigger actors that can exercise their market power. The fishers have seen what happened to both wheat farmers and hog farmers in Manitoba after the dismantlement of the wheat board and the Hog Marketing board. As Mary said to me in our discussion about the fishery, she explained why she was not too keen on this so called "free market" the politicians were selling.

> It is like the farmers. You saw those little hobby farmers, those little family farms that were all over Manitoba, and now, they are all gone! Now they are just bigger farmers that are around, and they are corporate. That is the way fishing is going to be.

This is a similar insight to what Brian offered earlier in this chapter, that is, the awareness fishers have of their surroundings and the possible consequences of the "freedom of choice". This is the same point that a few politicians have observed as well, here in Manitoba. Tom Nevakshonoff (NDP), a representative from the Interlake, made the following observation in 2006 about the effect of dismantling of the Hog Marketing board

> When you [Progressive Conservatives] did away with the single desk, all those small farms went out of business. Now it is the big producers with supply contracts to the processors, those are the ones that ended up on top, and all those family farms out there, Mr. Speaker, were dust in the wind. A few of them managed to hang on in rural Manitoba. They get jobs working in the hog barns for $9 or $10 an hour, but that doesn't substitute <u>for owning your own land, owning your own farm and producing your own grain</u>. (MLA 2006, Deb, P. 111). (My emphasis).

The last part of the speech that is underlined is crucial, especially when we talk about how fishers see part of their performance of freedom. That is, being independent, or "pride of being a

fisherman" as Mary explained. Loss of freedom to be independent limits the fisher's ability to support their families financially but, also, loss of control over production leads to loss of control over time and destiny. Rob Altemeyer (NDP), a representative from the Wolseley area in Winnipeg and the environmental critic for the opposition observed a similar point regarding the Wheat Board during the debate of Bill 23:

> […] It's not the agricultural producers that have come out ahead. A fantastic study done by the National Farmers Union has shown the dramatic shift in where all the money from the grain-from grain revenue has gone. It's gone to the grain companies themselves […] (MLA 2017, Deb. P. 1007).

There, Mr. Altemeyer is citing an observation by Edward Sagan (2017) from the National Farmers Union, that calculated that the farmers had received 88% of the export prices under the Wheat Board, while dropping down to 40% after the privatization of the board. The fishers can see the writing of the wall, as one fisher told me, and they know how competitive market may not favor the smaller fishers. Many fishers therefore do not see the freedom in competing against each other for finding the best prices. Rather, they see their freedom realized through collaborative efforts to see each other succeed.

Lake Winnipeg is big and each fisher on the lake has their own life to lead, and they do like their independence as Brian told me more than once. However, he also stressed that a fisher can only think about himself so far, especially for the smaller fishers who do not have the capacity to process a big quantity of fish. Some fishers on the North Basin have been able to organize themselves in co-ops, but it is not easy to get everyone on the same page on a lake the size of Lake Winnipeg. However, that is one of the successes of the FFMC – it has compelled fishers to work together. FFMC has limited competition between the fishers on the lake. In theory, they are chasing the same fish, but on the marketing level, they are not competing. When the private buyers were

dominant on Lake Winnipeg, they tended to pit the fishers against each other to force the price for fish even further down. Brian made that point as well when he said:

> Under the FFMC we are selling the fish to the open market, we are just doing it in an orderly marketing way. It prevents me from competing with the next fisher, and the next fisher etc. Without single desk marketing, we would be competing against each other, which would be a race to the bottom and the buyers would play us against each other. With the single desk marketing, that is not going to happen!

Fishers did acknowledge that the competition can bring an ugly side to a fishery. This ugly side of the competition always reminds me of one of the conversations that I had with Michael in Fisher River when we were talking about Bill 23 and the possible consequences of it for a small community such as his. Like Brian, Michael believes that freedom can only be accomplished through collaborative effort. First, he is a member of a co-op in his community, but as he said himself, he saw the dystopia that the Progressive Conservatives were offering him as cutthroat business:

> Free market means that I can cut my neighbors' throat. Put him out of the business and watch his family suffer or I can do that to another Tom to destroy his family – Bring them under my authority. Just can go around to a different Tom and make sure to cut their throats as well. And see, Solli, now I got monopoly! That is the free market!

As Michael emphasized with me, who wants to be responsible for another man's misfortune? If he is undercutting other fishers, it certainly would not stop someone else to do the same against him. As Michael often said, if he is doing well, it is highly likely that his neighbor is doing well also, especially if the fishers are working together collaboratively. Jamie, a fisher in Gimli also made this same point. There was cutthroat competition on Lake Winnipeg before the FFMC, but it was not between the buyers, it was between the fishers. Jamie also pointed out that the fishers on Lake Winnipeg would not only be competing against each other in this "free market", but they would be competing against other, bigger outfits world-wide:

> You are competing against very cheap products and you have a very expensive operation, what do you do? You cannot bring in a loss! Maybe an odd fisher here and there would do it, but it would not be enough to compete… You are competing against other fish all over the world. There is no shortage of fish in the world today. The whole coast of Chile is one big Salmon farm, and you have fish farms in China, Ecuador, and Mexico.

Jamie added that if a small fisher thinks he can compete against big corporations or can negotiate a good price with a multinational corporation, you need to "shake your head" because that is not possible. Many fishers expressed the same sentiments as Brian, Michael, and Jamie. They do not see competition as central for their freedom, rather they see the freedom of having their own small operation where they can control their own time and operations. They also acknowledge that they cannot do it without a bigger umbrella like FFMC or a producer co-op. This was especially evident when I asked those who were in favor of FFMC what they wanted to see if Bill 23 would lead to the dissolution of the FFMC. Most of them raised the point that they would like to see a producer co-op where fishers could continue working together in the marketing side of the fishery. As George said,

> I think the system that we have, under the board is excellent. I don't think anybody can predict what is going to happen now. I think the majority of the fishermen want predictability and certainty and want to have something like marketing board. So, I think we need to form a producer co-op of some kind to protect ourselves from the fish companies.

The fishers on Lake Winnipeg, like any other small producers, are in a very difficult position. It really does not matter, if one sees freedom in terms of individual marketing, or "possessive individualism", or see freedom through a "meaningful collective" effort. I might be pessimist but if money serve as a representation of social values, true freedom will never be achieved.

5.5 Coda: after opting out

Several years have now passed since the Province of Manitoba "liberalized" the fishers in Manitoba. It certainly was an uneven road that the Province paved, and the consequences have not fully revealed themselves. A few new fish buyers arrived on Lake Winnipeg shortly after Bill 23 came into effect. Donald Salkeld, the former president of the FFMC did start his business in a partnership with an Illinois based company, Schaifer Fishery. A few other fishers have slowly started their own small operations. A few fishers on Lake Winnipeg, predominately on the South Basin of the lake are still happy with the transition and seem to be doing well. Dave told me one day, a few months after the opt-out decision that he was looking for markets for his fish in Texas, US. John from Riverton, said "fantastic" to me, when I asked him how the new marketing system was working for him. He had found himself a buyer in Ontario that was giving him a good price for his fish. However, the vast majority or nearly 85% of the fishers did sign either three or five-year commitments with the FFMC, according the FFMC records. These were similar numbers as were seen when Saskatchewan opted out of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act in 2011. What has become clearer is that a business and political class in Manitoba were driving this change, since they perceived monopoly as a distasteful intervention. The case in point was Salkeld's decision to enter Lake Winnipeg as a buyer after having served as FFMC's president under the Conservative Party. Decisions made by the Province changed the whole economic management of the fishery which possibly impose a threat against interest of fishers. Here I will talk about two issues that illustrates these threats clearly, 1) The cancellation of the seven-day maximum payment period for fish, and 2) the newly introduced buyout program and increase of minimum mesh size initiated by the Province of Manitoba.

On January 11, 2018, Patricia Barrett, a reporter at *The Express Weekly News* broke a story that shocked the entire fishing industry in Manitoba. Patricia reported that a new buyer in Manitoba, Northern Walleye, that was owned by the former FFMC president, Donald Salkeld owed four co-ops in Manitoba between $700,000 to $1,000,000. As reported, Northern Walleye bought fish from those fishing operations to export to Illinois. Even though, as reported by Patricia Barrett, Northern Walleye kept encouraging "fishermen to continue to ship" (2019,14) and the buyer threatened fishers that the deals would be terminated if "the fishermen didn't keep shipping their fish" (2019,14). Even though these co-ops are not on Lake Winnipeg, the consequences of this event were felt on Lake Winnipeg. What made fishers angry was not just the amount the buyer seemed to be able to walk away with but was how the government dealt with it. As Marty who was a big supporter of open market told me, "There is no doubt that he [Salkeld] gave the whole industry a black eye, because this is our first attempt at the open market system, and it failed!" According to the regulations that came into effect in December 2017, the fish buyers had to pay the fishers no later than seven days after the date of the sale. Here is where the issue becomes complex.

The Province of Manitoba did not revoke Northern Walleye's license right away and the fishers became terribly upset that the buyer could keep buying fish even though he had shown he did not have the capacity to do so. Those co-ops did not get paid for their fish for months, and there is still no indication that the amount has been repaid. During May 2018 and June 2018, Rob Altemeyer from the NDP got up regularly in the question period in the Legislature to ask both Premier Pallister and the Minister of Sustainable Development, Ms. Squires, what the Province was planning to do concerning this issue. I will return to this in later chapters, but, in short, the debate as usual turned into a bitter exchange where nothing was resolved. The Progressive

Conservatives resolved the issue by changing the regulation rather than revoking the license of the buyer, something they only did almost a year later. The Progressive Conservatives decided to replace the seven-day period within which the buyer had to pay the fishers with a no set date rule. I will never forget where I was when the word got out that the Province had decided to remove the seven-day period. I was sitting in my car in Gimli during one of my road trips around the Lake when my phone did not stop ringing. I got phone calls and texts from fishers and others interested in the Manitoba fishery, most, if not all, terribly upset. Michael was one of those who called me that day, understandably very disappointed. As Michael pointed out, the new regulation was supposed to "liberalize" the fishers but this act on the behalf of the Province suddenly paved the way for a future exploitation of fishers. Currently, the fish buyers have no obligation to pay the fishers as quickly as possible. It is a lot of change from what many fishers were used to, where FFMC paid them every Friday. The essence is that the fishers have now limited power in negotiating with fish buyers, where the fish buyers can withhold payment to fishers and the precedent has been set that the buyers can threaten the fishers to terminate contracts, despite owing fishers money. In that way, fishers who opt to look for a better price away from the FFMC are in the peculiar situation that they have to be wary of future buyers in the knowledge that the Province will not protect them if the buyer decides to run off with the fish. This is especially interesting in the light of recommendations made by the envoy that the Province paid to go around the lake talking to fishers, that the Province should implement "fish buyer licenses and bonding process" (Friesen, G., and Mohr 2017, 8) to protect the fishers from losing their fish. The Province clearly ignored this suggestion with the consequences that now the fishers' freedom is compromised since the financial security of getting paid on time is jeopardized.

Secondly, as I will discuss in more depth in the next chapter, shortly after opting out of FFMC the Province decided to introduce mesh restrictions and license buy-back programs that on the surface were supposed to 'enhance sustainability'. But those initiatives also have a huge impact on FFMC's economic base. As my informants in FFMC told me, and the FFMC's representatives confirmed in a meeting in Fisher River in 2019, the legislated increase in minimum mesh size to 3.75 inches would lead to losses for the corporation of over 3 million dollars. Fishers catch a lot of medium size walleye with 3- and 3.50-inch mesh size, which is fish in high demand in both with retailers and restaurants. Additionally, the Province bought over 100 licenses from fishers, mostly First Nations. The loss of those licenses results in lower production for FFMC because most First Nation fishers ship their fish to FFMC. These blows to the economic base of the FFMC could be lethal in the long run and thereby limit fishers' choice even further.

Chapter 6: The Cartesian complex and the refusal of unpredictability and the "unintended consequences"

October 23, 2018, a group of recreational fishers led by the Manitoba Wildlife Federation (MWF) rallied in front of the Manitoba's legislative building in Winnipeg calling for the Provincial government to take action to ensure sustainability or as they themselves declared, to *"*save the crashing walleye population on Lake Winnipeg*"* [My emphasis] (Manitoba Wildlife Federation 2018). Moreover, they wanted to illustrate the economic importance of the recreational fishery for Manitoba. A few well-known MWF spokespersons, like Dr. Scott Forbes, a professor from the University of Winnipeg, Brian Kotak, the director of MWF, and finally a celebrity sport fisher enthusiast, Don Lamont addressed the crowd. All three spoke vividly about the inevitable collapse of the most beloved fish in Manitoba, the walleye if the Province remained, in their opinion, idly by without action. On this beautiful day, Professor Forbes declared that "until now, the fisheries have been managed exclusively by one small group, commercial fishers and it is only their voices which have been heard". A statement consistent with an op-ed that Professor Forbes wrote in the Winnipeg Free Press few days later when he described the fishery policy of Manitoba as "just say yes", to keep the loud group, in his words, of commercial fishers happy. In Forbes´ mind, as he explicitly stated in the front of the legislative building, the fisheries of Manitoba are "[…] poorly managed and we need to change that […]", and then he went on, explaining how fisheries in Manitoba are unsustainable, "[a] sustainable fishery does not overfish every major commercial species, lake whitefish, sauger and walleye…Sustainable fishery does not drive what was one time the most important commercial species on the lake, the sauger, into oblivion*"*. Professor Forbes´ colleague, Dr. Brian Kotak, supported Forbes´ words by stating that fisheries governance of Manitoba is "old

and inflexible" and the Lake Winnipeg quota system is "totally inflexible, and not based on science or sustainability and it puts our public fish resource in jeopardy". Dr. Kotak continued, implying how the Provincial government only listened to the commercial fishers and had a deaf ear for recreational fishers; an industry which MWF had calculated through a survey conducted by Probe research contributed at least "102 million dollars to the Province's GDP". Dr. Kotak persisted in showing the moral claim recreational fishers have to Lake Winnipeg, through monetary terms, by reminding the audience that commercial fishers contributed "29 million dollars, so that is nothing to be sneezed at, but it is ONLY a third of what anglers actually contribute [My emphasis]". In Kotak's vision, the recreational fishers could be even a stronger economic powerhouse, as he stated that the recreational fishers could "easily be a BILLION-dollar industry in our Province if we really just put in changes that are necessary". Kotak concluded his remarks by emphasizing that the recreational fishers were ready to "make whatever sacrifices are necessary through regulations to make sure we have a sustainable fishery, but the Province needs to step up to the plate in terms of the commercial policies as well" [My emphasis]. As Dr. Kotak alludes, the responsibility of achieving sustainability will ultimately rest on the commercial fisher's shoulders.

The rally on the October 23rd was not a one-time event, rather it was a highlight, or somewhat of a turning point in a tension between commercial and recreational fishers that had grown for a couple of years. Before October 2018, the MWF had led a few other rallies in front of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, emphasizing the importance of changes in regulations on commercial fishery.

When I began my research in 2012, the tension between the two groups was non-existent. The commercial catch record was at all-time high (Pálsson 2014) and as Mr. Dennis Smook, a member of the Progressive Conservative described, Manitoba was the "home of some best

freshwater fishing in the world" (MLA 2018, Deb, P. 2150). A report written by the Seafood Watch in 2015, that described Manitoba lakes as among the worst managed lakes in the world changed the narrative of the Lake Winnipeg fishery from a fishery that was thriving to one that needed saving. The Seafood Watch report provided many recreational enthusiasts ammunition to lobby for more and stricter regulations on commercial fishery. The walleye, and the other species on Lake Winnipeg needed protection against the self-serving commercial fishers who wanted to catch every single fish in the lake, to paraphrase Forbes´ sentiment in his op-ed in the Winnipeg Free Press. The online magazine, *Outdoor Canada*, published a few articles, where recreational enthusiasts shared their observations on declining walleye stocks with a common sentiment. Among the articles written was by Gord Pyzer, or Doctor Pyzer, as he is known among sport fishers, who noted that there were fewer Master Angler Greenback [walleye] than before. Naturally, Pyzer (2017) turned his attention to the commercial fishing effort by stating that the changes in the lake can be traced to a *"*[…] commercial fishery that is totally mismanaged by an absurd set of medieval rules […]". Another online magazine geared towards sport fishers, *Hooked Magazine*, had been actively posting stories on Lake Winnipeg's problems as well. There are two articles that I want to use as vignettes that exemplify this push from the anglers for policy reform on the commercial fishery. The first article was written by Professor Forbes where he described how the commercial fishery was killing the "golden goose" of Lake Winnipeg, the walleye. In this article Dr. Forbes was very specific and according to him, the only way to save the walleye is to "control fishing pressure". In his view, this will only be accomplished by introducing a buy-back quota program, based on a voluntary participation that would ensure that the once quota have been bought from a fisher, the quota "must stay retired". The other article published in *Hooked Magazine* focused on catfish, and how the Province of Manitoba should protect the catfish from

commercial fishers. The reason was never stated. According to the anglers, the trophy catfish fishery could generate almost $15 million to the Manitoba economy, while the commercial catfish fishery was only supposed to bring $40 thousand. In that article, a question was posed by Professor Forbes at a meeting in Lockport, Manitoba, where he asked the audience if the Province was ready to sacrifice trophy catfish fishing, "for the sake of a $40K commercial fishery?"

These narratives in the media did not go unnoticed by the commercial fishers. Every time a news article, an op-ed or a rally was being planned by the MWF, I received emails, texts or phone calls from fishers, making sure I had read it, and of course, wanting me to share my thoughts. The frustration among the fishers toward what they called "the angler's rhetoric" steadily increased. If one drives on highway nine to Gimli, or circles around Selkirk in March, one will see hundreds of fishing shacks on the South Basin of the lake and in the Red River. The commercial fishers refer to this as the March Madness – as a reference to the American College Basketball playoff frenzy. Each year, thousands of tourists visit Lake Winnipeg to get a chance to go fishing for walleye or catfish. Ice fishing is a unique experience and one that draws the most attention. Many nights when I stayed in Gimli during the winter seasons, I often had to go out for dinners and to do my work at local bars or restaurants. During my many visits, I met, as examples, a truck driver from Minnesota, a teacher from North Dakota, a carpenter from South Dakota, an accountant from Wisconsin and a commodity broker from Ontario. All of them were in Gimli for one thing: A jumbo greenback walleye! A trophy fish to get a picture with, before releasing the fish back to the lake. A story to tell their friends and families: the old battle between the man and nature; old man and the sea stories. Most anglers I spoke to agreed that the sport fishery on Lake Winnipeg was among the best in the world. For the commercial fishers, the angler's existence on the lake did not bother them at all. In fact, they usually supported their presence on the lake. I do not how many times

commercial fishers stood up in the co-management meetings or other meetings with the government stressing that they are themselves anglers. The commercial fishers also buy sport fishing licenses to take their children and grandchildren to the lake with them and let them enjoy the lake in a more relaxed atmosphere. The narrative that commercial fishing was to blame for the decline of large walleye in the lake, ruffled most commercial fishers' feathers. They felt misrepresented when others claimed that the commercial fishers were hunting down these large walleyes and they were the ones who drove the walleye's cousin, sauger, out of existence. "He is just running a hate site", Dave, a commercial fisher, told me once referring to the article that was published in the *Outdoor Magazine* and the contributions that appeared in the *Hooked Magazine*, when we were talking one day in his house. Dave added with frustration in his voice: "no matter what I say, the horses are outside, and the news is ready", and many of the fishers shared Dave´s feelings. It did not matter what they said, the jury was already out. The commercial fishers were to blame for the struggle of the large walleye on Lake Winnipeg.

I had a similar conversation with a few others commercial fishers shortly after a rally planned by MWF in 2017 which led Dr. Jon Gerrard a member of the Liberal Party to slam the Minister of Sustainable Development, for not modifying or changing the regulation on mesh-sizes on nets for Lake Winnipeg. My conversation with Steve is still stuck in my mind, mostly because I met with him a couple of days after a fisher´s meeting in Gimli where these particular issues was debated. Steve and I were talking about the influence of social media on this tension between the two groups and the prevailing narrative that commercial fishers were ruining the fishery. Steve showed me a couple of posts that he had seen on social media during the rally in 2017 and as Steve said "some of these posts are saying "oh, these guys [commercial fishers] are taking all the jumbo females because they are getting paid $20 a pound*"* and I am like "it is the worst priced fish!". As

Steve and rest of the fishers consistently showcased, and how they think about their fishing, they do care deeply about what size of net to use and where they place their nets. Steve continued by stating that the general public or anglers do not always understand how commercial fishers think;

> The price kind of dictates what we are going after, so you know, this year, the medium is worth a lot and therefore, we are catching those smaller and medium ones. If the small round is a lot, we will set smaller nets, so it gives every year class a chance to grow.

The point Steve is making is crucial. Here he is alluding to what is described in Moore (2015) how social-economic arrangement co-produce nature with animals. This point is often forgotten in fisheries governance and environmental politics, generating perverse outcomes. As I will illustrate, by ignoring the concept of co-production of the environment, meaningful solutions to environmental crises are overlooked.

In the wake of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation rallies, the Minister of Sustainable Development was convinced by the MWF rhetoric of the importance of controlling fishing pressure in the effort to reach sustainability. Honorable Rochelle Squires, a former Minister of Sustainable Development implemented two crucial policy changes: (1) increase of the minimum mesh size and; (2) introduction of a buy-back quota program. Both initiatives were instrumental to "save" walleye and sauger on Lake Winnipeg. As Squires was quoted in a press release on the day the buy-back quota program was announced, she said that "by acting today, we will <u>ensure</u> the ability of Manitoba's great lake to generate food, provide enjoyment and <u>support economic growth</u> in future*"* [My emphasis]. This message is re-enforced, in a document that the department of Sustainable Development (2019) published to explain their measures to "*enhance sustainability*":

> A willing seller-based buy-back of Individual Quota Entitlement is an essential component of implementing the larger fishery sustainability strategy as it provides for a <u>bottom-up</u>, fisher supported approach <u>to implementing management change</u>. Quota buy back will reduce the total available quota on the lake, which will work towards a <u>sustainable commercial harvest for a lake</u>. (Manitoba Sustainable Development 2019, 1) [My emphasis]

Similar sentiment was to be found behind the reason to increase minimum mesh size from 3 inches to 3.75 inches. The commercial fishers are seen as the primary villain in struggling walleye, who needs to be constrained further for sustainability be restored. In the same document the message from the Sustainable Development argued that:

> Increasing the minimum mesh size will improve the fishery by allowing more immature fish to escape the fishery, grow larger and spawn as once before being removed by the fishery. This will increase the reproductive potential of the walleye stock and at the same time increase the size of fish caught, which will ensure maximal walleye yield from the fishery. (Manitoba Sustainable Development 2019, 1) [My emphasis].

The above passage resonates well with ideas within the mainstream marine biology, which concentrate mostly on governing fisheries through size limits or restrictions on gear technology. Such intervention sounds legitimate and has been resilient, but is nonetheless, not a magical solution to guarantee biodiversity or sustainability. As Jeppe Kolding et al. (2016) have shown, approaches such as focusing on size limits on species are no magical solution but in fact, can threaten the whole structure of the biodiversity within a particular system. Accordingly, small fish are more able to "withstand higher fishing mortality rates than larger fish" (Law, Plank, and Kolding 2012, 610). As Jeppe Kolding and his co-authors have pointed out, the crux of the problem is that the models that are based on the assumption that smaller fish need protection do not address the complexity of an ecosystem, and consequently the interaction (prey/predation) between species. The catching of small fish is not as detrimental for the health of a stock as one might believe. As a prey for larger fish, high mortality among small fish is normal. Smaller fish play a crucial role as a food source, but over-population of a larger ones will also cause a trouble (Law, Plank, and Kolding 2012, 2016; Law, Kolding, and Plank 2015). In some cases, as Kolding et al. (2016) pointed out, it might be just as good to focus harvest efforts on small fish because of their higher productivity (Law, Plank, and Kolding 2012; Garcia 2012). Focusing solely on that point

would take away the larger argument that Kolding et al. (2016) are making. Kolding et al (2016) have made a great deal of the idea of balancing harvest which promotes fishing according to the biomass of the ecosystem rather than simply governing it through fishing efforts:

> Implementing balanced harvesting requires coordinated management across multiple fisheries with consideration of ecosystem structure, consequences of current fishing selectivity, and implications for future yields. This involves quantifying patterns of fishing activities and ecological consequences aggregated at the fish-community and ecosystem levels (Garcia et al. 2012, 3).

Such an approach that Garcia et al. (2012) describes are messy and complicated. They require us to be even closer to the environment and spend more time taking care of the environment. I would take a step further than Garcia et al. (2012) by insisting that such coordinated management should not only act across multiple fisheries or species, but across social and political levels. The application of restriction on size or gear requires very limited effort from the government to care for the environment, which probably explains the resilience of such policies. In fact, we can translate such a mindset in the larger scheme of environmental politics. Some environmentalists encourage us to limit ourselves in our interaction with nature, but the idea to remove the humans from the equation is impossible and should not be the goal (Latour 2014). In fact, as Latour (2011) points out, it was our separation from nature that made the mess we are in. As Moore (2015) emphasizes in his work, “nature can neither be saved nor destroyed, only transformed” (45). As I discussed in the introduction, Moore’s way of seeing nature as a matrix or oikeios makes his concept of “environmental making” relevant in an effort for a new political possibility. For Moore (2017, 2018, 2015), it is not only humans and political institutions which transform nature but animals as well. Consequently, we cannot remove humans or human organizations from nature. Nature is co-produced. The Anthropocene has gotten a lot of attention for past couple of decades, but both Capitalocene (J. W. Moore 2015) and Chthulucene (Haraway

2016) have made strong pitches for why the Anthropocene might not be the best approach for dealing with environmental crises (Haraway et al. 2016). The Anthropocene's human-centric approach is a diversion which allows the status quo to remain. If societies around the world have the desire to deal with environmental crises, or in the case of Lake Winnipeg, a struggling walleye stock, it needs to deal with the key problem: the rationality behind environmental making.

The MWF push for regulation on the commercial fishery to decrease fishing pressure and in their words, to "save" the walleye and the sauger is therefore misplaced. The governance of Lake Winnipeg is not perfect, in fact, no governance settings can be perfect, and it should not be perfect either. We need, as Latour (2011) argued, to return to a space where unintended consequences are acceptable. Nonetheless, the MWF made one good point in their rhetoric, changes are needed. However, the MWF criticism was misdirected because it only opened the space for the Province of Manitoba to shift the burden on commercial fishers' shoulders by only demanding technical but yet, significant changes for fishers instead of focusing on the larger scale and the effects of calculated consequences of bureaucratic practices. As I will argue, such bureaucratic practices both undermine nature as an actant and sacrifices the livelihood of small-scale fishers on Lake Winnipeg.

6.1 The Cartesian problem and the stickiness of sustainability

During the MWF rallies the word sustainability was cried out frequently. As I mentioned earlier, in one of his speeches, Dr. Forbes listed how he deemed the commercial fishing practice on Lake Winnipeg 'unsustainable'. In general discourse, sustainability is imagined as being a desirable goal for each society and the need for all of us to turn away from unsustainable practices to save Earth. Sustainability is a central discursive claim in both environmental politics and fisheries policies alike. To place sustainability in a policy agenda, as in a code of conduct for

responsible fisheries or when the Minister for Sustainable Development declares buy-back quota as an instrument for sustainability, is supposed to show how much policy makers care for the environment. However, for all the good intentions of policy makers, they rarely think about the unhealthy connotation of sustainability. Sustainability leads us into what one might call a duality problem; the well-known either/or mentality trap. Policy makers and some self-appointed environmentalists like to illustrate the importance of sustainability through apocalyptic predictions. Suddenly, sustainability no longer becomes a fluid and dynamic concept but instead is reduced to an empty signifier through its negation (Brown 2016). As Brown (2016) observed, the discourse of sustainability tends to focus on the *"*unsustainable features of the current order, rather than the positive features of sustainable society*"* (120). Either the policy makers change 'unsustainable' practices or society runs the inevitable risk of collapse. As both Dr. Forbes and Dr. Kotak emphasized, either the Province of Manitoba strengthens the regulations on commercial fishing or the stock of walleye and sauger will be wiped out. That kind of rhetoric would be acceptable in a case where everyone is equal and shares the same vision of what sustainability entails. However, we live in a world that is highly diverse ontologically, and greatly unequal.

As both T. Brown (2016) and Harvey (1996) have pointed out, sustainability can lead to the mindset of "lifeboat ethics", which means we are all equally responsible and we all have the same vision of how to "save" our ecosystem. Justifiably, as T. Brown (2016, 117) stated, "[w]hat one group calls sustainable might be highly inimical to the interest of other groups" [My emphasis]. Brown's words are crucial reminder of the struggle that policy makers and sometimes environmentalists, in this case MWF, ignore when using sustainability to capture people's imaginations. It is well documented how, as an example, Multi-National Corporations have different definitions of sustainability (Kirsch 2007, 2008, 2010; Harvey 1996) or different

standards of clean water than local people (Li 2015; Yates, Harris and Wilson 2017). As Kirsch (2010), Li (2015) and Yates et al. (2017) emphasize, power relations can never be separated from sustainability, and therefore, whose interest is being prioritized. Whether it is in La Oroya in Peru, Papa New Guinea or for First Nations in Canada, hierarchy does matter in defining sustainability and how it is employed in public policy. Here, I have arrived at a second point of why people need to exercise caution when using sustainability in public discourse. The connotation sustainability has with Cartesian dualism, bureaucracy, and therefore the rejection of unpredictability.

In order to become masters of the environment, humans have removed themselves from nature, which is completely opposite to the nature of mastery, as Latour (2011) pointed out. To be a part of nature, we need to put in the effort to nurture and maintain the relationship in order for nature to sustain us, but more importantly, sustain itself; just as a parent would do for one child. Unfortunately, the means towards the goal of capital accumulation and economic growth justifies humans abandoning their responsibilities and the breakdown our relationship with the environment. No longer do humans have to cultivate the environment; the environment needs to nurture the capital need for stability or growth. Consequently, the environment is reduced to an external object. As David Harvey (1996) pointed out, not only was the environment turned into a passive actor but "[…] [a]nimals were no longer viewed as living assistants as they were in the Middle Ages and construed instead as machines […]" (121). In other words, the environment was demoted to the status of a resource for human discretion (Salmond 2014). This is, of course, where Scott's (1998) simplification and Trouillot's (2001) legibility effects comes into play. The environment became an object that humans could manipulate through the magic of calculations, mapping, surveying and of course, technological innovation. The environment was simply something that just could be "touched by the finger" (J. W. Moore 2015, 178). The environment

was no longer part of the society, but just another substance, that we, as humans, could manage through our advanced science and therefore "giving rise to a rationality of world conquest and domination" (J. W. Moore 2017, 605). This shift is referred to as the Cartesian dualism that overhauled our relationship with the environment (Palsson 2006). Like both Moore (2015) and Latour (2011:2014) have emphasized, it has given rise to human exceptionalism, which has provided us with the illusion of control and a predictable world.

The mindset of the Cartesian dualism is never far from the common idea of sustainability, but policy makers based their decision on calculations in the effort to reach some sort of 'ideal' sustainability or economic growth. This is problematic, because for bureaucrats, sustainability needs to be something predictable. It is interesting to reflect on how governments or other institutions define sustainability. As an example, the Seafood Watch report on Lake Winnipeg defined sustainability as "[…] seafood originating from sources, whether wild-caught or farmed, which can <u>maintain</u> or <u>increase</u> <u>production</u> in the long-term without jeopardizing the structure or function of affected ecosystems […]" (Driscol 2015, 2) [My emphasis]. As Henrietta L. Moore (2017) pointed out, there is a tendency for international bodies to define sustainability in the terms of "<u>economic growth and competitiveness</u>" (69) in an effort to "secure the <u>continuation of established lifestyles</u>" (69) [My emphasis]. Sustainability entails that stocks need to maintain the same size or grow in size according to the Canadian government but article 6.1 in Bill C-68, amendment to the Fisheries Act stated:

> […] In the management of fisheries, the Minister shall implement measures to <u>maintain major fish stocks at or above the level</u> necessary to promote the sustainability of the stock […] [My emphasis].

The whole idea of monocropping in agriculture and, forestry or implementation of quota system in fisheries was not for the environment's sake, rather as Scott (1998) emphasized for

"commercial or fiscal interest" (263). Simply, to make the world around us legible, easy to manipulate and more importantly, a way to surge profit margins. This is what J.W. Moore (2015:207) has argued by removing the environment from the society, the environment became "cheap". It then becomes imperative for the whole system to keep it that way. As soon as the environment no longer remains cheap, the profit margin will get smaller to bring the system to a halt. Sustainability becomes another word for, as Henrietta L. Moore (2017) pointed out, safeguarding our lifestyles where no drastic changes are needed. The role of science is supposed to find ways to maintain that growth or increase the output that environment can yield but as soon as the environment "output" deviates from the set target, one will hear the choir sing "unsustainable"; demanding action for restoration to the past production. Brightman and Lewis (2017) called this the trust in the environment's capability of resilience – a programmed power of the environment to reboot or bounce back to "whatever was the pre-crisis condition" (3). Donna Haraway (2016) insightfully pointed out that such belief is one of the greatest mistakes made, and I will credit that to bureaucrats as a whole, that is, perceiving the environment as an "autopoietic system" (37). That is, a system that can reproduce itself, regardless of what is happening outside and can always bounce back to provide a foreseeable result. You can manipulate it as much as needed. Identifying the environment in this way will, as Scott (1998) stated, blind us, because the "facts on paper" are rarely, or ever, as dynamic as the "facts on the ground" (49). The attempt to harness the environment through mapping and hard calculations, robs the environment of its true personality – being a "sympoiesis" (Haraway 2016, 37), capable of unexpected changes where every actant plays its role (Latour 2005). As repeatedly Moore (2015:2017:2018) observed, the environment is truly an actant and consistently resists abiding to the law of capital or rationalization. This results in a distance between the environment and the bureaucrats. The more

bureaucrats attempt to rationalize the environment, the more the resistance will be from the environment, which only exaggerates frustration among the bureaucrats towards the environment for not being predictable enough. Since the bureaucrats are not on the ground like fishers, they have limited intuition on what is happening in the field and their only weapon is their trust in their calculations on paper. This was evident in the formation of the Co-management Board that I will go into further detail in next chapter.

Ultimately, sustainability and environmental politics revolves around relations of value, the processes of valuation and consequently, morality. As Moore (2015) noted, we can no longer avoid talking about how the law of value impacts not only how government´s environmental decisions re-create spaces, with social, economic and political implications but also, how they link to the idea of a sustainable society. It is no accident that Dr. Kotak and the MWF heavily emphasized the economic value argument, by arguing how much the sport fishery could contribute financially to the Province of Manitoba as a way to make a moral claim to Lake Winnipeg. The tension between the sport fishery and the commercial fishery is similar to what Caterina Scaramelli (2019) observed in her research, that different groups will show their moral claims to certain space through means of media or legal documents. More commonly, as David Harvey (1996) pointed out, environmental groups tend to apply what he called "ecological modernisation" (151), an attempt to use monetary value as a universal language in the hope to be "persuasive to those in power" (151). Large hog farmers applied that logic in their claims to a space during the **Save Lake Winnipeg Act** in 2011, by stressing that the hog industry provided millions of dollars to the economy and hundreds of jobs. The commercial fishers occasionally fell into that same trap by trying to showcase to the Minister for Sustainable Development, that the commercial industry too, was crucial for the Manitoba economy. Every time I went to a meeting with commercial fishers,

some would sit beside me to remind me that the commercial industry does contribute more than just these $29 million. They too, as they consistently told me, spent their income within the Province, and probably contribute more than the sport fisheries.

Such logic, however, leads to a double bind within the environmental politics. On the one hand, placing a dollar value to nature helps in some cases, as in E.P. Odum's fight for the wetlands in Georgia, to remind policy makers about the importance of nature, not just as an economic engine (Harvey 1996). On the other hand, by emphasizing the monetary value of nature it forces nature to be a part of the law of value; susceptible to the process of being deemed to be valued or devalued (J. W. Moore 2015). By doing so, some relations with nature are calculated as more valuable than others and become the basis of what should be prioritized. Consequently, lives and spaces will in the end, be treated differently. This certainly resonates with Didier Fassin's (2009) criticism of Foucault´s governmentality and bio-power, which in his words did not account for meaning and values. Christian Parenti (2016) translated the idea of bio-power to Geo-power, to describe the state´s role in environmental making, but he did not expand the role of the value in the process. This is crucial, especially when we talk about sustainability which often, as I mentioned, sweeps these moral questions under the rug. In the value process of environmental making, some areas and people will be devalued, and eventually turned into sacrifice zones (Fassin 2009). Sustainability relies on this value process in a sense that one relation to the environment will always supersede some other relations. The danger of sustainability in current usage is the tendency for concentrating on not only growth or maintenance, but that which will yield the highest monetary value. The problem is that it is highly contradictory aspirations which in the long run undermine the exact "sustainability" that is attempted to be reached, destabilizing people's livelihoods in the areas that were devalued.

In an ever-changing world, the current idea of sustainability is simply insufficient to be a beacon for a sustainable society in a world riddled with inequalities and changes in climate. Sustainability both in practice and theory, needs more space for unpredictability, where the environment is allowed to express itself, free from bureaucratic rationalization.

6.2 It is not about walleye or whitefish percentages

A couple of days after I returned to Lake Winnipeg at the end of 2016, I dropped by at one fisher´s garage that he used as a working station in Gimli. Jacob, an 86-year-old fisher was working hard alongside his son-in-law, Benjamin, putting ice on their daily catch of pickerel before driving it to Selkirk for further processing. Jacob and Benjamin greeted me and welcomed me back to the lake, but shortly the discussion turned to the rumor of a possible buy-back quota program and the allegedly unsustainable practice of the Lake Winnipeg commercial fishery. Jacob looked at me, with a pinch of annoyance in his face, expressing that "politicians do not understand what sustainability is" and as soon as he spoke these words, he turned his back to me and walked away to his house behind the garage. Jacob returned few moments later with an old, square steel plate that looked like a vehicle license plate but as you looked closer, you could see the date, 1917 and Jacob's last name. Jacob looked at me, and asked me, "Solli, do you know what this is?". I looked at it briefly, and I had I good idea that it was an old fishing license, but before I could answer, Jacob said "Look Solli, this was my grandfather´s license". I looked little puzzled, wondering where this conversation was heading. Jacob continued, "You see, this license plate was attached to my grandfather´s wooden fishing box to indicate whether it was a tullibee or a whitefish in the box. Yes, my boy, walleye was not called the king of the lake back then. It was all about whitefish!". I was still bit lost and I wondered to myself whether or not the old man had a point. Jacob kept looking at the old license plate, and then he articulated his frustration with how those

who "do not know how it is fishing in this lake, are the ones forcing those changes". As he continued "They do not share the same idea of sustainability as we do. We do not need any paper stamp to tell us if we are sustainable or not". Then Jacob pointed at the old fishing license one more time and uttered "This is sustainability! My family have been fishing for over 100 years. The lake has provided a livelihood for my family all those years. If that is not sustainability, what is?" [My emphasis].

Certainly, the concerns about sustainability of Lake Winnipeg had been raised frequently and especially after the flood in 1997, numerous choirs started to sing familiar tunes. As an example, Global Nature Fund nominated Lake Winnipeg the most threatened lake of the year in 2013. The frequently cited report from the Seafood Watch in 2015 raised serious concerns about the governance of Manitoba lakes by degrading those lakes to the category of avoidance for fish buyers until the Province of Manitoba committed to 'enhance sustainability'. Later, the final Envoy Report (Friesen, G., and Mohr (2017) as well, raised concerns regarding sustainability of the lake and recommended that the Province initiate a buy back quota program to reach sustainability by buying 20% of existent quotas. Additionally, they recommend that Manitoba should prepare to go through eco-certification to be sustainable. Certainly, members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly have raised their apprehensions regarding Lake Winnipeg sustainability, especially Dr. Jon Gerrard, who was at the time the leader of the provincial Liberal party and the representative of the River Heights constituency in Winnipeg. Repeatedly, Dr. Gerrard stood up in the Assembly to demand government action to reduce excess nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg, as I will address in greater detail later in the chapter. He encouraged the government to bring the lake back to what it was in pre-1970s and often condemned the government for not setting a higher target for reduction of phosphorus (MLA 2007, Deb, P. 1974). The interesting thing was that the argument

was more than often about percentages: 'should it be 10% reduction or even greater?'. Mr. Gerrard also raised questions regarding sustainability of the large walleye once the attention grew rapidly from both the Seafood Watch and the MWF at the commercial fishing. The politicians and the MWF raised serious questions of the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg as catch records showed a decline in walleye and sauger catches. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, Dr. Forbes argued that the sauger has almost gone extinct in Lake Winnipeg. If one looks at the catch records between 1950s and 1990s, one will see that the catch for sauger averaged around 1,651,731 kg. However, as one can see as well, in the same figure below, the average catch for walleye during the same period was 1,636,090 kg.

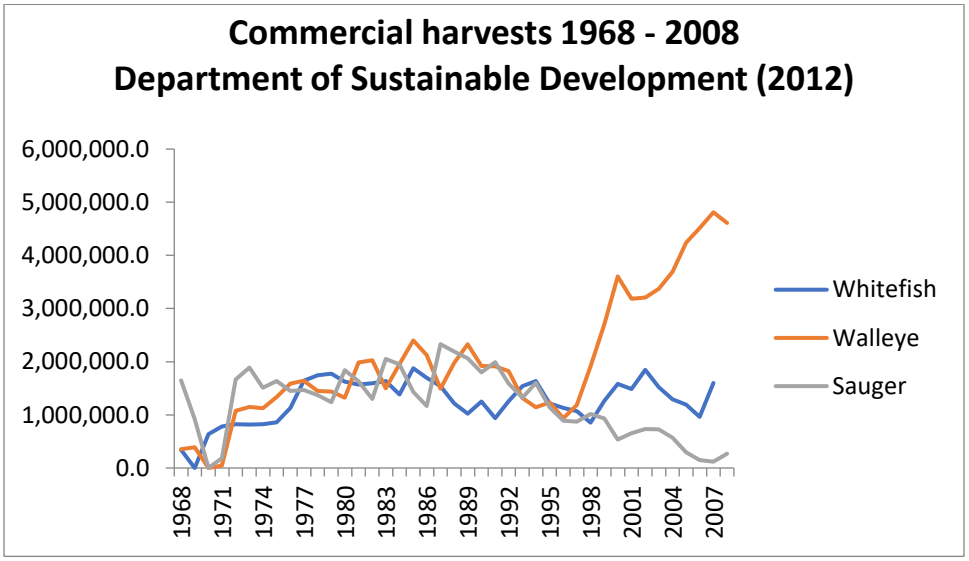

Figure 9: Commercial harvest 1968 - 2008

However, gradually the catch for walleye skyrocketed in the end of the 1990s and in the beginning of 2000 while the catch for sauger diminished all the way down to 120,205 kg. When I started my MA fieldwork during the 2011/12 fishing season, the catch for walleye was at a record high, 4,546,533 kg compare to 157,608 kg of sauger. (Pálsson 2014; Johnson and Pálsson 2015). I will return to the sauger numbers shortly to explain the statistical crash. However, one of the issues that raised MWF´s warning bells was the sudden drop of walleye catch by 1,296,058 kg, or

from 4,546,533 kg, down to 3,250,475 kg during the 2015/2016 fishing seasons (Sustainable Development 2017). What Dr. Forbes, the MFW and eventually, the Province of Manitoba classically declared was that as soon as the production no longer meet certain targets or there was limited capability for further growth, an intervention was needed to restore the production to its former glory. Ironically, Dr. Forbes and his associates argued for crashing the walleye fishery, however, one can read the statistics and concludes that the walleye production was and still is well above past average production which in simple words indicates that the 'crisis' in the walleye fishery is overblown and not placed within a larger context. The rhetoric only shows on one hand how powerful the narrative can be by painting a picture of doom and on the other hand, as following arguments will illustrate, how the two groups wrestle with different versions of reality that reinforces the complexity of the available data.

The clash between the fishers on Lake Winnipeg with both MWF and the Province traces to a completely different idea of sustainability, just like Jacob pointed out with me. After I had the conversation with Jacob, his point finally hit me. In fact, I understood what Barry, another older fisher told me frequently when he described he liked fishing because, and I quote "you never know what you will get". Every time I heard this, I assumed it was a gambling mentality, as in game of poker. You never know what kind of cards you get dealt, but when you get the right cards, you get this jubilant feeling down your spine. For an outsider, fishing might seem like a gamble, you throw your nets in the lake and then you just wait and hope you catch what you wanted. However, fishing is a trade which takes decades to master, if you ever truly can master it, just like a professional poker player. Both learn how to deal with the cards they have been dealt. In terms of fishers on Lake Winnipeg, through their years of accumulated traditional ecological knowledge, they have learned how the currents on the lake move and know exactly how to lay down the net, according

to the direction of the wind. Most importantly, they know that if they want to catch a walleye, they need to lay the nets relatively close to the surface, but if they want to catch either sauger or whitefish, they have to sink the nets closer to the bottom. When Barry says that he likes fishing because he "never knows what he will get", he speaks to the mentality that the fishers on the lake need to have. Expect the unpredictability. "The lake changes day to day, season to season" was another phrase that Marty in Riverton told me that expressed the same sentiment. Even though one catching fish learns to increase one's chance of by learning how the natural environment behaves, the unpredictability nonetheless never disappears; bad climate conditions for walleye spawning or a late break-up of the ice in the spring can transform a season, turning the prospect from a prosperous one to a nightmare. As Brian expressed to me one day when we were discussing sustainability, he perceived it as the ability to "harvest enough fish to make it worthwhile and yet, leave enough fish in the lake to make sure it can carry year after year".

The fishers emphasized that the stock of walleye, whitefish or whatever other fish species are out there fluctuates, which is the nature of unpredictability. The idea that stock could be maintained or even increased every year, was preposterous, as Marty pointed out by stressing that politicians and "a lot of biologists have not experienced the lake enough" and he added that it was not enough, like he said to "study a book" to know what sustainability looks like. In an attempt to debunk the idea that commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg was unsustainable he emphasized that "as of late, we have had natural ups and downs with different species of fish. I do not think there is any one factor into it other than weather and natural stuff that happened". As he added, it could not be considered a natural scenario if walleye would have a successful spawning every year. As he, argued, a healthy stock of walleye would be considered if "we can get two or three good spawn years out of five, is a way of saying we have healthy stocks". This is what Jacob, was trying to

remind me as well, that some years, the whitefish and the tullibees will have a successful run, while in other years, walleye will come back stronger to reclaim space. As Steve emphasized as well, "if I cannot find walleye, I will catch some whitefish instead. I still can make some living" [My emphasis]. For the fishers, the ability to make a living was strongly associated with sustainability. More than often, they pointed out that they would not consider it sustainable fisheries if they cannot support or bring the food to the table as sustainable fishery. As I mentioned in detail in the second chapter, the family plays the central role of each fisher´s idea of a good life. "I do this for my family" was a phrase I often heard from the fishers. In fact, what species they wanted to fish did not matter too much for them, rather whether it provided a livelihood for their families. "Why would we drive walleye or sauger out of existence?" was a question Jon asked me and he provided the answer right away by saying "it would drive us out of existence and undermine our families".

As many fishers stressed to me their observation was that food for the walleye had become scarce, since the invasive rainbow smelt disappeared, the large population of walleye did not have enough food to sustain itself, which, as theorized by the fishers, resulted in an explosion of both whitefish and the tullibee. To quote Steve once again,

> Let's say pickerel stocks are declining, just for argument sake, I am not going after them because I cannot find them. I will go and catch whitefish. Eventually, the pickerel are coming back because no one is really going after them since we would be using different size of nets and fishing in different areas.

It was a similar message that Sam Murdock, the co-chair of Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board and the leadership of Fisher River Cree Nation were conveying in the letter they wrote to the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Provincial Minister of Sustainable Development, Rochelle Squires, a few days after the MWF rally in October 2018. Sam called me, asking if I could help them compose the letter, which I gladly did. We spent hours in

Sam´s office in Fisher River. We focused on a few issues that impact the stocks of Lake Winnipeg, and one of these issues was the fact that fishing stocks do fluctuate, and external conditions do affect spawning rate of fish, but we also pointed out that price structure for fish does affect which fish species are being targeted. This point is not always clear when one looks into annual catch records. In the letter, a declining catch for walleye was not refuted, but the emphasis was on the fact fishers were catching other fish species instead of walleye. As can be seen in the figures below, the combination of catches on Lake Winnipeg did change between the 2009/10 and 2015/16 fishing seasons.

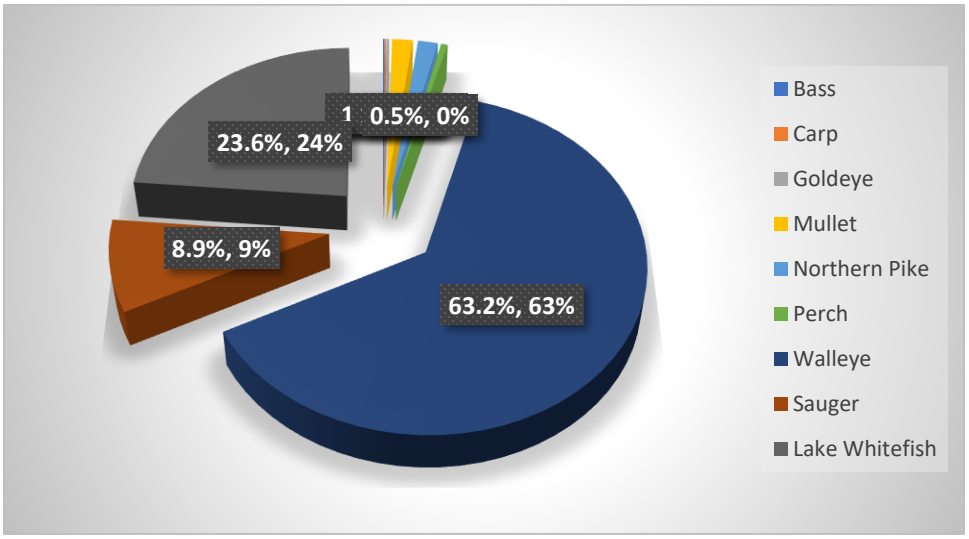

Figure 10: Commercial Fishing Production composition (2009/2010)

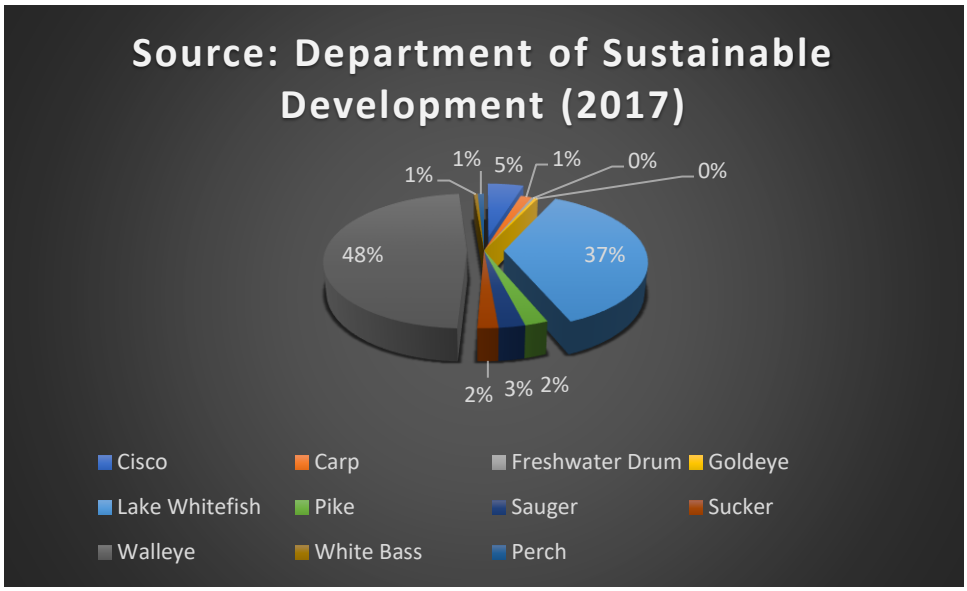

Figure 11: Commercial Fishing Production composition

As one can see, during the 2009/10 fishing season, 63% of the catch was walleye, compared to 24% of whitefish, and only 9% sauger (Pálsson 2014). What is important to note, is that tullibee (cisco) did not even register in terms of catch. However, the picture changed during the 2015/16 fishing season, which saw an explosion of catch in both whitefish and tullibee (cisco) compared to both walleye and sauger. Walleye dropped down to 48% while unexpectedly, tullibee (cisco) contributed 5% of the total catch and whitefish 37%. Fishers in the South Basin and the channel area were catching unprecedented number of whitefish, but it was the tullibee that stole the thunder. In the fall of both 2016, and 2017 fishers were catching tullibees more than they wanted. I remember Lenny, whom I often went out fishing, had his net floating up to the surface due to a massive amount of tullibee in his nets. Many fishers took advantage of the unexpected explosion of tullibees, especially since the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation was offering fishers a $15/kg for the tullibee roe. Lenny was one of those fishers who stopped fishing for walleye in the fall and focused all of his attention to the tullibee. Many other fishers, however, decided the opposite. To pick up and process tullibee roe requires long working hours and a lot of energy.

Many of them either set fewer nets, or simply pulled all their nets out of the lake but as Barry explained:

> It means it reduces your catches for pickerel (walleye) and it is not so much because it is not pickerel there, but because the volume of tullibees are so high, you can only set so many nets because you cannot look after all of them. Especially, when we were getting up to seven to ten boxes of tullibees to a net, and that ties you down. You can only fish two or three nets, and some days, not even that. The catch of pickerel [walleye] is the same or less than it was before, so you cannot spend the effort on the pickerel that you need to catch the amount you want to catch.

The problem as Barry explains, was what many other fishers were experiencing, especially those who have been used to relying on walleye. Suddenly, the tullibee smothered the walleye which forced many fishers, especially on the South Basin to ship tullibee or whitefish to FFMC rather than walleye.

In terms of the sauger, as most of the fishers have tried to emphasize, the price structure has for years simply not given them any reason to go for the sauger. As an example, in 17/18 fishing season, a fisher received $6.61 for a medium headless walleye compared to $3.09 for medium headless sauger (See appendix B). More importantly, for years FFMC has marketed small and medium saugers as a “baby walleye” (Dave Burgunder, personal comm) in the US, and the sauger was therefore counted as walleye in the records but not as saugers. The fishers pointed out that the eruption of tullibee in Lake Winnipeg is an illustration of the unpredictability of fisheries to which they needed to adapt. They also pointed out the scare that rainbow smelt gave many in the 90s when introduced into the lake. As Marty reminded me, they turned out to be one of the main food sources for the walleye. However, by accepting the unpredictability of natural ebbs and flows of fish stocks, in some ways, the fishers on Lake Winnipeg trust the resilience of the lake, and the production can bounce back, even though production might not be the same as before. The fishers on Lake Winnipeg have been consistent in their faith, that the explosion of tullibee and

whitefish on Lake Winnipeg cannot solely be explained by the unpredictability of nature. This might sound contradictory, but the fishers are aware of how environment can at the same time be transformed. Shortly after the Seafood Watch published their report on Manitoba inland fisheries, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly established a committee to do an inquiry study, which was led by Harold Westdal. His report showcased that the fishers on Lake Winnipeg attributed some of the ecological transformations to bureaucratic practices. As the fishers pointed out to Mr. Westdal, and anyone who reads the Seafood Watch report will see, the environment is never mentioned in their report nor are bureaucratic practices and the focus is solely on fishing efforts (Westdal 2016). This comes back to a time when I was sitting in Sam Murdock's office while we were discussing sustainability of Lake Winnipeg. Sam, who has fished for years and has been active in the community leadership, turned to me and said:

> For the government sustainability means you can only harvest 30% of your quota in pickerel [walleye] and balance it with whitefish. For them, that is sustainability. For me, sustainability is, let put a stop to waste being dumped into this lake. That is sustainability, and then we will see when you have created a healthy lake and from there, you create healthy stocks… But it cannot just be about walleye or whitefish percentages. That is just short-term thinking. What about the long-term stuff that is killing the lake?

The quote shows the sentiment of what the leadership of Fisher River Cree Nation was trying to convey in the letter to the Ministers and what I tried to argue in my own op-ed article in Winnipeg Free Press but could not explain in detail due to lack of space. Sustainability cannot be focusing solely on fishing effort, and that is a point that fishers as a whole were trying to drive home in their clash with MWF and the Province of Manitoba. They argued that they were not the reason for the transformation of Lake Winnipeg, rather, there are larger factors in plays. This requires us to include valuation processes and the Province's environment-making projects.

6.3 Lake Winnipeg as a sacrifice zone

On April 29th, 2013, a group of farmers protested the use of the Portage Diversion, a water control system on the Assiniboine River floodway located in the town Portage La Prairie about 85 km west of Winnipeg, by preventing provincial technicians from activating the channel to divert a high volume of water flowing through the Assiniboine River. The main function of the water control system is to protect larger urban areas, such as Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg from floods in Assiniboine River and Red River valley. As Thompson, Ballard, and Martin (2013) pointed out, two of the prime objectives of the Portage Diversion as an infrastructure is to "minimize the volume of water diverted to Lake Manitoba" and "protecting the city of Winnipeg" (83). This is the danger every year, or at least every second year in the spring and autumn: A high-water level on the Assiniboine River is diverted into Lake Manitoba, through to Lake St. Martin and into Lake Winnipeg. This is one of the highlights of Manitoba´s 'victory' over nature. The Portage Diversion was initiated by the Conservative Premier, Dufferin Roblin in the early 1960s. It was continued by Premier Doer in the 1990s and is still not fully completed. As Premier Selinger reminded everyone in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, during the debate on the farmers' protest, the idea of the Portage Diversion was to "protect as many lives as possible" (MLA 2013, Deb, P. 875). The farmers had nothing against protecting people in Winnipeg or valuable farming lands in the south of the Province. The farmers were showing that they were bearing the consequences of protecting certain areas. Their land and livelihoods were ultimately devalued for the 'greater good'.

In the spring of 2011, an unprecedented flow in Assiniboine River threatened to flood Winnipeg, Portage La Prairie and Brandon if nothing was done. The Government of Manitoba knew that at the time the current infrastructure would not have the capability to receive such

excessive inflow of water, as Mr. Larry Maguire a member of Progressive Conservatives stated during a debate at the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. The Province of Manitoba decided to spend $160 million dollars to build a temporary channel between Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, and then between Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipeg. For many politicians those actions seemed just a small drop in the larger scheme, and by raising the water level of Lake Winnipeg by only an inch or a quarter of an inch as Steve Ashton (NDP) the former Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation claimed, was only by his judgement "an imperceptible difference on the levels of the lake" (MLA 2012, Deb, P. 1251). For them, it was just a problem on a map that had to be solved. This takes me back to a consultation meeting between the Province of Manitoba and the Fisher River Cree Nation in 2018 regarding the proposed permanent outlet between Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipeg. The meeting was held in the old community center in Fisher River, and when the representatives of the Province wanted to show where the service road and the permanent outlet were to be placed, they brought out a big map of the area. We all surrounded this table and paid close attention to where the Province's representatives ran their fingers on the map, showcasing the locations. Even though fishers and hunters raised some concerns with the location of the infrastructure, the Provincial representatives still argued it was the best option. I remember how abstract this moment felt, seeing everyone hovering around a map and I could only envision the scenario that Mr. Maguire described when it was decided to build an emergency outlet between Lake Winnipeg and Lake St. Martin in the fall of 2011 to further protect southern Manitoba and City of Winnipeg from a massive flood. For the politicians and the bureaucrats, it was a question of logistics; the rest of the area was just perceived as the Honorable Premier, Greg Selinger, acknowledged as a "sacrifice zone" (MLA 2015, Deb, P. 2216). As Sam told me once in his office, "I know exactly why they are digging the dikes here. They could have tried to find ways around

Brandon or Portage la Prairie, but they choose this area. I am not stupid. I know exactly what they are doing". And since the flood of 2011 was considered an emergency event it did not require an environmental assessment or an extensive consultation with First Nations (Thompson, Ballard, and Martin 2013).

The flood in 2011 was massive, and the consequences of the flood are still felt in the Interlake area and have probably not gotten the attention deserved, but that can be contributed to the fact of how well the infrastructure held up. The general public in Winnipeg were shielded from the worst consequences of the flood and were almost unaware of the tragedy as Mr. Nevakshonoff pointed out in a debate in the assembly in 2013 (MLA 2013, Deb, P. 3631). It was the First Nations and other residents of the Interlake area that were flooded. By diverting water through the Portage Diversion, it not only raised the water level of Lake Manitoba, but it completely displaced the First Nations community at Lake St. Martin. Thompson, Ballard, and Martin (2013) have described elsewhere how the man-made flood destroyed the First Nation community and left the area "unsuitable for building residences or infrastructure" (77). The effect and the aftermath of the flood on communities and fisheries on Lake Winnipeg are less documented. The flood of 2011 almost wiped out the entire fishing industry in the small community north of Fisher River, most of whom are First Nations as well as in the Metis community of Dauphin River. The fishing industry of Dauphin River was thriving before the flood with 65 fishers working full- and part-time but overnight it changed. The residents of the area were evacuated and most of the fishers there could not fish for a couple of years. As Margaret reminisced one day when I visited her shortly after one co-management meeting, "we could not get our product out even if we could have fished. We had no problem getting to the lake, but we could not set our nets and ship our fish because nobody could come to get it". The flood left the infrastructure in bad shape since the water level was high

enough to cover the roads, and as Margaret pointed out, it literally left bitter taste in the mouths of many fishers as the water started to settle down. To quote Margaret, one could

> …smell rotten fish. The smell was very strong, you did not have to open a window, you could smell it as you drove by. You knew something was out there rotting. We could see along the edges, smaller fish stuck. Whatever came with the water in the swampy areas got stuck as the water went down.

The Province of Manitoba decided to buy back quota from the Dauphin River area a couple of years later in 2013. As a result of the flood which paralyzed the fishing industry in the area further, only 12 fishers were still active during the 2018/19 season. There was a big reason why I visited Margaret in her home in Dauphin River, in her home outside of the reserve. Fishers in the South Basin and North Basin, especially fishers in Fisher River had noticed the changes in the ecology of the lake after the new diversion was built between Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipeg. Lake Manitoba and Dauphin River could not handle the water the Portage Diversion diverted to protect the city, which resulted in construction of an emergency diversion which seems to have even more detrimental effects on the fishing industry than the flood itself.

The construction of the diversion was quick, and the Province of Manitoba began using the diversion in the fall of 2011 to mitigate the high-water problems from Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. The problem of the diversion became visible quickly for the fishers from Fisher River who were fishing from Macbeth Point and of course those who were close to Dauphin River. The diversion has been used a couple of times since and every time the channel has opened, the power of the waterflow has been strong enough to grab whatever debris is loose in the waterway and bring it to the shores of Lake Winnipeg. By doing so, the waterflow from the channel not only changes the fishers' effort but it impairs both whitefish and walleye spawning efforts. As Freddie, Sandy, and most fishers from Fisher River noted to me, there is more silt and debris in the water close to the fishing camps of Macbeth Point whenever the channel is opened. As Sandy remarked

one day, “I have never seen dirt bad like that. It was almost like a six to eight inches of thickness”. As he describes the dirt as combination of debris, silt and tree sticks, he continued describing the effects of the debris on his fishing.

> You just do not catch any fish because it [the dirt] will choke them out! The fish that get into the net can die a lot quicker. They just run away from it and they go to other places where are not their normal spots. I don’t know where the fish goes but, if they go further in deeper water or they just swim away?

As Sandy continued, he articulated that the effects of the dirt and the silt were not only felt when the diversion is opened, but year-round:

> In the winter it [the dirt] floats down to the bottom but as the water warms up it tends to lift up and touch the surface of the lake. Late spring it seems to come out more than beginning of the season. But, in the fall it starts to sink slow back to the bottom as the water cools down.

Moreover, Freddie told me one day as I was discussing this issue with him in the cafeteria in the Fisher River band office, the visibility of the dirt depends on the weather:

> It all depends on the weather. It is different if we have cloudy or sunny days, windy days blowing either north or south. Different things happen on the lake depends on the currents and the flow of the lake… If we have a cloudy day and you are heading up to your net, you can pretty much guarantee that there is going to be dirt on those nets when you get there. On sunny days, boom. No dirt!

The bottom of Lake Winnipeg has been well known to be muddy, hence the name of Lake Winnipeg in Cree, Muddy waters or winipek. However, the dirt seems to have resulted in change of the bottom of Lake Winnipeg which consequently changed fishing efforts as observed by Freddie as well;

> I find the bottom hardened more in certain areas because I find my nets tend to move more than it used to back in the day. I never had that issue before… Once we put net in place and they would stay on the same spot and they would stay there all season. We would fish for five weeks and not one net would move. Now adays, almost every day we are tying nets and putting them back where they belong. The anchors of the nets are constantly moving.

As another fisher pointed out,

> In 2012 after they used the channel, you set up your nets but the next morning you would go out to lift them and basically there is nothing there because a 65-foot tree is stuck in the nets. It has taken out the buoy and the anchors of the net, so you had to cut your losses. You also would find your net up in the shore, wrapped around trees. They [the Province] said "we will do a net replacement program, but we want your old nets back!". So, I said, do you want me to bring the tree with me?

Those changes that both Freddie and Sandy mention contribute to increasing fishing effort and is an indication of the drop in catch for walleye shortly after the flood of 2011. The fishers are forced to fish in different areas, more often further from the shore, which consequently is less safe especially for fishers who fish in the North Basin like Fisher River and Dauphin River. Moreover, what is overlooked as well is the fact that the number of fishers in Dauphin River dropped by almost 82%. The Province has already bought out a few licenses from Dauphin River in 2013 and others have not yet been allowed to move back home which in itself, can partly explain why the statistics show that fishers have been catching less walleye. Furthermore, the soil sediment the channel brings to the lake is not just a nuisance for fishers who are working hard to make a living, but the fishers observed that the dirt is jeopardizing the future of the fisheries, due to the degradation of the spawning grounds.

The opening of the channel changed waterflows of the lake which the fishers have observed has resulted in obstruction in waterways for fish and robbed both the walleye and whitefish of their fulfillment of life which includes, as Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg (2015) remarked, the "capacity of movement, for social and familial association, and work and play" (328). The fishers in Fisher River noticed that both the walleye and the whitefish were not following their usual path during the spawning season. Also, if the fish species found their usual spawning grounds, it had been ruined by debris. Fisher River fishers work from Macbeth Point, and from that point of view, fishers have a good view of a couple of the most important spawning grounds for walleye and whitefish. The fishers pointed out that one of the most productive spawning grounds for walleye

is Sturgeon Bay, located northwest of Macbeth Point. Other well-known spawning grounds are Dauphin River, Buffalo Creek, and Lake St. Martin, which all flow into Dauphin River. Every spring, schools of walleye travel to Dauphin River and Sturgeon Bay to spawn while every fall, the whitefish swim towards Lake St. Martin through Dauphin River to spawn. However, fishers on Fisher River noticed that the current changed when the channel was opened in 2011 and 2014. They saw, as Sam Murdock told me at one of our first meetings, that the whitefish and the walleye that used to use Dauphin River as a gateway to spawn chose to swim up the channel instead. As he said, the current of the channel waterflow was stronger than the Dauphin river. As I have learned from my time on Lake Winnipeg both Sam Murdock and Margret taught me that the fish always pick the stronger current to swim up against. As the fish swam up the channel, the spawning success was compromised because as fishers pointed out, as soon as the channel was no longer required when an acceptable water level in Lake Manitoba was reached, the channel was shut down, which led to the fish getting stuck in the channel. As Sam told me, the media was either not aware or did not care enough to report on a massive fish death in the channel. He witnessed hundreds of fish getting stuck there, and the smell accordingly was horrible. Margaret shared a similar story, as she stated:

> When they (walleye and whitefish) used the channel, and the water started to drop drastically fast the fish was already there and they (the Province) had a huge fish kill because the fish was stuck in that channel. The water dropped so the fish could not carry on nor go back. They were stuck in the middle!

Even though the fish, according to the fisher's observations managed to spawn in little creeks here and there around the Dauphin River area, they doubt it was successful. Many of those creeks flooded in 2011 and those creeks have not recovered fully. The same can be said about the debris and the silt that came with the channel. It made the spawning area around Sturgeon Bay and on the shores close to the Dauphin River very inhospitable for both walleye and whitefish to spawn.

The dirt pushed the walleye from their usual spawning grounds in Sturgeon Bay, but if there was any attempt at spawning, the soil sediment in the gravel beds ruined it. Additionally, this dirt pushed the whitefish from the North Basin to the South Basin. This resulted loss in spawning years, but the fishers themselves have argued that the fishery had lost 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015 spawning years for both whitefish and walleye. As Margret observed, and even what some of the anglers have pointed out, the fish have certainly got smaller:

> We are seeing the effect of that flooding on the age classes of the fish. There were big fish before 2011 but then there were small fish after 2014. For couple of years there was no spawning for walleye or whitefish.

Certainly, the above observations from the fishers make sense when one looks at both the catch records from the Province and production records from FFMC. Not only has the overall catch for fish on Lake Winnipeg dropped, but more whitefish are appearing in the South Basin and fewer walleyes. The production records from FFMC also tells the story that fishers have been catching more small fish compared to the medium or jumbo sizes since 2011. This is just a small piece of the puzzle that the Manitoba Wildlife Federation and the Province have missed when lobbying for their own agenda for sustainability. The problem is not necessarily that the fishers are targeting smaller or bigger fish as claimed, but rather it is the size of fish in most abundance in the lake. The environmental altering project of the channel in response to the flood in 2011 has transformed the ecology of the lake. Yet, it is just one of many environmental projects initiated by the Province of Manitoba or other actors to transform Lake Winnipeg. The Province of Manitoba is in a peculiar situation which leads to a very contradictory governance practice; the attempt to balance the "saving" part of the conservation and the developmental aspect of sustainability, that is, making sure to transform nature in the interest of steady growth. The Province of Manitoba has chosen the sustainability path as a way to secure a steady growth in economic development which invariably

leads efforts for conservation of the lake to fail, simply because it has not dealt with the core issue of the lake; the monetary valuation of Lake Winnipeg.

6.4 Cheap nature and economic development

On October 5th, 2017, Rob Altemeyer, NDP member and the representative of the Wolseley Constituency in Winnipeg, tabled a resolution to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba on protecting Manitoba lakes and rivers. The resolution was targeted towards the plan of the Conservative government to deregulate restrictions on Manitoba´s hog production and processing which as Mr. Altemeyer pointed out would increase *"*the risk of nutrient drainage into the Lake Winnipeg and other watersheds*"*. Altemeyer continued by stating:

> But it´s not just inaction that is the problem, Mr. Speaker. They are making deliberate choices to weaken important environmental protections, and these are protections that exist not just for the sake of the environment, which of course, would have and indirect impact on people; they are making choices that are going to directly have negative impacts on Manitobans, whether it´s our drinking water in particular, our ability to enjoy the lakes and the outdoors. (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 2787)

Altemeyer´s NDP colleague from the Constituency of Flin Flon, Mr. Tom Lindsey criticized the Conservative government for *"*appeasing their corporate masters*"* because by "reducing regulations, cutting inspections allowing more pollution to flow into the lakes might be good for business*"*. Mr. Lindsey hit the nail on the head as well by remarking that "[t]his government's whole concept is everything has to be about <u>generating revenue</u>*"* (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 2792) [My emphasis]. Altemeyer's and Lindsey's statements have grain of truths in them, but that can also be said about the attack from Minister Squires on NDP's environmental record when she said *"*let's talk about the massive sewage overflows that occurred under the NDP's watch. The NDP let waste-water flow into our waters without treatment for 17 years*"* (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 2791). Ironically, all three of them are unwittingly on the same side of the coin, briefly describing the colossal failure of bureaucratic practices on Lake Winnipeg. But both parties have contributed

to the idea of Lake Winnipeg as a nature-as-sink to keep the economic wheels of the Province turning.

Both NDP and the Conservative parties have been exchanging the role of the governing party in Manitoba since 1958 and during those 62 years both parties have attempted to deal with sustainability of Lake Winnipeg through regulations. I will review three of the latest regulations to enhance sustainability of the lake as a whole, Bill 17 (The Environmental Act, 2008), The Save Lake Winnipeg Act (2011) and Invasive Species Awareness Week (2018). These regulations have been ineffective and have done little more than contribute to the contradictions within the government agenda. On paper, these initiatives were put in place to protect Lake Winnipeg and the relationships between the people and the lake. However, these same initiatives are undermined by government actions to keep nature as a cheap resource to generate revenue. By doing so, these highly exploitative relationships with Lake Winnipeg, are intentionally untouched so as to not compromise any possible monetary rewards for the Province. Such actions do undermine local people's relationship with the lake. The problem, as J. W. Moore (2015) pointed out is how reliant our economic systems are on accessing cheap nature for capital accumulation.

> As the forces of production advanced, so too demand for cheap energy, food and raw materials. Cheap thermal energy to smelt the metals, process the sugarcane and make glass, beer, bricks and everything else demanded by the world market. Cheap food to keep the price of labor-power from rising, or at least from rising too fast. And cheap raw materials – timber for shipbuilding, potash for dyeing textiles, iron for everything – to maintain a virtuous circle of expanding commodity production. In sum, the whole nature had to be put to work – in a radically alienating and dynamic way – for capitalism to survive (J. W. Moore 2017, 613) [My emphasis]

Lake Winnipeg has certainly been put to work for cheap energy, both for domestic and US consumption. Historically it has served as a source of a cheap food, a cheap dumping site for the City of Winnipeg and factory farms and lastly as a source of cheap raw material through peat mining and sand for fracking. This is certainly the process of a long environment making project

which has transformed Lake Winnipeg into what politicians call the "economic engine" of Manitoba (MLA 2008, Deb, P. 3467). Such environment making projects do have alienating and destructive elements that are difficult to abandon. By concentrating solely on capital accumulation and maintaining cheap nature following what Altvater (2016) labels a "logic of circularity", one forgets that the "negative cumulative effect" of extraction or of using nature as a dumping site until "eventually only a black hole remains". This dialectic between the value generating activities on the one hand and the cost of appropriation of nature on the other, alienates not only the general public from seeing nature as nothing more than an economic engine. As soon as the cost or "negative cumulative effect" has caught up with the appropriation of nature the ones who are closest will be alienated by the "black hole" through loss of livelihood. Nonetheless, the sacrifice of the ones closest to the "black hole" is deemed acceptable if the area generates monetary rewards and nature is still considered cheap.

6.4.1 Bill 17 and Save the Lake Winnipeg Act

Bill 17 and Save Lake Winnipeg Act both deal with the same issue, namely excessive nutrient loading into Lake Winnipeg. Bill 17 was the predecessor of the Save the Lake Winnipeg Act in 2011. The latter was intended as a more comprehensive Bill. The excess nutrient loading of nitrogen and phosphorus into Lake Winnipeg is nothing new. Older fishers reminded me that they noticed algae in the lake in the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s. As Elvis, a fisher in his late 60s told me when he reminisced about his childhood as we were sitting in his living room in Gimli, he could not recall ever seeing a sauger or walleye in the South Basin until after the 1960s:

> I have a suspicion that DDT was a contributing factor because in the 1960s there were a lot of algae blooms, especially out here [South Basin]. I do not recall much of it in the north end but once the DDT was banned in the mid-60s the fish seemed to come back in the 1970s.

The issue of algae bloom was raised by fishers in the end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s. As Dr. Gerrard rightly pointed out, one of the well-known and outspoken commercial fishers, Robert T. Kristjanson had raised the issue "consistently and persistently" with him and other politicians in the early 2000s (MLA 2007, Deb). In fact, from the beginning of the 1990s to the early 2000s just the phosphorus introduction to the lake almost doubled (Schindler, Hecky, and McCullough 2012; McCullough et al. 2012). Moreover as Schindler, Hecky, and McCullough (2012) pointed out, during a 13 year period (1994 to 2007) the amount of phosphorus released to the Lake Winnipeg watershed was amplified by 71% compared to an 18% increase of nitrogen to the waterways during the same period. This certainly created a huge problem since it produced a massive accumulation of algae and bacteria which not only clogged fishers' nets but jeopardized fish habitat as well.

This issue was brought forward frequently by Dr. Gerrard to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in early 2000s. Dr. Gerrard persistently asked the government of Manitoba for actions to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen loading into Lake Winnipeg. Frequently and consistently, he called for actions to restore the lake to its pre-1970s conditions, which seemed to be the 'ideal' situation, or the state that politicians and other stakeholders wanted the lake to bounce back to. As Al Kristofferson the chair of Lake Winnipeg Consortium pointed out in a committee debate in 2011, the level of phosphorus in 1969 was 37 micrograms per litre compared to 55 micrograms per litre back in 2011 (MLA 2011, Deb, P. 144). Dr. Gerrard introduced a bill to the Legislative Assembly in 2007 in an effort to cut nutrient loading to the Lake Winnipeg by 1) banning phosphorus in dishwasher detergents, 2) banning the spreading of manure during winter and 3) placing restrictions on phosphorus in cosmetic fertilizers.

Since Dr. Gerrard and his fellow Liberals were in minority, the NDP had limited interest in paving the way for Dr. Gerrard's bill which he had prefaced by describing the NDP record towards Lake Winnipeg as a "failure" (MLA 2007, Deb, P. 775). However, the NDP introduced Bill 17 which was somewhat like the one Dr. Gerrard introduced just months earlier. Bill 17 was supposed to be the *"*be-all and end of all answers*"* (MLA 2008, Deb, P. 2309) as Dr. Jon Gerrard put it so neatly in his speech during the debate of the bill back in 2008. The big difference between the bills was that the NDP approach to reducing phosphorus involved placing restriction on hog production within the Province by introducing moratorium on hog barn expansion of operations that had more than 300 animal units of hogs. Hog production changed drastically after the Province of Manitoba decided to dismantle the Hog Marketing board in the mid-1990s as I briefly mentioned in earlier chapters. Consequently, the family hog operations were slowly being replaced by bigger and more efficient farms, for example, the production moved from 2 million hogs in the 1990s to 9.5 million hogs (MLA 2008, Deb, P. 3467). Through the years, with the help of the government, bigger farmers mostly had taken up various short-sighted, environment degrading farming practices to make the food production in Manitoba as cost-efficient as possible, which includes spreading manure in the winter to speed up growth in the spring as well as draining wetlands and digging channels to divert water as quickly as possible to the closest waterways to speed up production (Schindler, Hecky, and McCullough 2012). If one drives in southern Manitoba or in the Interlake area, one will see dikes everywhere, and witness how water flows with minimal resistance on its way to Lake Winnipeg. This certainly becomes a problem during spring when the ice melts and water levels rise which means a lot of nutrient waste is being swept off farming land to Lake Winnipeg. Certainly, this was a very controversial step taken by the NDP government, but it did not tackle the big issue, that is how anthropogenic activity transforms Lake Winnipeg. The

bill only slowed it down a bit by placing the moratorium. The role of Lake Winnipeg as a cheap dumping site had not changed. This is the problem the Province of Manitoba is facing and the reason why their regulations on Lake Winnipeg are ultimately ineffective. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, sustainability is often about maintaining or increasing production. Maintain the lifestyle we have, which translates to generating revenue by, as J. W. Moore (2018, 2017, 2015) observed, by keeping nature as cheap as possible to maintain profitability of food production or any other production thereof. This contradiction in conserving the sustainability of the lake and the need for a cheap nature was highlighted not just in the Bill 17 but also in the Save Lake Winnipeg Act in 2011. The debate of the bills paralleled each other so I will not repeat myself, but I will show the dichotomy between two different goals in the debate on Save Lake Winnipeg Act.

Bill 17 did not "save" Lake Winnipeg and the issue of eutrophication of Lake Winnipeg had not attracted national attention until the documentary, *Save My Lake* premiered on CBC in the spring of 2011 as a part of the CBC series, The Nature of Things with the environmental activist David Suzuki. The premise of the documentary was to illustrate how just a few ecological and human interventions have created, as the storyline stated: *"*a perfect storm of factors that are putting the lake and its inhabitants at risk*"* (Newman 2011). In *Save my Lake* it is implied that Lake Winnipeg was *"*caught in a complex web*"* which might be understood as an accidental interaction between the environment and the humans. It certainly was no accident. Lake Winnipeg has undergone a long process of cheapening nature and Lake Winnipeg, due to it remoteness, has been seen as an excellent "sacrifice zone" to serve larger urban areas and economic interests. In fact, Lake Winnipeg demonstrates the valuation processes and relationship people and politicians have with the watershed and the environment. Just a few months after the release of *Save my Lake*,

the NDP government of Manitoba introduced a new bill that was yet another attempt to "save" Lake Winnipeg.

The goal of Bill 46 or Save Lake Winnipeg Act according to the former Minister of Conservation, Bill Blaikie, was to lower the volume of the nutrients entering into the lake through four different strategies, (1) improved protection of wetlands, (2) placing restrictions on manure storage facilities for hogs, (3) two-year suspension of peat mining and (4) upgraded sewage treatment in urban areas. According to the NDP the combination of these strategies was supposed to reduce phosphorus released into the lake by 50%. Just like the previous Bill, the government placed a moratorium on the hog industry and then added a two-year suspension of peat mining within the Province. What was most interesting regarding the debate of the Bill was it shed a light on the tension between the two goals of the Province: sustainability of Lake Winnipeg and economic development of the Province. Most of the debate in the Legislative Assembly was more or less concentrated on how to prevent costs from rising for both beef and hog industries and also for the City of Winnipeg and the promise of the industry to find 'new innovative ways' to deal with waste. As the Conservative members of the legislature and some representatives from the respective industries illustrated, there were moral claims to the waterways due to economic factors. As Cam Dahl from the Manitoba Beef Producers Association pointed out in a committee debate "[i]t is undeniable that agriculture is an economic driver in Manitoba. The industry makes up about 28 percent of the Province's GDP and is Manitoba's single largest <u>wealth generating activity</u>" (MLA 2011, Deb. P 126) [My emphasis]. Cam Dahl continued by emphasizing the economic importance economic importance of agriculture, "[t]he value of goods and services demanded by Manitoba's beef operation is about <u>$635 million</u> annually." (MLA 2011, Deb. P. 126) [My emphasis]. The pork industry in Manitoba applied a similar strategy through the voice of Karl

Kynoch who emphasized at the same occasion *"*you will not save Lake Winnipeg with this bill, but you will eventually kill a billion-dollar industry which currently employs 11,000 people in Manitoba*"* (MLA 2011, Deb, P. 208) [My emphasis]. Those are examples of moral claims that the agricultural industry applied both in 2008 against the Bill 17 and Save Lake Winnipeg Act. Underscoring the importance of 'wealth creation' but also implying that they needed the expansion to afford the 'technology' to "save" Lake Winnipeg. Dr. Karin Wittenberg's testimony in front of the committee debate on Bill 17 was frequently quoted among Conservatives opposing the bill. Heather Stefanson, a member of the Conservative party did so by pointing out that:

> Innovative-incentive-based regulatory tools have greater potential for environmental returns, through improved cost effectiveness and promotion of innovative technology for environmental controls. (MLA 2008, Deb, P. 3269) [My emphasis].

The focus becomes how to deal with the environmental event such as nutrient loading in the least financially painful way possible and trust that the technology will be advanced enough to be 'cost effective'. This is quite ironic and resonates well with Altvater's (2016) criticism of Anthropocene´s fetishism for technological solutions by relying on technology and capital that were the causes of the situation that we are experiencing in the first place. It was the same debate surrounding the requirement from the Save Lake Winnipeg Act that the City of Winnipeg improve their waste management facilities to reduce phosphorus entering the river system which ultimately will end up in Lake Winnipeg. The cost of updating such facilities was more important to discuss in the Legislative Assembly rather than addressing the fact that the City of Winnipeg and other actors, not just in Manitoba but in other Provinces and states in the US were abusing cheap waterways to dump waste.

Certainly, farmers, municipalities, and industries in the United States and in other Provinces in Canada are also responsible for excess nutrient loading into Lake Winnipeg. The

problem is that none of these actors deals with the end results. For many, this is the cheapest way to get rid of waste and they do not need to live with the consequences. Even for the City of Winnipeg, the perception of Lake Winnipeg seems to be that it is a place further away than just less than a hundred kilometers. One does not have to spend much time on the lake to see the consequences of waste being dumped in waterways. As Freddie talked about the dirt that came out of the channel that can be seen best during a sunny day, he and other fishers said the same thing about the algae bloom. On a sunny day, anyone can see the thick green layer along the shores or on the harbors around the lake. The algae bloom clogs fisher´s nets which increases fishing effort. What fishers in the lake's North- and South Basins observed is that the algae blooms have been consuming oxygen to a state that in some pockets up north, the oxygen depletion is reaching the point which results in less food source for the walleye and whitefish. The fish then are more frequently moving to look for a food source down south. Part of the problem is the loss of 1,329 hectares of wetlands every year (Hoye 2017), sacrificed for Manitoba's economic gain. The wetlands serve a vital role as a filtration system which would slow down the rate of phosphorus entering Lake Winnipeg (Schindler, Hecky, and McCullough 2012).

6.4.2 Half-minded measures.

> Anybody who has been on a small plane that´s taken off from St. Andrews at any time in the last five years – I mean, this isn´t just about wetlands. This is about the mess we have from peat mining in this Province where there´s no restoration requirement at all. And you fly over dozens of them if you´re going to the east side of the lake, if you´re going to Norway House; no matter where you´re going, it is a mess. (MLA 2011, Deb, P. 177).

The above is a quote from Ms. Gaile Whelan Enns who spoke on behalf of Manitoba Wildlands in the committee debate on the Save Lake Winnipeg Act. Here, Ms. Enns is describing a reality that a few First Nations communities around Lake Winnipeg were facing. Intensive peat mining in their area not only jeopardizes the wetlands but also spawning grounds and fishing

through the dirt and silt that comes from peat mining. As Enns pointed out, there were peat mining operations in the North Basin of the lake as well on the east side. This is something that the Save Lake Winnipeg Act was supposed to deal with by placing two-year moratorium on peat extraction licensing, which as Ms. Enns and Mr. James Beddome from the Green Party of Manitoba described as a "good first start" (MLA 2011, Deb, P. 171). The revenue from peat mining has been deemed important enough to legitimize its destructive environmental practices. Peat mining in Manitoba has been in operation within the Province since the 1940s and has contributed somewhere around $30 million. The relevance of the industry was illustrated clearly when the Province decided to place the moratorium on the industry. It not only did not do it permanently, but the act grandfathered in a few existing licenses. As an example, just few days after the act took effect, three peat mining companies got licenses to extract peat moss.

One corporation that has been successful in getting licenses and is hoping to expand its peat mining after the Save Lake Winnipeg Act was enacted is Sunterra Horticulture. Fisher River has been the driving force in developing Fisher Bay Park Reserve to protect a big area on the west side of the Lake Winnipeg. Fisher River managed to negotiate with the Province to maintain fishing and hunting in the area to maintain traditional occupations in the community. However, by granting peat licenses, the Province undermines Fisher River Cree Nation's efforts to protect the environment closest to them. The Fisher Bay Park Reserve is important for moose hunting but also the peat is the last defense against excess nutrient loading. It is basically a natural filtration system. In 2016, the leadership of Fisher River did not have any other choice than filing an injunction to prevent further expansion of peat mining on Beaver Creek. As Roger, a member of the leadership of Fisher River Cree Nation said to me one day when describing how it is to negotiate with the Government about this land, I quote, *"*very difficult*"*. As he continued, Reserve Parks are not very

sexy projects for the Province simply because, "the economic benefits are minimal because they do not get much money from it. It is not labor intensive either". The biggest problem, as Roger pointed out was that as soon as there is no dollar sign, the interest from the politicians will evaporate:

> The previous government, the NDP did not listen at all to the arguments why they needed to withdraw some of these licenses in the area. That they needed to stop issuing peat licenses. It fell on a deaf ear, so the present government does not listen either!

The response from a local politician to the injunction filed from Fisher River resonated with platitudes that demonstrated the politicians' mindsets towards Lake Winnipeg and the Interlake area. A former mayor of Riverton, Colin Bjarnason expressed the economic importance to Winnipeg Free Press when he said "what Fisher River is trying to do is unbelievable. I think they should just leave well enough alone". As Colin added "(the industry) can only get bigger as they (companies) expand… Companies have to meet environmental standards, they get checked, the same as municipality. You aren't going to jeopardize your business" (Annable 2016). What the fishers observed about the effects of the peat mining in the area historically was that they got a lot of eroded dirt into the lake but even worse is that there are few good spawning grounds in the area, so the destruction of the peatlands jeopardized the success of spawning even more.

6.4.3. The downside of connectedness

During my last few days in the field during my MA thesis back in 2013, all the talk was on the possible arrival of zebra mussels to Lake Winnipeg, but zebra mussels had been found in the Red River basin back in 2009 so it was only question of when they would arrive (MLA 2015, Deb, P. 1835). Surely, zebra mussels were found in the lake in the fall of 2013 but in the spring of 2014 the NDP government decided, which surprised many fishers in Gimli, to close the harbor in Gimli for a few weeks to prevent further spreading of the mussels. This caused both frustration and

amusement among the fishers. The fishers were frustrated at how long it took the government to react to the immediate danger of zebra mussels entering the lake but, at the same time, they could not believe that the Province thought they could prevent the further spread of zebra mussels. As the fishers say, 'once the zebra mussels are here, they are not going anywhere'. One can feel the presence of the zebra mussels on Lake Winnipeg by walking on the Gimli beach or any other beach around Lake Winnipeg. Very sharp shells of the zebra mussels can be found in the sand and the stones on the beach in the spring and summer. It seems that a portion of the zebra mussels die after the ice breaks up, because the mussels seem not have the capacity to survive the pressure. In fact, zebra mussels are not the only invasive species that have found their way to Lake Winnipeg. As I have mentioned before, the rainbow smelt was introduced to the lake in the 1990s and the common carp which found a path to Lake Winnipeg through the Assiniboine and Red River system in the 1950s (Badiou and Goldsborough 2006).

To prevent further expansion of invasive species in Lake Winnipeg, Alan Lagimodiere and Rick Wowchuk, both members of the Conservative Party, launched a campaign to increase awareness of zebra mussels by bringing Bill 212 forward to the Assembly in December 2017. The purpose of the bill was, according to Mr. Wowchuk, to protect the Manitoba environment. According to the duo, the best protections for the waterways and wetlands are "prevention, detection and timely responses to identification" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 333). The responsibility of identifying invasive species was suddenly transferred to the general public. Again, the initiative was supposed to help with the sustainability of the lake, but invasive species were perceived as a threat to the local ecosystems especially since the "[…] consequences are both environmental and economical […]" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 333), as Wowchuk pointed out. Wab Kinew, leader of the

New Democratic Party chimed in as well, describing the importance economically in preventing invasive species in Manitoba.

> We also know that there can be an impact on hydro, as well, that some of these invasive species may disrupt some of the hydro, you know, developments which provide such an important part of the Manitoba economy. So there´s also economic rationale behind us needing to do this work. (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 335) [My emphasis].

This point from Mr. Kinew illustrates the importance of Manitoba Hydro well, and that the environmental decisions are economically driven. This economic focus is the primary reason why the Invasive Species Awareness Week does not pay any critical attention to environment making projects or the tourist industry. Geographically, Lake Winnipeg is the center-point in a vast watershed basin that includes four states and four Provinces. Due to these connections with other ecosystems further away, it is not surprising that invasive species can make their way into Lake Winnipeg. However, what is not touched on in the Act is the other environmental projects initiated by the Province of Manitoba and the state of North Dakota. As Rob Altemeyer, the (then) NDP environmental critic pointed out in his opposition against the Act, it was ironic for a government to initiate a project such as Invasive Species Awareness Week while simultaneously seemingly standing idly by while a couple of big environment-making projects in North Dakota were underway. Altemeyer mentioned the Northwest Area Water Supply Project and Red River Valley Water Supply Project. Both projects involve diverting water from the Missouri River to the Assiniboine drainage system and Red River. As Mr. Altemeyer and the International Joint Commission have pointed out, such projects can lead to dozens of invasive species and bacteria eventually entering Lake Winnipeg (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 331).

Furthermore, I circle back to the water infrastructure changes that the Province has developed since the 1960s. As mentioned previously the Province developed the Portage Diversion and the Fairford River water control systems in an addition to working on a permanent outlet

between Lake Winnipeg, Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba for flood control and hydro power generation purposes. These projects mean all of those systems are connected and create the possibility for species to migrate between the lakes. As fishers on Fisher River pointed out, the fish were newly using the channel as a spawning ground to the fish's detriment. They also pointed out that there were other ways for species to migrate between the lakes through the Fairford River.

6.4.4 Elephant in the room

The biggest problem with both the Save Lake Winnipeg Act and Invasive Species Awareness week is the issue that neither of those respective legislative initiatives deals with the fundamental relationship between the Province of Manitoba, Lake Winnipeg, and Manitoba Hydro. Since 1974, Lake Winnipeg has served as a reservoir for hydro-electric power generating for Manitoba Hydro and in fact, it is the one of the largest reservoirs in the world. Manitoba Hydro has an impressive infrastructure in the Interlake area and around Lake Winnipeg but currently Manitoba Hydro runs eight generating stations that affect Lake Winnipeg in one way or another. There are six generating stations in the South Basin region of the lake, or to be more specific on the Winnipeg River that flows into Lake Winnipeg. Those stations are small and range between 67 mw to 165 mw. The other two are located in the North Basin, respectively in Grand Rapids (480 mw) and Jenpeg (129 mw). Those are just 8 generating stations out of a much larger power grid infrastructure that Manitoba Hydro has developed, mostly to sell cheap electricity for commercial and residential use but also for export to the US. According to Manitoba Hydro's 2018/19 annual report, the company provides Manitobans with a lower average retail price for electricity than for example, both North and South Dakota. In 2018/19 the infrastructure generated over $2 billion, of which $430 million came from export revenue (Manitoba Hydro 2019). Manitoba Hydro historically has been a cash cow for the Province of Manitoba. As Kulchyski,

Neckoway, and Buck (2006) estimated just the Grand Rapids generating station alone had generated over $1.08 billion in revenue since 1982. The importance of Manitoba Hydro was exemplified clearly in a debate in 2014 in the Assembly when then Premier Selinger and the opposition leader, Brian Pallister argued about the importance of expansion of Manitoba Hydro. Selinger insisted on the crucial role Manitoba Hydro plays, not only for generating export dollars but for Manitoba's economy as a whole. Premier Selinger explained, "Mr. Speaker Manitoba has a growing economy and growing population, $62 billion economy. If we do not build Manitoba Hydro, we face the prospect of running out of it [power] 10 years or 12" (MLA 2014, Deb. P. 2000). Premier Selinger continued:

> What business person when he has a contract to sell a good or a service, would say to them, 'let's delay it, let's take more time, let's not do it'. Why would he forgo $10 billion of export revenues that'll pay down the cost of the dams and keep the rates low for Manitoba citizens and Manitoba businesses. We have the opportunity to keep the lowest rate in North America and he wants to delay that? That's foolish. (MLA 2014, Deb, P. 2000).

As Premier Selinger emphasized, and Manitoba Hydro has advertised, the company sees itself as a provider of 'clean and affordable energy'. Selinger himself pointed out that Manitoba Hydro consistently needs expansion and cheap sources to survive. However, as Peter Kulchyski a professor at University of Manitoba, has shown over and over again in his work, the energy the Manitoba Hydro provides should not be considered clean since it leaves traces of destruction. The best documented effects of Manitoba Hydro are evident in the small community in the North Basin, Grand Rapids. Fishers in Grand Rapids and in fact elsewhere on Lake Winnipeg have noticed changes in the lake since the end of 1960s when the generating station in Grand Rapids was built. A Grand Rapids' elder, Kennedy, described to me how he felt Manitoba Hydro acted like a god on Lake Winnipeg. As he told me, the generating station in Grand Rapids has detrimental effects on the currents of the lake. Kennedy emphasized that the most damage is when Manitoba Hydro

holds back the water until the summer. Sometimes the corporation releases water in the winter as well but, whenever they do so, it disrupts the spawning and fish habitats for both whitefish and walleye. As an example, fishers now only catch few if any of big humpback whitefish. It really does not matter if you talk to an elder in Gimli or fishers on Fisher River. Before the generating station was built, the humpback whitefish was in abundance and fishers went up north to catch for markets in Chicago and New York. Today, as the catch records from FFMC (2017) show, most of the whitefish catch are medium or smaller in size. Fishers say the same about walleye spawning grounds.

The construction of the generating station has had the same effect as the digging of the channel between Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipeg. In both cases, construction has degraded the usual path that both walleye and whitefish go to spawn. The fishers observed that the fish do not go to the Saskatchewan River to spawn in the numbers that they used to and, whenever Hydro activates controls on the water levels, it disrupts any spawning success that the fish might have. The account of Kennedy is supported by Kulchyski, Neckoway, and Buck (2006) who described the effects that the generation station had on the fishery at Grand Rapids. As they showcased, just Grand Rapids alone was producing at least 453,592.34 kg of walleye alone in the 1960s or before the generating station. However, the data from FFMC tells a similar story. Indeed, the data shows that the production from Grand Rapids station since 2012 is around 454,983 kg on average, all species included (FFMC 2019). That is a big drop off from the 1960s. One can note that both walleye and whitefish production have declined since 2012, apart from 2015 when whitefish production went up to 257,229 kg. It is a small sample size, yet it gives us an indication that the channel and other factors combine with Manitoba hydro contribute to decline of both whitefish and walleye in the Grand Rapids area.

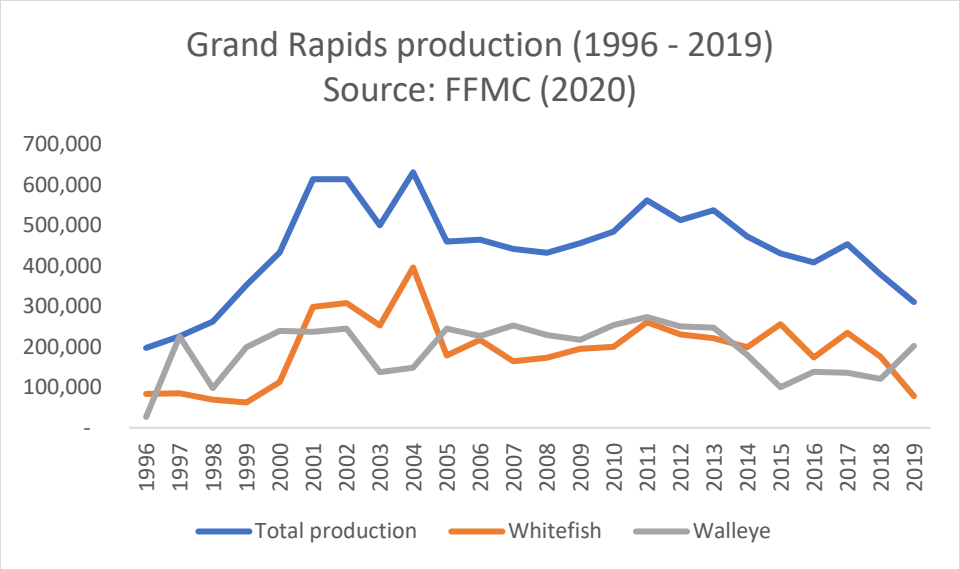

Figure 12: Grand Rapids commercial production (1996 - 2019)

Most disturbing for the fishers and other environmentalists regarding Lake Winnipeg is the Northern Flood Agreement. The agreement allows Manitoba Hydro to control the water level on Lake Winnipeg in order to maximize the corporation´s return. Since 2008, Manitoba Hydro has been maintaining the maximum water level, which is most likely double the amount of water the lake would have under normal circumstances (MLA 2009, Deb, P. 3282). The problem, as fishers in Fisher River, and in other First Nations communities, environmentalists and few politicians have pointed out, is that the high-water level that Manitoba Hydro maintains ruins some possible fish habitats and wetlands. This is a problem that the Save Lake Winnipeg Act completely ignores as Mr. Mike Sutherland from Peguis First Nation (just 25 km south of Fisher River Cree Nation) pointed out in his presentation in the committee debate on the Save Lake Winnipeg Act:

> Even though Save Our Lake may be a move to try and save the lake, as other acts and legislations, our First Nations people are again left out. It makes me wonder why the Province is making this move, when it's the same government that maintains the high-water level with Manitoba Hydro to create–generate energy. As First Nations people, we have seen that the high levels of Lake Winnipeg has done more damage to our lands than anything else (MLA 2011, Deb, P. 216). [My emphasis]

The crucial point that Mr. Sutherland makes is that Manitoba Hydro maintaining high water

levels is first and foremost for fiscal interest. As Mr. Sutherland pointed out later in his speech, due to drainage of farmland and the high-water level of the lake, the river floods more frequently because it can no longer leave the reserve. This is also the reality for Fisher River Cree Nation where the river frequently floods, and a lot of manpower has to be available to protect the community from larger damage. The high-water levels on Lake Winnipeg have detrimental effects on the wetlands and the Netley-Libau Marsh. These important areas are supposed to be the last defense of the lake, but no longer can serve that role since they have been flooded out by a high-water level of Lake Winnipeg. This is showcased brilliantly in the *Save My Lake* documentary. That is how the Manitoba Hydro infrastructure has, through a long process, completely transformed the waterways leading into Lake Winnipeg and, consequently, transformed a big area of Netley-Libau Marsh to a dead marsh. As Dr. Goldsborough pointed out, the constant water-level no longer allows for temporary draining and droughts which the marshes need for regeneration.

6.5 Coda: fishers pushed aside

One day in 2018, I was sitting with Sandy in Fisher River and we were talking about sustainability and the relationship the fishers have with the Provincial Government. Sandy was little bit upset, and tired of what was happening, and he felt that the provincial government did not support fishers' interests. He looked at me and said, "we just need something. A tax rebate or something that shows that the government is with us". As he continued

> We are under a threat, or a siege and part of it is that the government are making decisions to make changes to the environment and water ways, and they are not respecting the fishers' aspect of it. They are making decisions that hinder commercial fishing.

Sandy was not done but he talked a lot about looking beyond the headlines. What do you not see? Was his question. "Government has their own agenda and favored the angler's community

and economic development and would be more comfortable if commercial fishing were a thing in the past".

Sandy's comments capture the gulf between government and fishers in Manitoba, but more importantly that certain zones in the Interlake area are deemed appropriate to be sacrificed in the name of economic sustainability. Bureaucrats and politicians in Manitoba have distanced themselves through objective mappings and statistical calculations from fishers with the result of that people's livelihood around Lake Winnipeg have been devalued. In general, in discussions of sustainability, the need for predictability comes up clearly. Both the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Wildlife Federation did not like the unpredictability of Lake Winnipeg and attempted to regain control of the lake through stricter regulations. In itself, governance of water bodies such as Lake Winnipeg should be seen as messy, characterized by unintended consequences, and learning from mistakes and missteps. Following Latour (2011) our technological innovations to harness nature should bring us closer to nature, not push us further away. Just like parenting, things happen unintentionally, and you learn from your mistakes. Bureaucratic practices do not follow such a logic. One might perceive the negative effects of the Portage Diversion and the channel between Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipeg as unintended consequences. But it cannot be further from the truth. It is a consequence of calculated risk and a cold hard valuation process conducted by cost/benefit analysis.

The flood of 2011 was a pivotal moment that illustrated the morality of cost/benefit analysis of bureaucratic practices. The Government of Manitoba had already decided where to build the Portage Diversion and the channel between Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipeg and it was deemed more valuable for the Province to protect the center of Manitoba, Winnipeg and the most important farmland in southern Manitoba at the expense of rural areas in the Interlake region.

It is no coincidence that politicians such as Stuart Briese (Progressive Conservative) emphasized in a speech in 2013 that the Portage Diversion had saved over $32 billion in damages since 1968 rather than focusing on the destruction the infrastructure had caused. Most likely, as the action of the Province indicates, the damages in other areas were just collateral damage in a sacrifice zone. It was not just the channel that showcased the bureaucratic calculations but various economic development projects that in the long run, are deemed to be more valuable than many rural activities, such as commercial fisheries. Projects such as farmer's dykes, Manitoba Hydro developments or peat mining activities all contribute handsomely to the Manitoba economy. One can argue that the Province has sacrificed greatly the wetlands in Manitoba for $450 million in export revenues through Manitoba Hydro. Another case one can make is the same argument for the peat mining activities, but valuable peatland and consequently the health of Lake Winnipeg is being sacrificed for few million dollars. Lastly, waterways are being jeopardized through waste dumping to increase efficiency of farms and to keep the input costs minimal. Gradually, Lake Winnipeg has been turned into a storage tank. This puts fishers in the Interlake and other areas around the lake in a very precarious situation.

For years, bureaucrats and politicians have been called upon to deal with the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg. The latest to do so was the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. The Manitoba Wildlife Federation publicly, through the voice of Dr. Forbes, called for changes in the commercial fishery, and thereby encouraged the Province to introduce measures such as a buy-back quota program. The call of MWF for enhancing sustainability through fishing effort ignored the larger issue, which is the exploitative relationships within the Lake Winnipeg watershed in the name of economic prosperity. The bureaucrats and politicians are in an enormous bind together here, but they do not want to upset those exploitative relations for fear of losing revenues for the Province

and loss of jobs. Such actions might hurt the system as a whole and forfeit our current lifestyles. Instead, of addressing those difficult issues, the Province of Manitoba has opted to sacrifice the area around Lake Winnipeg, and commercial and First Nations fishers are among the people who are being asked to sacrifice their livelihoods for what one might be problematically define as provincial economic sustainability.

The days following the Minister's decision to apply buy-back quotas and increase minimum mesh size were hectic. I will describe this in the next chapter, but those days illustrated, as Sandy said to me one day when we were standing in front of the Legislative building after a meeting we had there, "this program [buy-back quota] has nothing to do with sustainability. It is about to getting us out of the lake". A few days after the conclusion of the buy-back program, Professor Forbes was quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press celebrating Minister Squires for protecting "long term sustainability of the Lake Winnipeg". Furthermore, Dave Baxter (2019, D8) quoted Professor Forbes saying "there is room for all the fishers if we can all get along and agree on a good management model" [My emphasis]. This is quite ironic from Professor Forbes who did not seem to realize or simply decided to ignore the serious consequences of that the buy-back quota offer would have for fishers on Lake Winnipeg as a whole but specifically for First Nations fishers. The buy-back quota program design was not to make room for commercial fishers or 'enhancing sustainability' but to sacrifice many fishers for continuation of economic development and other environmental making projects.

A couple of days after Minister Squires announced the government's plan to buy back quota to retire, the leadership of Fisher River called for an emergency meeting that was held at the United Church in Fisher River. The leadership extended the invitation to fishers from their neighboring community of Matheson Island to discuss the response to the Minister's latest strategy

for ‘enhancing sustainability’. The decision to buy quota back sent a cold message to the First Nation communities around the lake, who relied heavily on fishing. For communities such as Fisher River and Matheson Island, fishing is everything and their only occupational opportunity. The purpose of the meeting was first and foremost an attempt to convince the fishers who only had maybe one or two licenses not to sell their quotas. The Province offered fishers a lucrative deal for their quotas, but for the First Nations fishers they were offering $4 for the pound which was almost double for what they would get on the open market. Some fishers in the meeting asked, how could they reject such an offer? Some fishers could get $30,000 with minimal effort. The Province gave the fishers only fourteen days to decide if they wanted to sell or not and they made it relatively easy. Just fill out a form and send it to the office of Sustainable Development. Nothing else required. Consequently, the Province made sure to limit the capacity of Co-ops such as Matheson Island or Macbeth Co-op to raise enough funds to buy quotas from their fishers in order to maintain the quota within the community. As a couple of councilors of Fisher River and others in the leadership of Fisher River mentioned more than once at the meeting, it was an extreme difficulty for small communities to finance, in some cases, almost $500,000 in under fourteen days. Even though the Province labelled it a voluntary program, it nonetheless forced the fishers to the wall waving a promise of almost $30,000 in front of someone who has limited opportunities at home. Harvey (1996, 368) called this tactic an “intriguing paradox” when “the rich are unlikely to give up amenity “at any price” whereas the poor who are least able to sustain the loss are likely to sacrifice it for a trifling sum”. Ultimately, as can be seen in table the Province of Manitoba bought around 126 quotas back from 89 individuals, or almost over half a million kg.

Table 1: Quotas bought back by the Province of Manitoba 2019.

Part of Lake Winnipeg	Quotas bought by the Province (KG)
South Basin	152,860
Channel area	121,520
North Basin	245,585
Total:	519,965

As can be seen, the Province bought 245,858 kg from the North Basin and 121,520 from the channel area but both areas are predominantly First Nations fishers. Just in Fisher River alone over twenty quotas were bought and almost all available quotas were bought from Bloodvein, a small First Nations community on the east side of the lake. Table 1 does not reflect the whole picture on Lake Winnipeg and the way fishers are being slowly pushed aside but table two illustrates the impact of the buy-back quota for First Nations and Métis communities in particular:

Table 2: Total Quota allowable change since 2012 (Department of Agriculture, 2020)

Community	Total Quota Allowed (KG) (2012)	Total Quota Allowed (KG) (2020)	Total Quota allowed change since 2012 (KG)	Total Quota Allowed Change since 2012 (%)
Selkirk/Winnipeg	180,440	101,030	(79.410)	(44%)
Gimli/Winnipeg Beach	1,389.604	1,279440	(110,164)	(8%)
Riverton/Hecla	482,980	544,360	61.380	+13%
Fisher River/Jackhead	773,270	700,990	(72,280)	(9%)
Pine Dock/Matheson Island	550,840	468,750	(82,090)	(15%)
Dauphin River/Gypsumville	587,470	479,110	(108,360)	(18%)
Grand Rapids	671,350	556,012	(115,338)	(17%)
Poplar River	297,890	334,370	36,480	+12%
Barens River	488,530	444,360	(44,170)	(9%)
Princess Harbour/Bloddvein	147,940	113,720	(34,220)	(23%)
Wanipigow/Manigotagan	260,990	219,650	(41,340)	(16%)
Traverse Bay/Victoria Beach	87,870	62,730	(25,140)	(29%)
Total	**5,919,174**	**5,304,522**	**614,652**	**(10.4%)**

As table 2 highlights most communities of Lake Winnipeg have lost quotas since 2012, most notably is the Métis communities of Traverse Bay and Victoria have lost 29% of their total allowable quotas while Fisher River and Jackhead have lost 9% as an example. What also can be seen it is not just the First Nations, but also smaller fishers on the South Basin who were tempted to sell. I remember the next day after the meeting in Fisher River I drove to Gimli to visit Elvis. I was sitting in Elvis' living room in Gimli when he told me his plan to sell a couple of his quotas to the Province. Simply, because he could not reject the price he was being offered and plus, the government had scared him enough by their rhetoric of the status of the lake. However, Elvis sold his quota with a heavy heart since he knew this would mean that his son who also is a fisher would not get those quotas in the future. This is exactly what the Fisher River and First Nations were facing at a larger level. After the emergency meeting in Fisher River, the leadership of the community composed a letter to Minister Squires, describing the seriousness of her decisions.

> […] This concern is most acute with regards to some FRCN's most vulnerable, who may jump at the short-term benefits that this program may offer […] (Appendix C).

Moreover, the letter shifted towards the impact of the future of the fishing industry on Fisher River when they correctly pointed out that taking quotas off the lake put a lot of fishers, especially the younger ones in a difficult position:

> This program may act to prevent <u>younger individuals</u> seeking to enter the industry from doing so. This program will cause there to be less quotas available and these young fishers are being put at a disadvantage with Province acting as a bidder who is offering more to near retirement fishers for their existing quotas. (Appendix C) [My emphasis]

The buy-back quota program ended up dispossessing over 89 fishers around the lake, most of whom were First Nations, and for small communities such as Fisher River it is a huge economic blow. The commercial fishing provides employment, and it keeps many people off welfare year-round. Suddenly, those who sold their licenses will be in precarious situation when they have spent

their $30,000. As the fishers and some in the leadership pointed out in that meeting in Fisher River, such an amount can only sustain a family for a year or so. The fishers with no license will likely have to apply for welfare since there is not much alternative employment available. There are 150 fishers in Fisher River who fish spring and fall seasons and few of them fish winter season as well and they do not only generate monetary values for the community as a whole, but they also provide a regular supply of fresh fish to their neighbors and fellow community members. Certainly, fish is vital for maintaining a source of traditional and nutritional food in the community but additionally, it strengthens the relationship between the members in keeping them healthy, both spiritually and physically. That is why it was so important for Fisher River to protect the fishers and hunters' right to fish and hunt in the Fisher Bay Park Reserve. Roger told me, using the community care center as an example, the importance for the elders to have access to food such as fish and moose for their health. As the letter states, the Province offered fishers good prices for their quotas. It was certainly lower for fishers around Gimli who can in some cases get $5 or $6 a pound while their counterpart up north gets much lower price for their quotas, which means that young fishers in Fisher River or other First Nations communities with limited lines of credit had to compete with the Province to buy the quota. As I will talk about in the last chapter, the Province did not give the Co-ops around the lake time to accumulate enough funds to buy quotas to keep it in the area. By pushing fishers but especially young First Nation fishers aside, the Province jeopardizes the future of supply of freshwater fish in many of those communities.

In conclusion, the buy-back quota program in particular was perceived as a way to 'enhance sustainability' but, in reality, the intervention was a way to devalue certain areas around Lake Winnipeg. The fishers have described how the flood in 2011 and the channel built to protect other urban areas have had a heavy impact on fisheries on Lake Winnipeg. Not only has the channel

brought silt and dirt, but it has resulted in a substantial fish mortality and, consequently, unsuccessful spawning. The fishers have gradually seen walleye production decline and, for some, the flood completely dispossessed them, as in case of Dauphin River. The current water control system is only a one piece of a longer process of turning Lake Winnipeg into a cheap dumping ground for waste and for economic development. Such practices have compromised fishing and fish habitat in the long run and, yet, it was the fishers, and mostly First Nations fishers, who were asked to bear the burden to reach what the Province of Manitoba deemed as "sustainability". Communities such as Dauphin River, Fisher River, and Matheson Island have lost considerable numbers of quota allocations for the past few years.

These results are the outcome of environmental politics, that is, the different versions of reality and how to address issues that arise. Fishers saw the reality of declining walleye in a complex and sometimes contradictory manner. Fishers did talk about the resilience of Lake Winnipeg in relation to their livelihoods but, at the same time, acknowledged the impact of environmental changes that have transformed the lake to the point that they have become worried about their livelihoods. On the other hand, by ignoring larger conversations around the co-production of nature, environmental groups such as Manitoba Wildlife Federation concentrate on technical issues that have an immense impact on fishers' daily lives while the systematic practices that undermine the very sustainability that the organizations are fighting to remain intact.

Chapter 7: The Co-Management façade: when disparity of power turns a democratic platform into stupidity.

On May 8th, 2019 Sam and I were sitting alone in a large conference room at the Viscount Gort hotel on Portage Avenue in Winnipeg, but Sam had just dissolved a fishers' only meeting, that is usually held prior to the co-management meetings. This day was not like any other preparation meeting before the co-management meeting. Earlier in the morning, the fishers on Lake Winnipeg had voted unanimously to walk out of the Co-management Board. After Sam had told the fishers to return to their homes, he finished his lunch, then turned his attention to me and said, "Solli, you stay behind with me, to be my witness when I tell the representative of the Province of Manitoba that we are walking away". We waited in the conference room for 20 minutes or so, but there was no sign of them and then finally Sam stood up and said that the representatives of the Province were probably in the hallway, waiting. True enough, when we walked out of the room, there was the staff of the Department of Sustainable Development, waiting for the co-management meeting to begin. This time, it was supposed to be the first meeting of a new Co-chair of the Co-management Board. Unfortunately for him, this was his first and last co-management meeting that he would chair. Sam laughed when he saw them waiting, and said, "Solli, this will be interesting, eh!". He walked straight to the staff members, and I stood little bit behind Sam when he finally announced happily to the staff that the fishers had voted to walk away from the board. The staff was utterly in disbelief by the news. For them, the news seemed to come out of nowhere. Sam turned to me as we walked away to his car and said, "when did they think this was a successful Co-management Board?".

The decision for the fishers to walk away was an extremely easy one for the fishers but it took a few months to make, nonetheless. The fishers on Lake Winnipeg were getting tired of

talking to what they perceived as the deaf ear of bureaucrats and of consistently being left out of the process of decision making. As Sam himself wrote in a letter to the Minister for Sustainable Development to explain the decision to walk away, "we do this with a heavy heart, but the Province of Manitoba left us with no other choice". Sam continued to express his frustration with the Province of Manitoba:

> The Co-management Board was revived a few years ago with a promise of shared decision-making process like co-management arrangement is supposed to work. Our experience has been, unfortunately the opposite, where we find the board ineffective. The Province has consistently practiced politics that does not have anything to do with good governance, or what should be acceptable in a democratic society. [My emphasis] (Appendix D)

In this paragraph Sam touches on few key issues relating to the idea of co-management in resource governance. The purpose of a Co-management Board is that it brings different people together to the discussion table to reach a collective decision. It is considered a good governance practice, since it gives the people "[…] a greater voice and greater control over decisions that impact our [their] land, our [their] communities and our lives (L. Simpson 2001, 139). In fisheries governance, Co-management Boards have been prevalent in recent years, precisely due to the promise that they can empower fishers and other stakeholders in their interaction with the state. In Interactive Governance (IG) theory, emphasis is on the importance of interaction between both the governing system and the system to be governed. The Lake Winnipeg co-management platform is an example of how IG theory would advocate to strengthen governance interactions. IG theory, as described by Kooiman et al. (2005), opens a space for and promise of

> "[…] the whole body of public as well as private interactions taken to solve problems and create societal opportunities. It includes the formulation of principles guiding those interactions and care for institutions that enable them […]" (17)

Those societal opportunities that IG theory describes, are the interaction between parties which will eventually increase, as they call it, the governability of a particular system; in other

words, the capacity of a system to solve problems that might arise. Co-management arrangements are seen as an opportunity to not only increase the legitimacy of decisions but consequently alleviate possible tensions between the state and the fishers. As Jentoft and Chuenpagdee (2015) point out, this creates "[…] a higher potential for producing voluntary consent than hierarchical governance, as [it entails a] …process of involvement and participation […]" (25) [My emphasis]. Certainly, in theory these are important observations, but they do not tell the whole story. The danger of co-management is that it can be used as a political tool. Co-management arrangements are often perceived in a positive light due to their connotation as a 'democratic' way of governing. The democratic aura of co-management settings blinds us to its downside in the space it opens up for becoming a weapon for politicians and the elite to solve legitimacy crises. Ironically, co-management arrangements can therefore easily be turned into a technical solution, as Degnbol et al. (2006) would call it, the very thing that it was supposed to avoid being.

The Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board is a good example of how the promise of empowering fishers to become an active voice in a decision-making process can turn into its opposite. The process of Bill 23, the changes of minimum mesh sizes and the buy-back quota program exemplify the inherent problem with Co-management Boards. When I say the aura of democratic procedures of Co-management Boards blinds us, I refer to two related issues: (1) the power disparity between the fishers and the state. Power relations tends to be swept under the rug when discussing Co-management Boards. The fact the state can act largely with impunity means that the participants' voices at the co-management table will not have the same weight as that of the state; and (2) The delinquent idea of democratic procedures. The colonialist idea of democracy is limited to majority rule and contested elections (Wedeen 2007) where the "winners" of the election deem themselves as the legitimate rulers, which gives them power to change whatever

they desire. ‘The people have spoken’ mentality. The process of democratic procedure is disregarded and, as Harvey (2003, 66) points out, those who are in office have no problem with allowing policies being promulgated “[…] by experts and elites […]” by relying “[…] upon undemocratic and unaccountable institutions to make key decisions […]”. Together, in the case of the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board, these issues turned the Co-management Board from a promising interaction between different actors into an infantile stupidity.

7.1 As power prevents communications

When I say the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board was turned into infantile stupidity, I am in no way saying the members of the board are stupid but rather the process of how the board was operating was a textbook definition of infantile stupidity. Here I put great value on Graeber's (2015, 2012a) observation on interpretive labor and lopsided structures of the imagination to illustrate how disparity of power does not encourage effective interaction, but rather results in less or no communication at all. As many feminist scholars have taught us, and Graeber (2012) emphasized, all social relationships are inherently unequal which undermines the ability of powerholders to put themselves in the shoes of the less powerful, and it inhibits powerholders’ willingness to interpret any given social situation. This is especially true when the power disparity between parties is immense but the ones who hold the power normally lack the empathy for what the other less powerful must be experiencing because they really do not have to. They are the ones who initiate changes or set restrictions on other people’s activities and therefore, they are not the ones who will ultimately be affected.

The burden of the interpretation of new social reality or changes are conferred to the less powerful to “muddle through” as Herzfeld (2005) would have put it, to figure things out. The bureaucrats and politicians in Winnipeg do not have to deal with the increase on minimum mesh

size or buy back quota. In fact, they cannot imagine themselves how they would "*muddle through*" such changes because their vision of what it is to be a fisher is limited or nonexistent. Of course, they do not need to; the bureaucrats and politicians are the ones imposing the rules that other people must live by. The irony is that when someone challenges the vision of the more powerful view on the social reality they have created, the communication between different groups turns into infantile stupidity. I should say rather the more powerful will completely shut down the communication with the group that challenged them and in fact, the more powerful really do not need to communicate their will at all. In the case of the Province of Manitoba, they can do almost anything, without consulting or communicating with others, as fishers voiced consistently. The Province's word and action can be backed up by violence, in other words – the full force of the law, which obviously gives them great power to arrest or fine anyone who does not follow sets of rules, established by the Province. Violence as Elaine Scarry (1985) stressed carries out various meanings but as David Graeber (2012) pointed out, violence also can turn into stupidity because it does not promote communication between parties but rather creates spheres of silence. It is a worse situation than when parties talk past each other because the communication has been turned into a competition of flexing one's muscle against resistance instead of having meaningful conversation; that is infantile stupidity.

7.2 The first test of the strength of Lake Winnipeg co-management board

On the morning of April 27th, 2017, I attended my first Lake Winnipeg co-management meeting at the Canada Inn hotel on Regent Avenue in Winnipeg. I walked into a large conference room and the first thing I noticed was a few tables arranged into a square in the middle of the room and seats for 25 fisher representatives, or for two representatives from each area. On the right side of the square was a few rows of seats for other observers who were not representatives

but interested in commercial fishery in one way or another. As I walked into the room, the staff of the Department for Sustainable Development greeted me, asked me to sign in and some of them asked me briefly about my research. I talked to the staff for few minutes before I took a seat on the sideline with the other observers. By my side were a few other commercial fishers from Gimli and Riverton who were interested in the board, but also representatives from FFMC, Manitoba Hydro and few other well-known personnel in Manitoba politics who joined us later that day. Sam Murdock, co-chair of the board welcomed everyone to the meeting, but the first couple of hours of the co-management meeting were dedicated to a fishers only in-camera meeting. The fishers-only meeting took me by surprise, mostly to hear how disappointed the fishers were already with the Co-management Board and what they believed to be lack of support from the provincial government. Sam asked the room full of fishers to share their opinions on the efficiency of the board, and whether they believed they should dissolve the Co-management Board. As Sam stated clearly, many had shared with him the feeling that the Co-management Board was not working for the fishers. At the time, a few months previously, the government had introduced legislation for an amendment to Fisheries Marketing Act (opting out of FFMC) and many fishers, especially First Nations were still upset and believed the government had not fulfilled its obligation to consult. Certainly, many fishers stood up to share their frustration with the government who had not listened to them. Many of those speaking expressed their apprehension at the government's practice of circumventing rules and regulations of the Board. One fisher shared an instance of a meeting he had with a government official who asked him to sign a document which was still just a draft and had not yet been approved by the board but nonetheless, the government had already started using it as if had been de facto approved. Many fishers especially from the South Basin were ready to dissolve the Board and walk away, but even though some North Basin fishers were

tempted to do so as well, they shared the bind which they and most of the fishers were in regarding their communication with the government. The crux of the problem was that, as they stated, the board was the only avenue they had to talk with the government, and the only place for them to receive any information on what was going on at the government level. As one North Basin fisher told me shortly afterwards, "we have to have the board there" as he continued:

> What government wants is to get rid of all these boards because then they have the free rein to do whatever they want. As long as we have the board in place, we keep the government accountable. If they do not come to the same conclusion as us, or are not on the same page as us, then we will catch them at it. Have our discussions and trying to keep up with them so they are not running out of control and try to do things we cannot support.

Others pointed out that the Co-management Board was the only way for them to know what was allowed and what had been changed in their fishery. Some of them shared the feeling that the government had taken the 'Co part out of the management board' and the board had turned more into an info session. Nevertheless, even though the fishers believed the Co-management Board was ineffective, they still did not see any other way than to keep the board alive.

The other interesting issue that was brought up was the issue fishers on the South Basin had with the anglers. As Johnny informed the North Basin fishers, he and many fishers on the South Basin felt like the Province had already sided with the MWF which recently had suggested to the Minister for Sustainable Development to increase the minimum mesh-size from 3 inch to 3 ¾ inches. But as fishers on the South Basin argued, the South Basin had been historically 3 inches. By increasing the minimum mesh size, this would kill any perch fishery or even sauger fishery. One of the Area two (Gimli and Winnipeg Beach) representatives tabled a motion that dealt with 2 issues: 1) the fishers would not acknowledge any changes in fisheries where there had been no consultation with fishers and 2) the motion to suggest that fishers would extend an invitation to the Province of Manitoba and MWF to meet in an attempt to discuss the tension between groups

and articulate to MWF the commercial fishers point of view. There were debates between the fishers, but the motion was approved unanimously. The fishers themselves emphasized that they had to stick together, North and South Basin, because the government wants to, as the fishers said, “drive a wedge between the groups”.

As the government officials were allowed back in the room, the whole dynamic of the meeting shifted. The meeting changed from a dialogue between the fishers to a questions and answer format. The provincial biologists had prepared a few PowerPoint slides and they basically gave a short lecture on what they were doing, and how they were planning to do so. Meanwhile, the fishers were supposed to listen and ask questions at the end. The First Nations fishers were overall quiet, they listened attentively while the fishers in the South Basin spoke more. The biologist had a few issues that they wanted to share with the fishers, as an example, licensing issues (anglers and commercial fishing), most of which dealt with a code of conduct of fisheries on Lake Winnipeg.

The second day of the meeting illustrated well the rift between the fishers and the Province of Manitoba. The new timeline for the new bill on the Fisheries Marketing Act was on the agenda, but one of the provincial biologists had the duty to introduce the process of the bill, that the plan was to introduce it to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba either in the fall of 2017 or winter 2018 but as soon as he concluded his presentation the fishers expressed their frustration vocally with the Province. Most fishers expressed at that meeting how disappointed they were about not having the opportunity to talk about the decision of opting out of FFMC in a board meeting before the decision was made. The provincial officials emphasized the upside of an ‘open market’ by stating 1) the Province would make a regulation that required fish buyers to pay on time, and 2) the intention of the Province to set up an electronically monitored software program which would

allow fishers to check an average price for fish online. With that statement from the Province, the fishers became agitated further and everyone in the room felt how the atmosphere changed and become highly volatile. Most fishers started to get impatient in their seats, and one could see the facial expression of the government's co-chair when she realized that she had to navigate through very stormy waters. In an effort to calm the room down and regain some control of the meeting, the government's co-chair decided to say, "we are all in this together" and a second later, everything exploded! The fishers immediately raised their voices, especially a couple of fishers from the North Basin of the lake, by challenging the co-chair that they were in the same team. North Basin fishers expressed their dissatisfaction with the government with the words, "you are ruining communities" by emphasizing that some communities do not even have a reliable cell or internet service to check up on some prices. Many of the fishers claimed at that moment that the Province "did not know what they were doing" simply because they do not even know how it is to be on the lake every day or live in a remote community up north. Moreover, as the fishers pointed out to the government officials, as soon as the market opens, they no longer can set a price and therefore their hands would be tied in that regard. Another fisher from up north pointed out that the Province was the one creating this problem, not fishers, so how could they be on the same team? At the end of the day those two speakers probably best showcased the feeling fishers had that the two parties were not on the same team. A few fishers, both from the North and South Basin suggested the co-management as a whole should send a statement to the Government of Manitoba, stating their grave disappointment in the lack of co-operation/consultation with the Co-management Board regarding opting-out from FFMC. The government's co-chair was not prepared to have anything to do with the proposal, so she quickly put her foot down and stopped it before the board could even vote on it.

7.2.1 The tipping point

I attended my second co-management meeting between December 7th and 8th, 2017. It was a typical December morning in Winnipeg when I arrived at the Regent Hotel Casino, but the atmosphere was buzzing as soon as I walked into the lobby. Surprisingly, I saw a lot of fishers coming to the hotel, even fishers that I knew who never liked these co-management meetings and historically tried to avoid them because they found it ineffective and without a purpose. Suddenly, at least 40 fishers were in the lobby of the hotel waiting impatiently to be let into the conference room. Half of the fishers who had arrived were attending as observers rather than active participants. The reason many of them decided to drive to the city was twofold, 1) the discussion on new regulations regarding open market and 2) the rumor that the deputy Minister was planning to attend the meeting later that afternoon.

Just a few weeks earlier the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba had passed the legislation that 'opened' the market for freshwater fish in Manitoba and the bill had come into effect just few days before the co-management meeting. There was not just the element of 'opening the market' that frustrated fishers but the new regulations that forced more paperwork on the fishers and prohibited commercial fishery for catfish. Most of the fishers that I talked to before the meeting were upset with how quickly and silently the government had pushed the new legislation through.

As usual, the co-management meeting began with a fishers-only meeting, and of course the floor was open for everyone to share their thoughts on the new regulation. This two-hour meeting was remarkably interesting in the way that everyone was on the same page and agreeing with each other. The fishers mostly talked about two issues, lack of consultation and the denial from the government about taking any consideration of the fisher´s traditional knowledge in their decision making, and the tension with the anglers. Right from the start, many fishers challenged the new

regulation and even called for fishers to request the regulations be rescinded since they saw them as illegitimate. The fishers all agreed in that meeting that that the consultation for the amendment of the fisheries act was non-existent and therefore should never have been put into effect. As many First Nation fishers emphasized, the Province is required to consult with the First Nations, and therefore Bill 23 was a clear violation of Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. The fishers expressed over and over again how tired they were about not being consulted and about the fact that the Province did not listen to any of the knowledge the fishers had gained from a lifetime of experience and observation on their fishery. Many of the fishers stood up and shared their opinion which was that the Province is not taking "our observations seriously, and the media is eating up all the things that biologist and the government officials are saying". From the fishers point of view, as I described in the last chapter, they believed there was a lot more going on in the lake than both biologists and MWF were considering when talking about a sustainable walleye fishery. As everyone was talking about the collective experience in the room, Johnny, an Area 2 representative, distributed a paper to the fishers and asked everyone to write down the number of years they had been fishing. As everyone was writing their experience down, they deliberated about writing a statement to be presented to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, but Rob Altemeyer a member of the NDP was in the room and volunteered to voice those concerns from the fishers to Minister Squires on the last day of the sitting of the legislature, which was that same afternoon. The meeting broke for lunch, but Sam came to my seat and asked me about what I thought about the proposed statement. He then asked me to come up to his table to review and clean up the statement from the fishers which was written as:

Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 7, 2017

Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board resolution directed to Premier Brian Pallister and Minister Rochelle Squires.

Whereas new fishery regulations have been implemented without industry input and full consultation and whereas the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board represents approximately 80% of the Manitoba commercial fishery.

Therefore, be it resolved that this board require implementation be suspended pending proper consultation". (My emphasis) (MLA 2017, Deb. 432).

The resolution was carried unanimously by the fishers, many of whom had decided to head up to the Legislative building to show their disappointment with the Province. For the rest of us who decided to remain in the conference room, a few hours of presentations of explanation of the new Province regulations awaited us and everyone knew that the meeting would be intense. As I wrote in my notebook a couple of minutes before the actual meeting began, "let the fun begin!"

It certainly was an interesting few hours, and the notion that we tend not to speak truth to power was as far from reality as one could imagine during that afternoon. Fishers did not hold back anything during the government officials' presentations, and even a couple of members of the audience were not afraid to ask the officials difficult questions or simply, challenging the motivation and the facts on which the Province was building their regulation changes. There were two issues that the fishers were interested in and challenged the Province: 1) the decision to opt out of FFMC and 2) the fact that the Province believed, according to their data, that the walleye was declining and needed more protection from the fishers.

The new regulations in Bill 23 initiated an increased bureaucratic responsibility on the fishers' shoulders. Under the FFMC they only needed to fill a loading slip when shipping their fish there for processing. However, the new regulations dictated significantly more paperwork requirement for the fishers. Suddenly they were required to fill out not just weekly but also monthly trade records, regardless of whether they had made any sales or not. The fishers challenged these new regulations by stating that the bureaucrats did not understand how the work life of a fisher really is. Johnny stood up in the meeting and pointed out that the fishers often work 14-hour days,

which often is a mentally and physically draining activity and to expect fishers to complete more paperwork than they had to do previously was ludicrous. Especially when the new regulations opened a space for an 'open market', where some fishers might have to spend more time than before to find buyers in addition to processing some of their catches. As Johnny pointed out, due to the nature of the work, some fishers might make a mistake, which according to the regulations would result in fines or in more serious events, a suspension. Johnny asked the rhetorical question to the provincial officials by asking them whether or not they would be fined or even fired from their line of work if they made a mistake? The room got quiet for couple of seconds and then Johnny answered, "I doubt that". Another fisher in the audience stood up and pointed out a threat that taking away fishers´ livelihood by flexing the state muscles should not be considered the best strategy in assuring compliance as he described it as "disrespectful" towards the fishers on Lake Winnipeg. The experienced of Bill 23 resonated well with (Graeber's (2015) observation of " […] iron laws of liberalism […]" (3). That is, the process of "liberalization" from further bureaucracy complicates matters further by adding more paperwork, contrary to the promise of the opposite. In this case, as Johnny pointed out, the paperwork could be used as a stick above fisher's head, ready to strike as soon as mistakes occurs.

Additionally, the fishers kept criticizing the Province for lack of consultation regarding Bill 23. One of the First Nations fishers, Patrick from Jackhead with whom I had slowly developed an acquaintance during the board meetings, rose up and reminded the government officials of Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution on the responsibility of the Province to consult on changes that might affect their livelihood. As he said, in the case of Bill 23, there had been "no consultation whatsoever" and he called for someone to take the responsibility. And when the officials answered with an explanation of why the Province did not take the time to consult, they claimed the pressure

was coming from above. And this line of questions and comments kept on coming from the fishers to the officials to the point that they barely could continue with their PowerPoint presentations. This continued when discussions with the board moved to different sections of the Bill 23. When the Deputy Minister came for a visit, he attempted to explain the rationale behind the Bill 23 and that he was his "own man" and had made the decision scientifically. He believed such an appearance to the board was important to legitimize the Government's decision, but the fishers had largely been skeptical, especially due to the fact that formerly, this Deputy Minister had served as a managing director for Manitoba Wildlife Federation (MWF).

One of the sections of the original Bill 23 had the provision of prohibiting fishing and marketing of channel catfish which was one of the bases of the debate that I mentioned in the last chapter between the commercial fishers and the anglers. The purpose of the provision was to protect the catfish just as they did with the sturgeon which has been illegal to catch and market for decades. This was one of the steps of 'enhancing' sustainability on Lake Winnipeg and a conservation effort against 'overfishing'. The fishers in the meeting challenged the intention of the Province and their rationale behind the provision. In part, the criticism revolved once again around what the fishers believed was the inability of the Province to comprehend how the fishing was actually conducted and the reality in which they were living. The possible banning of the catfish was not a huge issue for the fishers, but they objected to it on principle, and they saw it as irrelevant to the sustainability of the lake. The catfish was not a species that the fishers deliberately go after and as Michael in Fisher River told me, "I would not eat catfish personally, and I would not feed my dog that thing. It is a junk fish". Even though fishers are not trying to catch catfish, they still end up getting one or two in their nets once in a while. It is a significant nuisance for the fishers every time a catfish is caught in their nets because it is a big fish which makes a big mess by

ruining the nets. It causes a financial hit because each net cost around $100 as mentioned in the third and the fourth chapter. One fisher stood up and asked the officials how were they going to avoid getting catfish in their nets? More importantly, how was the Province going to enforce it and logistically, what was the fishers supposed to do with the catfish that would most likely be dead in their nets? Discard them? The fishers loudly voiced at the meeting that this compliance could not be manageable logistically. A few fishers already had established a very small market for a smoked catfish. The fishers at the meeting asked, if it was not more sustainable fishery to bring the fish home and sell it to those who want the fish rather than discarding it back into the lake dead, as the officials appeared to be implying? Fishers shared their observation that the catfish was suddenly plentiful in the lake, which was the reason why more catfish was being caught in their nets than previous years. Somehow, the Province was claiming otherwise, and in relation to the catfish, the debate gradually moved to the state of walleye, especially after the Deputy Minister dropped by to talk with the fishers.

The Deputy Minister was very steadfast on the fact that the walleye had been declining and the discussion was somewhat focused on eco-certification and sustainability. The Deputy Minister argued that the Province had to protect the walleye stock and one way to do so was going through the eco-certification process which should help the sustainability of the lake. Moreover, the Deputy Minister stated that his 'scientific' data showed that the walleye were under stress. This declaration did not go over well with the fishers at the meeting, who bombarded the Deputy Minister with comments on their own observations on the lake. First of all, the fishers asked the Deputy where his data was derived from, which he answered by stating that they had reviewed catch records from the FFMC and the Province´s index netting program. The fishers challenged the data by saying that the catch records do not reflect how much fish is actually in the lake. Plus, as was mentioned

in a previous chapter, the fishers pointed out that the abundance of tullibee and whitefish in the South Basin meant less space for walleye in the net. The fishers were also critical of the index program which they supported but thought it was insufficient, simply because it took samples in a few pockets on the lake but more importantly, the individuals doing the sampling did not set the nets and fish like commercial fishers. The fishers were extraordinarily adamant about the fact that it does matter how one sets the net, and that the direction of wind can determine the success of the day. As the fishers say, it is not enough to set a net just for a few days or a week. You have to set the net for much longer to account for all the variables, and no one week or day will be the same. You can catch a lot in one week, but almost nothing the next. Interestingly, the fishers pointed out, not just in this meeting but other meetings as well, that the provincial samplers did not use the same equipment for catching fish for their index program as the fishers. The fishers use these special anchors in their nets to help them float better on the lake, which the Province does not. By this, the fishers argued that the Province could not catch the same amount of fish as they themselves did and therefore could not possibly get comparable data. The fishers argued that the problem the Province has, is that it has not been using similar equipment as the fishers and therefore their base data would not reflect legitimate results. Relentlessly, the fishers repeated to the Deputy and the other officials that the state of walleye was not as bad as the Province claimed. Margaret from Dauphin River also stood up in the meeting and pointed out that the Deputy and other officials should look closer at what their own provincial infrastructure developments were doing to the lake, referring to the channels between the lakes. What annoyed the fishers was the fact that they felt their observations on the lake were not being heard. One of the people in the audience stood up and straight out asked the provincial officials why they were being so disrespectful and dismissive towards fisher's knowledge.

A couple of less pressing issues were discussed in the meeting which shed light on the ineffectiveness of the board that I will talk briefly about later in the chapter. The heated discussion of Bill 23 and the visit from the Deputy Minister epitomized a problem of Co-management Boards, which as many older fishers argued was a persistent one. The fishers felt the Co-management Board had not enhanced the degree to which their voices were being heard as promised and rather it had silenced them. For the fishers, the Co-management Board was only a one-way street for the government's agenda. Stan captured the fishers' experience quite well when he remarked,

> I want to see this Co-management Board working, I am not against it. I am all for people and they are interested in doing something for the fishery. I feel sometimes, that if something that we feel important it is not always what the Province thinks it is important.

7.3 The co-management façade

Before my first co-management meeting in 2017, I applauded a couple of the staff of the Department of Sustainable Development for their attempt to have an open public meeting as an effort to cultivate discussion on Lake Winnipeg. Hence, it was ironic that suddenly the Province began to close the public debate to outsiders at the co-management meeting on the April 8th, 2018. "If they try to kick you out of the room Solli, we will walk out" said both Sam and Johnny to me numerous times as we felt that the Province was trying to close down the debate further. This was saddening to experience because as Interactive Governance theory emphasizes, a co-management arrangement is supposed to create social opportunities; creating space for a dialogue between different parties to cultivate ideas and solutions. Co-management arrangements are supposed to adhere to the ideals of Habermas´ (1989) public sphere to, "[…] engage them (the people) in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere" (27). Co-management settings are not supposed to be just simply a site for public critical debate but rather, in the terms of Fraser's (1990) strong public, act as a site for channeling

discussions to make changes. That is an integral point of co-management. It is not about just exchanging ideas but to have meaningful discussions that can lead to changes. However, in case of Lake Winnipeg, the Co-management Board was never allowed to get close to such grand objectives. As Andrew Song (2015) stressed, failure of co-management "may have been triggered by past knowledge and decisions that typically remain irreversible" (688). In the case of Lake Winnipeg an uneven power structure proved to prevent any possibility of such an idea to materialize. It is not just the matter of who holds the greater power but the power of language and how the space for discussion is being employed. As Bakhtin (2010) observed, the use of language and space is extremely vital for fruitful discussion but, more importantly, for inclusion. Not everyone is suited for an academic discourse or even speaking in a large group.

> Many people who have an excellent command of a language often feel quite helpless in certain spheres of communication precisely because they do not have a <u>practical command</u> of the generic forms used in <u>given spheres</u> (Bakhtin 2010, 80). (My emphasis)

Warner (2002) backs up Bakhtin's observation by stressing how idioms, stylistic markers and lexicon in language can easily exclude people from conversation. The idea of a practical command of a language in a given sphere is crucial here because it is easily overlooked. Many elders and other fishers have respectable command of the language and hold decades of knowledge of their environment which unfortunately is lost, simply because it does not translate to the space in which they are being placed. A big conference room or a forty-minute lecture filled with bureaucratic jargon can easily overwhelm anyone who is not used to such practice. Both Nadasdy (2005) and Spak (2005) did not explicitly say so, but their work showcases nonetheless how different spaces influence the whole conversation between different groups in a co-management setting. As Nadasdy (1999) illustrated, elders who participated in a co-management meeting more than often had trouble with the lecture format meetings due to a high usage of bureaucratic jargon

and consequently felt socially excluded. A somewhat similar situation prevailed in the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board meetings, but some fishers, mostly from the South Basin were more outspoken compared to many of the First Nations fishers who preferred to talk in smaller groups. The most fruitful conversations were usually during the coffee or the lunch breaks when the fishers had a chance to get together in groups to exchange experiences or ideas. Margaret, as an example, shared her frustration with the setting of the meetings to me because her sentiment was that currently, the meetings did not allow many fishers to share their knowledge of the lake. "I would like to see all the commercial fishers on the board speak out more often. I would like to hear from all of them, not just a few". Interestingly enough, I had similar discussions with Mark Price, one of the biologists for the provincial government before my first co-management meeting. He, just like Margaret, expressed his desire to see more fishers speak out more during the meetings. As Mark stated, "I did my presentation, but nobody said anything! But then after when it was coffee break, people started to come up to me and engage in conversation". What was even more curious in my conversation with Mark was when he acknowledged a big problem, that "people are nervous to talk. They are scared of being ridiculed, or they are scared of their ideas being shut down. There are a lot of positive conversations at these meetings but not a lot of positive outcomes". Here, Mark is certainly referring to the conversations during the breaks (coffee and lunch). Interestingly, Mark seemed to understand the consequence of the lecture-format settings or Q&A format, but he did not understand how the provincial dominance and the style of the meeting format shaped the reluctance from the fishers to engage in a fruitful conversation.

From the beginning, some fishers were denied the social setting they needed in order to be accommodated and where they would have been comfortable to speak out. The way that the

Province perceived the role of the Co-management Board was simply not consistent with the creation of such a facilitating environment.

7.3.1 The breakdown of the foundation of the board

Fishers argue that the Province deliberately sent invitations to Co-management Board meetings and minutes from the previous meeting only a couple of weeks before each meeting. By doing so, the Province gave the fishers limited time for preparation for each meeting, and an inadequate opportunity to look over the minutes from few months ago which fishers frankly did not have sufficient fresh memory in order to be sure that the note taker from the Province had adequately captured the 'discussions'. Fishers reported that provincial control over the Co-management Board grew as time went on. A good example of such control by the Province was how the co-management meeting on April eight, 2018 was organized. The Province did everything in their power to limit opportunities for fishers to organize themselves by eliminating the fishers' in-camera meeting, which had been vital for fishers to discuss collectively the issues at hand. Moreover, the Province also wanted to limit the exposure of the meetings, by renting the smallest conference room at the Canad-Inn Hotel on Sargent Avenue in Winnipeg. The room barely had the capacity for twenty people. Moreover, the Province tried to prevent more people, even other stakeholders such as FFMC who have a lot of interest in knowing what was going on in the lake from attending the meeting. It was obvious that the Province did not want another meeting like the one that was held at the end of the 2017.

As the fishers came together in this small conference room on Sargent Avenue and realized that there was to be no fisher-in camera meeting, they immediately asked for twenty minutes to deliberate with each other before the start of the actual meeting. The fishers described attending the co-management meetings was like banging their heads repeatedly to the wall because, once

again, they felt they did not have a voice on how the board was operating and they believed that the board was not addressing the most pressing issues. I think Johnny recapped the feeling when he described the board as a smokescreen for the government's agenda:

> I am not sure if I should call it the white elephant, I am not sure what you would have call it, but that board is a bit of a façade. We meet twice a year as part of this board, fishers express our dissatisfaction, we express our concerns, we express changes that we hope to see will benefit us as fishers. 99 out of 100 of them, our concerns, issues, or suggestions are dismissed. The Province uses the same board as their avenue to present to us the changes they want to make in legislation, and control and changes that they want to pursue... The Province does not play by a set of rules. That board is a facade, a fake organization with supposedly a set of rules that we are supposed to play by. We are supposed to play by the rules, but the Province does not. (My emphasis)

Again, Margaret shared the same sentiment as Johnny, even though she did not go as far as calling the board a façade, but she still did not feel the board was as *cooperative* as it was designed to be:

> They say it is a Co-management Board, but there is no co in there. They changed the name from an advisory board because they thought that under an advisory capacity, it gave the government a chance to say, 'you gave us your advice but we do not have to listen to it'. Co-management means that you have to work together to make the lake a success. I do not know if it is a fisher's attitude or the government´s attitude. I think it is the government [attitude] that still thinks of the advisory board. 'You can give us all your suggestions, but we still do what we want'. There has to be more CO-management of it. (My emphasis)

Even Sam was tired of the little credit their traditional knowledge was given in the Co-management Board. What frustrated Sam as well was the feeling that not only were they excluded from the decision-making process, but, as I indicated in the quotation from Johnny earlier, and something Sam emphasized as well, the Co-management Board was deliberately circumvented when it came down to decisions. The board barely served any meaningful role:

> I really would like to see something enacted that states that this Co-management Board has the power to make decisions with the Province. As a true partner. Not the way they are playing it right now, whereas they are trying to sneak in changes through the back door as you know. Even the minutes takes forever for us to receive, and they even forget important stuff, right. And that is the tactic they use.

As Sam continued, he described the problem of the Co-management Board and the lack of interest from the Province to listen to the fishers' observations and include them in the process:

> Very frustrating! [being left out] Had they done a proper consultation before they enacted this [opt out of FFMC], sure we would not be where we are today. Everybody would have been happy because, it would have led to a happy meeting.

The testimonies from Margaret, Johnny and Sam were eye opening but all of them, and various informal conversations I had with other board members would highlight how they felt the Co-management Board had not lived up to the expectation or even the rules it was supposed to play by. As one reads the terms of reference for the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board, one will see on paper it was supposed to give the fishers a way for a meaningful conversation with the Province. I will cite four crucial provisions or terms of references that the Co-management Board was supposed to follow:

> (3) The Department and the Lake Winnipeg Fishers seek to establish a <u>cooperative</u> working relationship…with the common purpose of ensuring an economically viable and sustainable fishery, for the equal benefit of current and future generations. [My emphasis] (Manitoba Conservation and Stewardship, 2013: 1).
>
> (4) <u>The department seeks to provide opportunities for meaningful participation</u> by users of fisheries resources in <u>decision process</u>, and to strive to achieve consensus among users of fishery resources and communities with regard to decisions affecting them. [My emphasis] (Manitoba Conservation and Stewardship, 2013: 1).
>
> (5) The Co-management Board will make decisions by <u>consensus.</u> [My emphasis] (Manitoba Conservation and Stewardship, 2013: 1).
>
> (7) Decisions of the Board will be based on scientific knowledge and <u>local, historical and traditional knowledge</u>, and be made in a fair and <u>transparent manner</u>. [My emphasis] (Manitoba Conservation and Stewardship, 2013: 1).

The process of Bill 23 illustrated the complete breakdown of these terms of references, at least from the fishers' point of view. The intention of the Province with the board might have been the same as the fishers, that is, create a space for a meaningful conversation but the practice of politics and the unequal power relations obstructed the potential of such conversation to realized

cooperation. It appeared that the 'meaningful participation' or consultation was only a second thought in the mind of the Province. The more important goal for the Province was the ability to check the boxes in order to be able to say they had consulted with people, regardless of how meaningful such participation really was.

7.3.2 The question of meaningful participation

It was illuminating to witness the debate in the Legislative Assembly regarding consultation with fishers for Bill 23**.** Rob Altemeyer and Amanda Lathlin (NDP) criticized the Province consistently for their lack of consultation during the whole process. As an example, Mr. Altemeyer was asked to read the resolution that the fishers collectively agreed upon before the co-management meeting between 7th and 8th December 2017, during question period to Minister Squires. The resolution from the fishers demanded a suspension of the new regulation until a proper consultation had been achieved. Minister Squires answered the resolution in a political manner and contradicted the fishers who claimed that there was no consultation whatsoever,

> We did broad consultation with fishers right from northern Manitoba all way down to the South Basin, and we consulted broadly about moving towards an open marketing system (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 432).

Minister Squires never really articulated further what broad consultation entailed in her mind, except just by emphasizing, "[…] [w]ell, Madam Speaker, we consulted broadly with fishers, including constituents from the Member of the Pas (Ms. Lathlin) […]" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 432). Here, the line between what Minister Squires defines as consultation and what is meaningful discussion is distorted. The blurred line the Conservative Government drew helps the government to argue that the consultation was really being honored. Minister Squire's predecessor, Honorable Cathy Cox hired a third party, Signature Mediation to conduct "consultation" on behalf of the Province. Certainly, Signature Mediation travelled around Manitoba but the focus of the

meetings that they held in Manitoba was largely on the transition to an open market and possible eco-certification. Both former Minister Cox and Squires emphasized that indeed, that Signature Mediation had fulfilled the Province's obligation to consult with fishers. As an example, the former Minister of Sustainable Development answered a criticism from Amanda Lathlin, who criticized the department for not consulting First Nations fishers, by stating on March 23rd, 2017:

> We-in fact, our fishing envoy has met, I believe, with over 32 commercial fishers throughout the entire Province. It's been broad consultation process and not one that deals with one sector of the commercial fishing area. (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 954).

Moreover, former Minister Cox continued on the same issue a couple of weeks later, or on the April 3rd, 2017 as she re-enforced the idea that the Province indeed, had upheld their obligation towards the fishers in Manitoba.

> Through this extensive consultation with stakeholders, including FFMC, <u>we ensured that all communication channels were kept open</u> and our process transparent as we moved to Freedom Day. (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 1002). [My emphasis]

Curiously, Minister Cox argued that the Province had kept the communication channels open, especially through Signature Mediation. To be fair, Signature Mediation did talk to a lot of actors, such as fish buyers, a couple of researchers and they visited multiple communities in Manitoba. To argue that the Minister's claim that government was undertaking a consultation was in fact, just an excuse to keep the current course. Let me explain how the Minister's stance illustrates a problem that the politicians do not acknowledge, that is, exclusion by inclusion. In simple English, it means that to be included does not necessary mean that one will automatically be included. Even though fishers were included in the Co-management Board and participated in meetings with the Envoy, they were not debating the issue in any meaningful way whatsoever. It is ironic that the former Minister for Sustainable Development argued that the Envoy [see chapters 4 and 5] consulted with the fishers regarding the FFMC issue but without realizing that Jeff

Wharton, the Minister for Municipal Relations acknowledged that the main issue the Envoy was supposed to limit itself by talking to fishers was on the transition to a "flexible market" rather than dealing with the larger issue at hand, which was the decision to opt out. As Mr. Wharton explained in the debate on April 4th, 2017.

> We recognize that there are challenges in adapting to more flexible markets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is why our government has set up the fisheries envoy, who will assist fishers and communities to take advantage of their new market opportunities. (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 1061)

Referring to the responsibility of the Envoy, Mr. Wharton added,

> The Envoy´s responsible for <u>developing a new framework for commercial fish sales</u> in a flexible marketing environment. The envoy is responsible for consulting commercial fishing communities, indigenous groups, and business to identify <u>important issues</u> and <u>opportunities</u>. <u>The policies that were developed in consultation with fishers will ensure effective and sustainable fishers management</u> and allow us to establish catch and sales reporting requirements. (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 1061) [My emphasis]

Here, Mr. Wharton declared that the purpose of the Envoy was to have conversations with fishers on developing a new framework, but he also mentions that the fishers had been consulted on the policy (opting out FFMC). The fact is the fishers never really had an opportunity to contribute to anything about a new framework, let alone be asked if they wanted a new one. The Co-management Board and the fishers as whole were robbed of the opportunity to have a meaningful dialogue about overhauling the whole system. The fact is the decision to opt out of FFMC was announced on August 16th, 2016, or almost four months before Signature Mediation was hired to do their "consultation" work. More importantly, the Co-management Board would not get together until few months after the decision was made publicly, or on December 1st, 2016. By that time, the Conservative Party had been in power for only a few months. Certainly, some Conservatives legitimized the decision by arguing that opting out was just their way to "*make good on a campaign promise*" (MLA 2017, Deb, P. 1061). Even so, the issue of opting out of FFMC

was never much in the public debate during the 2016 election, especially in some communities around Lake Winnipeg. As Margaret recalled, no politician had dared to come up all the way to Dauphin River to declare that opting out of FFMC was a must:

> They said they campaigned on it, not here they did not. We had one person who came here, and he was the Liberal candidate. We did not see anyone else, nobody campaigned here during the election year. …A lot of the guys [who supported opting out], say 'they campaigned on it [opting out] and they made promises to us'. We did not hear any of that up here. And after talking to other fishers around the lake on the North Basin, nobody else did either. No campaign promises were made, and nothing was ever said about commercial fishing or opting out, or anything like that.

Margaret was not the only one who was not aware of any discussions before the actual decision but both Michael and Sandy shared the same story from Fisher River. Nobody campaigned on the issues in these areas and, as Michael pointed out, the leadership of Fisher River did not even regard the meeting with Signature Mediation as a 'consultation'. As Michael remarked, "no, they came after the fact, but we made it clear that we were not here to be consulted and it was not endorsed by the chief and council. They have to be endorsed, consulted and made aware of what is going on before they come into the community".

The limited debate about opting out of FFMC had, both among the general public in Manitoba and at the Co-management Board effectively undermined the sincerity of the Co-management Board. It completely ignored the fact that the issues were supposed to be debated in meaningful way and decided by consensus. However, by doing so, the Province made the interactions between those involved meaningless, to the borderline of stupidity. The fishers and the Province fundamentally had nothing to discuss, because the decision had already been made on the political level. And since the Province had already announced their intention to the Federal Government, before even presenting the question to the Co-management Board, the process of opting out was already set in motion. The fishers did not see any purpose of talking to the Signature

Mediation representatives. Charles articulated a common feeling among the fishers when describing Signature Mediation´s visit to the Co-management Board,

> That is after, eh! I mean, they were appointed but to me that is just waste of money. They do not have anything to say…Why are they talking to the fishers for? It is stupid! They are just covering their asses as far as I can see. It was waste of money. I mean, they [the Province] created this situation, and what are these guys going to talk to us about? How to contact a fish company or something? That is stupid!

The stupidity that the Charles mentions is the fact that the fishers themselves has a strong sense that the Province would never change their opinion on Bill 23. The Province was already too deep in the process since it was already committed to the change. No matter what resolution the fishers passed during their fishers' only in-camera meetings, they knew the answer from the Province would be negative, or the Province would in one way or another try to undermine their criticism by stating the opposite. Just as Minister Squires did when she refuted the notion that her department had not consulted with the fishers, despite contrary claims from the commercial fishers. This meant that the conversation in the co-management meetings, as was described previously, went in circles. It was the same issues, over and over again which basically, had the same results. The fishers´ desire to discuss the larger issue while the Province tried to steer the conversation to a smaller, less controversial issues. It was maddening to sit through co-management meetings and not seeing the effect of the emergency channel on fish, or possible consequences of proposed permanent channel, on the agenda. Even a simple vote on whether the Co-management Board should support opting out of FFMC was non-existent. Margaret voiced the concerns of many fishers about the reluctance of the Province to focus on the larger picture:

> When I sit at the board, I try to look at it as the whole lake. How is this going to affect the whole lake. not just my area… But lake issues, like spawning areas, all that kind of stuff affect the whole lake and needs to be dealt with as a lake issue. Not a South Basin or North Basin or the channel. The whole lake. They say, ohh these channels will affect the North Basin, yeah but they don´t realize that it might have a direct impact on the North Basin immediate but down the road it will affect the channel and South Basin. It is going to affect

> the whole lake. Not just one area or one area at time. And they are not talking about it and the government is going 'sushh don´t talk about it because then it will become an issue'

The Province seemed to be alright with allowing fishers to spend hours on 'personal' issues. Certainly, these are important too, since the fishers were trying to explain to the Province why few fishers who allegedly broke the 'code of conduct', were treated unfairly in their opinion. But again, none of those issues were leading anywhere. The Province was not interested in smaller issues either. No matter the size of the issue the fishers brought forward, or the opinions the fishers were sharing, a deeper conversation would not be facilitated. Whenever a member from the fishing communities would stand up and share his/her experience, or ask a question, the representative of the Province more than often did not look very enthusiastic in engaging in deeper conversation. The Province used various tactics to silence any conversation. The interest from the Province was more on the PowerPoint slides and the material that they themselves had prepared for the meetings. The response from the officials was to kill any follow- up discussions, brushing away the questions by replying "this is a good question /comment" or typically, "we will take it under consideration". The fishers knew such response was meaningless and they knew that the officials simply wanted them to be quiet. The fishers shook their heads, and took deep breath before uttering, "they will take this and that under consideration but as soon as the meeting is done, everything goes out of the window". The words from the officials therefore carried little or no value whatsoever in fishers' minds and it completely shut down any possible, or meaningful conversation.

Overall, the Province was reluctant to share any decision-making with the fishers, despite what the Co-management Boards Terms of Reference indicated, and ignored the fact that decisions should be made on a consensus basis. There was an incident on April 8th, 2018 that illustrated this hesitancy from the Province to include the fishers, even on small issues. A couple of meetings prior, the fishers and the Province had established a sub-committee to review and update The Lake

Winnipeg Administration Procedures which are basically the codes of conduct of Lake Winnipeg. Certainly, it was a gesture from the Province to 'include' fishers in some decisions. This particular sub-committee had met a couple of times, and it had reached consensus on an updated version, or that was what the fishers believed. However, as the officials from the Province introduced the document to the Co-management Board, the fishers who sat in that committee where not happy at all. As the fishers looked at the document, their facial expressions swiftly transformed to one of dismay. The fishers observed that there had been changed made to the document and it did not look like the one they had previously approved. Margaret was one of the members of this sub-committee and I will not forget her fierce reaction to those changes. She voiced those concerns at the meeting and later with me, as she remarked,

> We agreed to something and then they tweaked it and it was totally different than we thought. When I saw it and saw our names were still attached to it, I said 'no, you either go back to what we had agreed to, or you take our names off'.

The sub-committee met again, but the damage was already done. It was an opportunity to include the fishers in decision making, but it failed spectacularly as it was a demonstration of going behind the fishers' back. As Margret concluded, "they think it is okay that they can do that". What was more disappointing, was that it did not surprise the fishers, since it was their feeling that it had been the on-going story of the Co-management Board anyway. They were, nonetheless, thwarted in that it was seen as acceptable to unilaterally change words or intentions in a document that was supposed to be the work of the two parties. They also saw this incident as yet more proof of what they believed to be backdoor dealings of the government. In fact, the reason why the Co-management Board of Lake Winnipeg failed was that the bureaucrats or the politicians never needed the approval of the Board. Even though in theory, the decisions were supposed to be taken by that particular Board, or at least, be informed of possible decisions, the Minister could do

whatever she wanted, let alone inform all the relevant stakeholders of the Minister's intentions. The final word and the execution were always with the Minister and the Board merely served as a platform for the Minister to say she had 'consulted' with fishers and nothing more.

7.4 Arbitrary power turns into a grenade

It is essential to keep in mind that the Co-management Board is just a small part of a larger political decision process in Manitoba. The problem I will discuss here is the arbitrary decisions that the Minister can make about a fisher's livelihood without proper consultation. In fact, the Minister does not need to indicate or share her deliberations at all. The inequality in power was too much for the fishers to overcome and for the Co-management Board to survive.

The politics in Manitoba can be close and personal in one way but very impersonal on the other hand. In one way, the fishers perceive the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and the bureaucracy associated with the power as something abstract and far removed. The fishers, as I have showcased, doubt the ability of the bureaucrats and politicians who sit in their offices in Winnipeg to make an educated decision about Lake Winnipeg. Politics can also be personal in the sense that once in a while you can run into your MLA in the streets of Gimli, or in Riverton, or one might have been a neighbor of an elected official. The distance can be close but if one lives in Fisher River, Dauphin River or Norway House, the distance certainly becomes more remote. The key to influence policy makers in Manitoba is to become politically immersed or well-connected within the political network of the party in power. That is how politics works in Manitoba. Mitch, an older fisher talked to me at length about the importance of being well-connected by emphasizing that the only way for him as a spokesperson for the fishers to push something through or to gain politicians' attention in the past was to become politically inclined.

> What we did for years is that we had an inside track. I was involved politically, and few other fishers were involved in other parties and, if we had a change in government, we

> pretty much had an inside track that we could follow up and say 'Minister, you want us to go public in the paper or do you want to meet and talk with us? We are just asking for something that is right! We did a lot of changes, that way, being politically active.

To become politically active for fishers is always challenging, simply because of the nature of their occupation. Fishers spent most of their spring and fall on the lake, and for fishers in Fisher River as an example, who spent most of their spring and fall fishing in remote camps, they do not have extra hours in a day to travel to attend a meeting, or some other politically organized event during the fishing seasons. Even during the winter season, many fishers go out on the lake at least 4 days a week. To become politically organized as a whole, like the Manitoba Wildlife Federation has accomplished, is a large challenge for the fishers. Not just from a financial point of view but from both a geographical point of view and because of the nature of the job as well. Lake Winnipeg is a large lake and some communities around the lake are not as accessible as others. As an example, travel for fishers from communities such as Berens River or Poplar River takes more planning to visit Winnipeg than for someone from Gimli. The window for fishers to get together is therefore limited, especially for fishers who fish full-time or live in communities further away from the city. One of the advantages of participating in the co-management meetings was that it enabled the fishers to get together and discuss their issues in the fishers only in-camera meetings.

However, the downsides of participating in the meetings was that the fishers questioned why they were even in the attendance since they felt the meetings were pointless. The ineffectiveness according to the fishers could be traced to two reasons (1) they felt their knowledge was being ignored and (2) the presence of the individual who is responsible for the decisions was missing. The Minister for Sustainable Development was not a frequent attendee and it seemed that she relied solely on her staff to interpret the proceedings of each meeting. However, it was imperative for the fishers to have the Minister in the attendance simply because, in their view, the

fishers thought they had more chance to get through to the Minister than to have their message filtered through the bureaucrats. Mitch spoke to that view as well,

> "The system we got, we are dealing with civil servants, you get nowhere with them. Especially when you got the fisheries department, where you got biologists whose primary goal is to fill every lake with fish and preach doom and gloom, in case it happens. Then if it does not, nobody will remember what they said anyway".

Certainly, the bureaucrats in Manitoba know well that the fishers often try to go above their heads by attempting to directly contact the Minister. The fishers wrote letters to the Minister in an effort to share the reality they are facing, in order to persuade the Minister to take action. Therefore, it was a rare occasion that the Minister for Sustainable Development was scheduled to attend for an hour during the co-management meeting on November 29th, 2018.

That co-management meeting actually began the day before in the afternoon, or more precisely, right after the FFMC's General Meeting concluded. A few of us arrived late, because of the FFMC meeting ran late. It was a busy day, not just because of the FFMC meeting, but my op-ed had been published in Winnipeg Free Press in the morning, which meant that many people were interested in talking about the article which was first and foremost to answer the misleading information shared by Dr. Forbes a couple weeks earlier in the press. Another intriguing thing that happened was that the Co-management Board got a new co-chair from the government side. The new co-chair introduced herself, and she made it abundantly clear, ironically, the importance of listening to the fishers since they knew 'more about the fishing industry than she did'. The co-chair also emphasized that her job was not only to listen but to have conversation with the fishers. Again, the fishers had a difficult time believing that was the case and doubted that they would become active participants. Those fishers who spoke out, stated clearly that they were tired of hearing rumors about the Province's willingness to changing the minimum mesh size to respond to what Dr. Forbes and his followers called a 'crashing walleye population'. The frustration was,

as usual, about the fact that the issue of the possibility of changing the minimum mesh size had never been meaningfully discussed in the Board, except when the fishers were trying to respond to the rumors and were hoping to know their Province's intention.

The next day, when it was confirmed that Minister Squires would be attending the meeting for an hour, the fishers assembled into their fishers' only meeting to discuss how to deal with the Minister in a united and organized way. There were a few issues that the fishers agreed to talk to the Minister about: 1) the rhetoric that the commercial fishers were 'ruining' the lake, 2) The ineffectiveness of the Co-management Board, 3) the effects of environmental projects on the fishery and 4) meaningful consultation. Instead of giving everyone a chance to speak to the Minister, the fishers decided to pick four presenters to articulate the fisher's observations and stand points. Among the presenters the fishers picked to speak for their behalf was myself, Stacey from Dauphin River with whom I had previously been acquainted, Stan from Gimli, and Dennis from Grand Rapids. All of us, in one way or another described for the Minister what we saw as a failure of the Province to include fishers' knowledge and observations in the decision process. Moreover, we tried to convince the Minister that sustainability was not just about biology, but it included social and political aspects as well.

The reason we were in this situation, and the growing frustration among the fishers towards the Co-management Board could first and foremost be traced to their exclusion from meaningful interaction. As Dennis verbalized so eloquently to the Minister, "no changes can go through without a proper consultation". It was fascinating to watch the reaction of the Minister while listening to us talk. To be fair to Honorable Squires, she listened attentively. As we concluded our presentations, the Minister was keen on learning more about the fisher's data to understand their point of view regarding the stock assessment. Furthermore, a small spark of hope sparked in

fisher's mind when the Minister indicated that she would not make any major changes to the fishery without the involvement of the Co-management Board. I remember thinking to myself "we are finally turning the tide here" and I felt very hopeful that we could move forward as the Minister left the board meeting. Shortly after the Minister had left, we had a quick break, and I was standing with Sam and Johnny outside the conference room when both Sam and Johnny wanted to see if they could invite someone from the MWF for lunch to meet and talk to the rest of fishers about Lake Winnipeg. Fortunately, Brian Koostak accepted the offer, and everybody had a good conversation where both parties explained their point of view and the consensus of that lunch was to keep the conversation going. The rest of the day was pretty calm compared to many other days during the co-management meetings. As the meeting concluded, I walked out with Sam, and we talked to other fishers but on the way out I expressed my delight with the day. However, Sam looked at me with doubt in his eyes as he said, "we have heard this before, we just need to wait and see what happens". And guess what? Sam was right to be doubtful because just four months later the Minister announced her decision to increase minimum mesh size and introduced a buy-back quota program without bringing the proposals forward to the Co-management Board or even informing the fishers as a whole before the decision. Those decisions were a grenade the Minister had thrown into the middle of the Co-management Board which was apparently just collateral damage for what the Province called, 'enhancing sustainability'.

7.4.1 Political power does not require sharing

The Minister's decision on introducing the buy-back quota program and to increase minimum mesh size epitomized once again, the implications of an unequal power structure within the political process of the Co-management Board. The Minister has a democratic accountability to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, her political party, and every four years the public.

However, when it comes down to the Co-management Board, her power is apparently to have an arbitrary quality as opposed to a responsive quality since she can circumvent democratic deliberation. As described, the Co-management Board did not vote on anything of importance, and whenever the fishers tried to get resolutions through the board, the Provincial officials apparently had veto power to kill any resolution. That is why Johnny called their dealings with the Department of Sustainable Development an "uphill battle" within the board because "so much power is given to the bureaucracy, the department staff, the manager of the department". The meetings never reached a point where both parties would genuinely exchange ideas or force the bureaucrats to understand and apply traditional knowledge in the decisions. This is a common problem within Co-management Boards. Spak (2005) observed a similar trend within the Gwich´in Renewable Resource Board where the unequal power structure prevented bureaucrats from understanding the reality of resource users and their interest in incorporating their knowledge was lacking. Again, they did not have to since the bureaucrats held all the power. To force biologists to include traditional knowledge in the decisions, *the Gwich´in Renewable Resource Board* decided to flip the table and give the majority votes to the resource users. By doing so it forced Federal biologists to accept traditional knowledge in their policies and encouraged both parties to exchange ideas and knowledge. Such experience would certainly be worth trying on Lake Winnipeg but giving the majority of votes to fishers would not solve the larger issue on Lake Winnipeg that made the Co-management Board ineffective, democratically. The arbitrary power of the Minister is the problem.

On March 16, 2019, the Minister of Sustainable Development announced the intention of the department to buy back quotas, five weeks before the upcoming co-management meeting. A policy such as buying back quota which would be considered detrimental for fishers, should have

been discussed within the board before the decision was made due to the magnitude of the policy. This certainly was not done. The simple reason was, just like with Bill 23, the Minister did not have to, or in other words, was not interested in having the conversation with the fishers. For the Minister, it was enough that her party had won the majority of Provincial Assembly in 2016. The NDP member Mr. Altemeyer made this point in parliament during the debate of Bill 29 when he discussed the Minister's consistent undermining of the Co-management Boards:

> Yes. Why should anyone engaged in this issue believe the government is committed to the principles of co-management when this Minister is actively destroying the commercial fishery, including removing protections for fishers without even talking to the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board made up of fishers who sit there…. Why should anyone believe that this government will appropriately engage in co-management practices on this issue when their track record and their actions suggest the opposite? (MLA 2018, Deb, P. 2923).

And the Minister Squires fired back with a well-known 'people have spoken' attitude that the people had chosen her, and her party to govern while the same people had rejected other parties:

> Why would anyone believe this member opposite when he continues to come into this House, put false assertions on record?... Their record is very clear, and <u>Manitobans have spoken very loud and clear that they will not believe this member</u>. (MLA 2018, Deb, P. 2923). [My emphasis]

Minister Squires did not only believe the legitimacy of her decisions were born from the result of the past elections, but furthermore, that she was not required to explain her decision either to the Assembly or more crucially, to the Co-management Board. Shortly, after the Minister's decision, she remarked that the decision was to "fix" the NDP mess, but she did not spend time detailing the program except, as she stated,

> Madam Speaker, <u>fishers have been asking</u> for this buy back program for years, and we are <u>listening to fishers</u> because we care about the sustainability of our fisheries, and we care about Lake Winnipeg here in Manitoba. (MLA 2018, Deb, P. 2923). [My emphasis]

It is interesting to hear the Minister saying that her department had been listening to fishers, who has\d according to her asked for this program. It is certainly conceivable that the Minister had

a conversation with a small group of fishers, who were supported of such intervention but once again, it should not be counted as a consultation, as the Minister described it.

> [W]e have worked in concert with many resource groups to ensure that the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg is protected: we are consulting with all user groups, including commercial fishers, to take action. We are also ensuring that the quota amounts are sustainable, not just for now, but well into the future. [My emphasis] (MLA 2019, Deb, P. 1583).

Accordingly, Minister Squires said that her department was "consulting" with users' groups, but the problem is twofold with such a statement: (1) It already had been almost a week since she initiated the buy-back program when she made the particular statement. (2) in the press release Minister Squires and her department distributed when announcing the decision, it states that the Minister had initiated a 30-day consultation period "consulting fishers on other sustainable regulations measures". Which, as the Fisher River Cree Nation and other commercial fishers pointed out was ironic since the document released after the decision stated that the changes of mesh sized would be implemented by November 1, 2019. As Fisher River Cree Nation concluded, it would be unacceptable to go through such a process when the Department of Sustainable Development already had decided the outcome. Just to refresh our memory, by that time, the buy-back quota had not yet been discussed at the Lake Winnipeg Co-Management table. Even so, the Department of Sustainable Development did not give out much information regarding the decision, despite being asked to elaborate on the data that drove the decision forward, both from the opposite members and the fishers who were curious on about what consultation was done to which the Minister was referring to or if the Minister was using data that was unavailable to the fishers. As the members of the opposition, both Mr. Altemeyer and Ms. Judy Klassen criticized the majority for excluding the fishers in the decision process and as Ms. Klassen labelled the Co-management Board as "*phony*" simply because and I quote her, "there is no real teeth given for true positive

impacts?" (MLA 2019, Deb, P. 2024). Klassen´s speech and a statement given by Altemeyer a couple weeks earlier did not get any response from the Minister. If the Minister responded, as she did to earlier comments from Mr. Altemeyer, the debate turned into a ridicule where the point of contention was forgotten, and it turned into a comparison of who did a worse job on Lake Winnipeg. It was the same for the fishers, who were enraged by the fact that they were of learning of the Minister´s intention from the local media outlets. After the emergency meeting in Fisher River, the leadership of the community wrote a letter, addressed Minister Squires, highlighting their concerns regarding the Minister's intentions and declared disappointment with lack of consultation. As the leadership stated,

> Had there been some discussion or even notification of the intention to create such a program, FRCN [Fisher River Cree Nation] would have had the opportunity to ensure that all of its license holders were properly informed on what this decision may mean for them and the community going forward. (Appendix C)

Again, the Minister of Sustainable Development robbed the fishers and their community leaders of the opportunity to discuss and have a debate on the impact of such programs. As I argued in the previous chapter, the decision to start a buy-back program was to push many communities around the lake into a vulnerable situation. And, as the letter from the leadership of Fisher River stressed, it did not even give the community opportunity to make sure that the fishers would completely understand the future ramifications of selling their licences for a short-term gain. Moreover, the leadership of the FCRN pointed out and requested the Minister would provide them a copy of "documentation and data confirming the dangers faced by Lake Winnipeg, which presumably formed the basis of the decision to move forward with this program". The Minister never provided the FCRN those documents or data. This was not surprising and as I have already discussed, there were no communication between the fishers and the Minister of Sustainable Development between Co-management Board meetings, which did not produce any efficient

outcome either. The fishers wrote to various Ministers and MLAs between the fall of 2017 and spring of 2019 hoping to have them explain their situation, but rarely did they get any reply from the Minister. When the fishers got a reply from an elected official it often was in line of the answers they received during the Co-management Board meetings, that is, 'we will take it under consideration' or 'that is a good comment'. Textbook delayed tactics. I remember Johnny at one meeting in Gimli, trying to explain his position of being one of the spokespersons of the commercial fishers, but he simply could not get any answers. I had a conversation with Horace, a part-time fisher on the South Basin of the lake in his backyard in the spring of 2017. As we were talking about the lack of responsiveness of the government on fisher´s observations, Horace looked at me and said, "the no response Solli is unacceptable". As he continued,

> Include us! Don´t make unilateral backdoor deals. I mean, you can´t just because a few people are up in arms about something. It is their [the Province] need to react, and that is what it all boils down to. At the end of the day, it is all about the voters, and there is way more voters than there are fishermen so let´s please everyone else! You need to consult with fishermen. you cannot just decide, thinking that is the best thing to do because few people have told you that. That is ridiculous!

Horace´s words rang true to many other fishers' mindsets, not just during the process of Bill 23 but during the decision to change the minimum mesh size and the introduction of the buy-back quota. Those decisions only illustrated that the institutions like the Co-management Board were irrelevant and completely toothless in the whole political process, as Ms. Klassen pointed out. The Minister did whatever she desired to do, regardless of any deliberations of the Co-management Board.

7.5 Coda: As the curtains close

The announcement of both the quota buy-back program and the change to the minimum mesh size completely destroyed any chances for reconciliation between the Province and the fishers. As described, the fishers were completely blindsided. To make matters worse, the members

of the Co-management Board got an invitation to travel to Winnipeg for a Co-management meeting between 8th and 9th of May 2019. Of course, the Province had complete control of the agenda and predictably, there were few changes to the agenda. The biggest one was the Province's plan to spend the entire second day on a workshop, titled: *Lake Winnipeg Stakeholder Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Workshop*. The workshop sounded like a good initiative from the Province to bring together different voices to deliberate issues regarding Lake Winnipeg, which certainly was needed, but there was one glaring part missing on the agenda: fishers' knowledge and their experience of the ecology of the lake. The Province had reportedly invited various biologists and other 'experts' on the lake, but fishers, or anyone who might support fishers' observations were not invited to talk about fishers' knowledge. The Province did not even share with the fishers who were supposed to be present in this workshop, but they knew that no one had approached them to share their own observations with other experts. The only role the fishers were supposed to have during the workshop was simply to sit and listen to other 'experts', some of whom the fishers knew would present their findings which would contradict their own observations. There was no 'collaborative' in evidence. The fishers were supposed to be unquestionably okay with listening to other people who do not share their observations. As Stan told me, "We have to talk, and if we do not talk, we won't learn". Sandy shared similar sentiment as Stan when he remarked, "I am okay listening to others, but it is not fair that we cannot present our findings at the same time as others. Allow us the opportunity to defend our positions".

As I walked into Viscount Gort Hotel on Portage Avenue on the morning of May 8th, I already had the feeling that it would be my last co-management meeting. I had had plenty enough conversations and meetings between the decision to buy-back quota and increase minimum mesh size to know that a threshold had been crossed. The first people I met in the lobby of the hotel were

Margaret and Stacey from Dauphin River. Both of them were terribly upset with the decisions of the Minister to introduce buy-back quota initiative without any consultation with their area, or any other area on the lake for that matter. While I was talking to Margaret and Stacy, I saw other fishers on their way to the conference room for the fishers only meeting. As more fishers showed up, the atmosphere got more intense, and emotions were running high. As everyone got into the room, Sam opened the meeting with a strong message by declaring disappointment with Minister Squires, who many fishers had believed had promised not to enact any major changes without consulting the board. As Sam in his speech pointed out, "we are the Co-management Board, and we need to be consulted but we have not been so far for the past couple of years". Moreover, as he added "the strength is in this room, but no one is listening to our input". Immediately after his speech, Sam called for a vote to dissolve the Co-management Board. All the fishers agreed that the Co-management Board was not working properly. "We are stuck" said Stan as he described his feeling for the board. The fishers described the decision process of the Province as '*backward*' as the Province was making decisions and then claiming to be "consulting" afterwards. That was a major problem with the Co-management Board, and it had become toxic in the way that the Province claimed to be "consulting" with the fishers if they just met with the fishers, regardless of the actual conversation between the groups. A fisher from Matheson Island voiced a common feeling among fishers that the fishers on the board had been *"used" since "someone sits with us and say they have consulted with us. I do not like it anymore"*. Another fisher perfectly described the dilemma the fishers were facing when he said, "they say they are consulting with us, whatever they are trying to change. But I do not even answer the Province because they will say we have been consulted". The Co-management Board was in a way being utilized as a weapon against the fishers, and at this meeting, the fishers realized the dilemma they were in. They had been attending the

meetings largely to be kept in the loop regarding what changes the Province was going to do, but at the same time, they were running the risk that their presence in those same meetings would be interpreted by the Province as being consulted. The fishers had only two choices: 1) keep banging their heads against the wall and be stuck in the situation or 2) dissolve the board and hope that the Province would come back to them on different terms, as more of a partner rather than current top-down communications model. The fishers choose the first option since they were tired of sitting on a board that had limited power and where the Minister would do whatever she desired to do, regardless of fishers' opinions.

It was not just fishers on Lake Winnipeg who were upset about how the Minister for Sustainable Development had made her decisions, but other stakeholder organizations in Manitoba were disappointed as well. The same day that the fishers on Lake Winnipeg decided to walk away from the Co-management Board, the Manitoba Metis Federation hosted, along with Assembly of First Nations an emergency meeting for fishers at the Fort Garry Hotel to discuss, not only the decision of the Province to buy back quota from Lake Winnipeg, but also, how the recent decisions had been pushing Metis and First Nations fishers out of the fishing industry in Manitoba. Sam and I attended the meeting soon after announcing to the Province that the fishers would walk away from the board. Hundreds of fishers and leaders were gathered around in a big conference room, sharing their frustration and experiences. The meeting reinforced the experience of the members of the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board that the Province had indeed made decisions without proper consultations. As MMF President David Chartrand observed in a media release and again in the meeting that "to add insult to injury, Minister of Sustainable Development Rochelle Squires claims to have consulted fishers"[8]. Additionally, as he added, the buy-back quota program would

[8] Manitoba Metis Federation (2018:)http://www.mmf.mb.ca/news_details.php?news_id=364

"force more people out of work[9]" which would devastate many Metis and First Nations communities in Manitoba. The underlying message of the meeting was that the arbitrary exercise of power by the Minister undermined any effort for the Co-management Board to successfully function with integrity. This was what Sam and I discussed at length at Earl's restaurant where we met after the emergency meeting to work on a letter that would explain why the fishers were walking out of the Co-management Board.

The idea of a Co-management Board is to share the decision-making power with those who know the environment the best. It is supposed to give those people a platform to share their knowledge and be a part of a solution. In that way, as Jentoft (2000, 2007) and Nadasdy (1999, 2003) state, inclusion should resolve any legitimacy problem a system might have. However, by treating Co-management Boards as a magical solution to a legitimacy problem will create, as this Lake Winnipeg case has illustrated, an environment of mistrust and only question the exact legitimacy that it was supposed to solve. The capacity of a Co-management Board diminishes considerably when it collides with local politics and power struggles. To be a member of a Co-management Board as described before, requires different people to have an ability to interpret and understand other peoples' social reality. But, as the power disparity grows and the political struggle increases, the unwillingness of the power holders to interpret other stakeholders' social realities becomes a challenge. A challenge that only results in limited acceptance of different knowledge and limited deliberation of the issues in hand.

[9] Manitoba Metis Federation (2019) http://www.mmf.mb.ca/news_details.php?news_id=364

Chapter 8: Concluding remarks: re-imagining the environmental politics of small scale Canadian inland fisheries

The case of Lake Winnipeg gives us two important lessons. The first lesson, a theoretical lesson, illustrates the limits of Sen's (1999: 2009) ideas of the importance of critical debate in deciding what a just society should look like. Additionally, Lake Winnipeg shows the limited attention of Interactive Governance theory for disparities of power and differences in knowledge systems. The second lesson is more broadly relevant to fisheries governance and its emphasis on 'democratic' fisheries governance. It is not enough to establish a co-management board and expect everything to be resolved. The problem, as the Lake Winnipeg case shows us, is how a co-management board can be easily turned into a technical fix. Co-management boards need to be implemented carefully, especially since they need to deal with environmental issues. If they fail to seriously address the need for depth of engagement in fisheries governance, there is the danger of creating sacrifice zones where a specific group, in this case fishers on Lake Winnipeg, have to bear the burden of reaching 'sustainability'.

Jentoft and Chuenpagdee (2009) point out that fisheries governance is a wicked problem as policy solutions rarely succeed in fully addressing identified problems, and often those solutions become part of the very problem being addressed. For many scholars, the wickedness of governance is due to the failure to integrate transdisciplinary knowledge by a governing body. In recent years scholars have pled for greater breadth in fisheries governance; to move from no longer thinking of fisheries as more than just strictly biological but also as social and economic. Doing so requires new assemblages of different voices within the decision-making process. Different people from different disciplines can bring their unique views to the table and that should help fisheries governance to be more complete and more ready to address challenges that might arise.

Interaction and communication are the key words within Interactive Governance theory. Figure 13 only shows part of the idea of the IG theory but the intersection between what Kooiman and Bavinck (2005) named the Governing System and the System-to-be-governed represent the societal opportunities or the interaction between the two systems. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, these societal opportunities are intriguing solely because they profess to serve as a platform for a public debate on values underpinning how the world or fisheries ought to be. IG theory places great value in meta-orders such as sustainability, food security or human rights as a gold standard for governability (Weeratunge 2013; Allison 2012). However, the problem of relying on meta-values such as sustainability in governance is that they are not air-tight containers, but instead are very contested values between different groups. Additionally, their definitions are shaped by those who hold greatest political power. Sen's (2009) public reasoning as well does assume that common values can be reached through democratic debate. Pre-conceived perceptions of the values of sustainability and freedom are at the heart of the governance problem on Lake Winnipeg. IG theory and Sen (2009) overlook the messiness of not only how the world is but how the world ought to be.

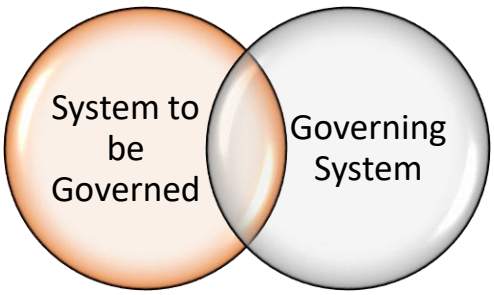

Figure 13: System to be Governed and Governing system interaction

Interactive Governance theory presumes that environment and the system-to-be-governed are governable since the effectiveness of the interaction between the two systems determines how successful the system really is. The IG theory´s representation of the environment or the governing

system can be misleading, simply because it does not capture well enough the dynamics it is supposed to embody. There are two issues that are not explained well in the IG theory or Sen's public reasoning: 1) the assumption that fisheries are only an environmental issue and should be treated as such and 2) the failure to recognize the fundamental disparity of power inherent in our current political systems. These issues explain why fisheries co-governance may fail. It is important to acknowledge these two issues since both are imperative for fishers' ability to protect their environment and their way of life. Lake Winnipeg illustrates the consequences of not understanding the limitations of democratic deliberation in dealing adequately with fisheries as environmental issues. To be equipped to govern fisheries as an environmental issue, an overhaul of not only the political system is needed but how we describe the problem we face.

8.1 Morality and sustainability

As explained in the chapter 6, Dr. Forbes and Manitoba Wildlife Federation ran a highly effective campaign between 2017 and 2019 to convince the Province of Manitoba to implement the increase of minimum mesh size and the buy-back quota as strategies to control fishing pressure on walleye on Lake Winnipeg. According to both Dr. Forbes and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, the population of walleye was crashing under the current governance framework, which in their opinion was held hostage by the commercial fishers. The indicator of overfishing was a drop in walleye production shortly after 2016. To emphasize the 'unsustainable' practices of commercial fishing, both Dr. Forbes and Manitoba Wildlife Federation argued that sauger had been wiped out of Lake Winnipeg. The crises were exaggerated when one looked at past production. Despite a recent slump in walleye production, the yield was still well above the historical average. Again, when talking about sustainability, there is a danger of fixating on numbers or targets which can be misleading and not telling the whole story. The story needs to be

viewed within the larger picture. One can look at past production on Lake Winnipeg and see the production spikes for whitefish in the early 1900s or before the 1950s. It is unfair to compare different fisheries because the fishery on Lake Winnipeg was not the same in the 1950s as it was in the 1990s or early 2000s. One might find it obvious simply because of technological advances through the years, but that would also be ignoring a crucial piece of the puzzle. The fishing effort on Lake Winnipeg have not changed as drastically as one might think. Commercial fishing on Lake Winnipeg is still a gillnet fishery: one fisher, one boat. What many fail to see is the co-production of nature: our social systems or governing systems change the environment just as much as the environment changes the governing systems (Moore 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation or the ITQ system on Lake Winnipeg changed the fishery just as much as the algae bloom or Manitoba Hydro changed the fishery. Fishers are aware that the sustainability of the lake should not be concentrated only on numbers but rather on ability to cope with the unpredictability of the lake. The fishers pointed out how the emergency channel and other infrastructure has gradually affected the fisheries for the past few years. As some fishers in Fisher River noted, the emergency channel changed fish habitat which resulted in less availability of walleye. In fact, thousands of fish were killed in the emergency channel which in turn compromised future spawning success.

Sustainability is about values and valuation processes, a point exemplified well in the debate between the commercial fishers on Lake Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba and MWF. As I detailed in chapter 6, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly passed various legislations to protect Lake Winnipeg and ‘enhance sustainability’, with limited success. The reason why measures such as the Save Lake Winnipeg Act or Bill 17 have had such limited success is simply because of hard, cold bureaucratic calculations. A good example of such was the provision in the

Save Lake Winnipeg Act of banning further peat mining while it simultaneously grandfathered licenses for corporations to do peat mining in Beaver creek which undermined Fisher River's effort to protect Fisher Bay Park for hunting and fishing. All of those government interventions do not target large issues such as waste being dumped into rivers or the effects of the Manitoba Hydro infrastructure simply because it is not economically viable to do so. Lake Winnipeg still needs to be cheap labor for Manitoba's economy and, hence, the Interlake area has to serve as a sacrifice zone as has been documented for the flood of 2011. Not only did the flood displace fishers in Dauphin River but the flood undermined fisheries for communities such as Fisher River and other First Nations communities around Lake Winnipeg. To 'enhance sustainability' the Province decided that the fishers were the one to be sacrificed through programs such as buy back quota that resulted in the Province buying back over 500,000 kg. of quotas. This action resulted in undermining many fishers' ability to make a living in the long run.

8.1.1. The battle of values

What chapter 6 also showcased was the competing moral claims to Lake Winnipeg. Commercial fishers have attempted to argue for their rights to the lake through their monetary importance for Manitoba against the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, on behalf of recreational fishers, and various farmers' associations for farmers during debates on the Save Lake Winnipeg Act and Bill 17. The downside of such moral claims is it forces environment into 'valuation processes' and makes the environment susceptible to direct comparison with other monetary claims. In the case of Lake Winnipeg such comparisons leave room for the bureaucratic practice of calculating a hierarchy of interest. The Province of Manitoba has calculated that Lake Winnipeg serves the highest monetary value by being a cheap labor in the form of a reservoir for cheap electricity and a sewage dumping site. In the case of fishers on Lake Winnipeg, such calculations are not in their favor, and they had to pay the price for them though the buy-back quota program.

However, Lake Winnipeg also illustrated an interesting dialectical relationship between value and values. The fishers in Gimli and Fisher River highlighted the importance of their families and making ends meet by tying it to their sense of freedom. The price for fish plays an essential role for the fishers because by making a living and make sure their loved ones are taken care of, they are ensuring that their families or children have the freedom to play or enjoy other things in life. The fishers themselves want to make enough so they too have the freedom to do the other things in life they enjoy. This is a central idea for the fishers when reflecting on the good life, and it played a significant role in their individual debates of opting out of dealing with the Freshwater Fisher Marketing Corporation. The debate revolved around the central thesis of which moral principles market ought to follow to ensure the best well-being of the people it was meant to serve.

In chapters 4 and 5 I explored how the idea of freedom and free market has changed from early 1920s to the present through the debates on marketing boards in Canada. For inland fisheries, the debate during the 1960s was interesting both on Federal and Provincial levels. Politicians decided after a push from inland fishers that the idea of 'free market' and competition should not play the central role in the market economy but rather a 'plan and control' economy, as Polanyi (1967) would have put it, had the same debate in 2016 when the Province of Manitoba unilaterally decided to opt out of the FFMC. The Progressive Conservative Party influenced by a neo-liberal agenda believed that freedom could only be achieved through individualization and competition. That was the only true 'free market' and the politicians tapped into the disgruntlement among fishers who complained about the low returns they were receiving from the FFMC. Historically, the FFMC, like other marketing boards such as the Canadian Wheat Board, was set up to increase return to fishers. Nevertheless, the return from the FFMC had been declining. In 2016, fishers were receiving a return of points to the limitation of the FFMC that it was not intended to be run in the

manner of a private corporation since it is not allowed to buy its own transportation companies or make other investments that corporations would make in order to be more 'efficient'. The role of FFMC is solely focused on the fishers' return. As soon as that declined, the legitimacy of the existence of FFMC was called into question. Money as a commodity does not help since FFMC is highly dependent on the exchange rate between the Canadian dollar and the US dollar. The FFMC is also affected by the fluctuation of the cost of living for the fishers because fishers in isolated communities are often faced with a high cost of living while the species they catch are not sufficiently valuable on the market to compensate for those high costs.

Many fishers thus argued that the FFMC was hindering their freedom by not allowing them to seek their own contracts to get higher prices for their fish. They believed that a lack of urgency within the corporation to sell fish was one of the reasons for low prices. Those fishers perceived their freedom through the neo-liberal lens where the 'freedom' of competition would lead to higher income. The other group, however, looked at freedom in a more collective way. They did not see competition as an enhancement of their freedom but rather, a contribution to their unfreedom. More often than not, the historical memory of the exploitation faced by their fathers or grandfathers explained their position. This group of fishers envisioned freedom therefore in a more collective way. That is, they needed to work together through FFMC to earn adequate returns for necessities instead of competing against each other.

Different values will be given different weight across space and time. For the past couple of decades, the neo-liberal conceptualization of freedom has been stronger due to the political power behind it. This period is a stark contrast with the 1960s when FFMC was established where there was strong fisher and state support for collective control of the fishing economy.

8.2 Public reasoning and democratic deficiency

One of the cornerstones of democratic society according to Amartya Sen (2009) is public reasoning. For Sen, public debate should build the foundation of values that underpin how the society ought to be. Sen (2009) romanticized democracy to a point that he described democracy as an ideal institution to safeguard people's well-being since in theory democracy creates accountability and forces leaders to listen to the general public. It is fascinating how Sen (1993, 1999b, 2002, 2009) refuted institutionalism on the basis that it was too focused on finding the 'right' institutions and therefore disregarded the importance of processes. However, Sen himself did not spend as much time when it came down to the processes of democratic deliberation. Sen was influenced by Habermas' (1989) work on the public sphere and similarly disregarded the interplay between hierarchical knowledge and power in shaping public debate.

Lake Winnipeg went through various regulatory changes between 2016 to 2019 that gave me an extraordinarily opportunity to witness first-hand a vigorous debate between policy makers and commercial fishers on values and how commercial fisheries ought to be managed to secure the well-being of Lake Winnipeg. It has been considered 'good governance' to introduce Co-management Boards around the world to give fishers a voice in the governance to have an influence over their own livelihoods. However, such practices of giving fishers more responsibility during a decision-making process are proving to be more challenging than expected. The problem concerns not just the different 'mindset' between fishers and politicians and bureaucrats when the latter group is attempting to force changes to the 'system to be governed' or when the "rugged individualists" within small scale fishery are preventing groups from identifying shared values (Song 2015). The challenge goes deeper ontologically and epistemologically. The problem is not that the fishers are not participating, the fundamental issue is that the current political framework does not allow power sharing and leaves limited space for different sets of knowledge. Democracy

has been reduced to its bare minimum of contested elections and even those are threatened. Vote suppression in the United States, or the negotiation of free trade agreements such as Trans-Pacific Partnership or NAFTA that greatly influence people's livelihood despite their having limited or no control over these same agreements are examples of the democratic deficit. The Co-management Board example central to this thesis illustrates this pattern in Manitoba. The Board was simply used as a political sop that contained the seeds of its own destruction because fishers were not treated as equal partners within it. As a result, the Co-management Board became the source of a legitimacy crisis for the provincial government.

8.2.1 Co-management Board becomes another technical fix

Fisheries governance often takes interventions that have proven successful in one place and transfers them to another location in the hope of a similar result. Co-management in fisheries is an example of this phenomenon. The implementation of the Co-management Boards for Lake Winnipeg's fishers is a case where a 'democratic' solution to a legitimacy problem failed. Indeed, this is not the first failure of co-management on Lake Winnipeg. Older fishers talked about their past experiences with Co-management Boards on Lake Winnipeg. Consistently, fishers' experience has been that the Province was unwilling to hear or even understand the fisher's concerns about the ecology of the lake about fishers' role in decision making processes. Mitch, an older fisher who was outspoken and sat on an advisory board in the 1980s described to me the disappointment with the arrangement, and the fact, regardless of what fishers proposed, they never got a meaningful conversation out of it:

> We would present all of our resolutions to them and explain it to them, 'we want these changes and those changes'. Basically, the same concerns as the concerns the fishers are arguing with them today. They would say 'well, we cannot give you an answer to this question now, so we will present this to the Minister'. Well, they never went to the Minister, they went up to their bosses who was sitting somewhere else, and they would send us a formal letter saying, 'we cannot do this or do that.

Dan, another experienced fisher and a vocal one shared Mitch's sentiment describing his experience on sitting on various committees and boards.

> We found out that we actually get things done by agreeing with each other, but we found out that we were hitting a wall with the government of the day. We made recommendations and we asked to see the Minister come and visit us. However, he [the Minister] got frustrated seeing us working as a group and he then decided that our recommendations not be even answered. An explanation would have been nice, but then we decided to end [the board].

This is the same scenario that the fishers on Lake Winnipeg experienced during the process of Bill 23 and the initiative of the buy-back quota program and minimum mesh size change. Regardless of the intent of the fishers' statements, the Province did not budge in their position which made the fishers, as they described to me feel like their knowledge was not being respected as deserved. The current political framework opened a space for the arbitrary quality of Ministers' powers to produce policies that had the effect of giving them control over a fisher's destiny and consequently undermined the democratic processes as a whole. In other words, the political structure allowed the Minister to place fishers or First Nations as subordinates and redefine their political subjectivities into passive political participants. The Minister and bureaucrats do not need to listen to fishers. In fact, because of the power disparity between the groups, the Minister has a limited interest in knowing the social situation of the fishers, simply because she did not have to.

The next day after the emergency meeting in Fisher River on March 16th, 2019 I went to Gimli where I met a young fisher, Ron. Ron was still terribly upset by the Minister's decision to increase minimum mesh size. He still was confused and asked, "what more can we do?". As we were discussing the possibility of increasing the minimum mesh size. As he deliberated, he pointed out that the Minister did not realize what the differences in mesh sizes truly means for fishers who need the variability to adapt to different fishing situations. He pointed out that the seemingly small size difference is very important in practice. As Ron emphasized, it might be nothing for the

Minister to increase the minimum mesh size from 3 inch to 3.75 inches mesh size, "it really does not seem like a big difference to her. She probably thinks, 'it is only 0.75 inches! But for us, it is". Ron emphasized that the Minister and many other politicians do not fish, and do not know how big a difference each mesh size can have on a successful catch. By increasing the mesh size, the fishers will not catch as much medium size fish as previously, and the fishery for perch would be almost gone. Again, the Minister really does not need to understand fisher's reality since the political framework does not force her to listen to the fishers but rather, it gives her power to make her own arbitrary decision. In fact, the Minister is encouraged to listen to 'experts' and bureaucrats and let them make the recommendations. Again, Sen (2009) and IG theory neglect this democratic deficiency or power disparity within the political system. The utopia of a free exchange of ideas and negotiation of values between groups is rarely realized since the system is not based on equality between members. Again, this was illustrated clearly in how the Province of Manitoba proceeded with Bill 23, the buy-back quota program and increase of minimum mesh size. A clear hierarchy of knowledge was apparent in those issues, which is a huge obstacle for fishers to protect their livelihood simply because the consultation between the groups is limited and is built on speed rather than depth.

8.2.2 Hierarchy of knowledge and implication for consultation

Chapters 6 and 7 exemplified the hierarchy of knowledge within the Province of Manitoba. The fishers on Lake Winnipeg fought an uphill battle with both the Province of Manitoba and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. The latter two argued strongly for the 'unsustainability' of the fisheries by pointing out a decline in production which they believed needed a strong reaction from the government. However, the fishers themselves consistently pointed out that the drop in production should not be traced through fishing pressure but rather on the unpredictable nature of

fishery and market conditions that goes through ebbs and flows. The fishers shared their observations consistently with the Province of Manitoba at various meetings. They talked about how the opting-out of FFMC could hurt small communities that are not easily accessible, or that the emergency channel disrupted both walleye and whitefish habitat and consequently spawning success. The downside of bringing science into a democratic deliberation is that an opinion of an academic such as Dr. Forbes or the Manitoba Wildlife Federation spokesperson or bureaucrats in Winnipeg carry more weight at the discussion table than the eyewitness testimony of fishers who experience the lake on a daily basis. Certainly, as Latour (2004) pointed out, the democratic deficiency when discussing the environment revolves around the fact that scientists are the only ones who can walk freely between the social and the environment. They are the ones who can tell us how things really are, and the politicians depend on their observations for their decisions. By taking the observations of fishers seriously, politicians are scared of 'politicizing' the science. Scientific methods create confidence in what is fact. This excludes the voices of other people who might not hold a formal science degree but nonetheless are great students of the environment or know well how certain applied science or facts will affect their livelihood and the environment. In the context of Canada, First Nations have a particularly strong legal basis as knowledge holders. They have a contractual relationship with the Crown and should be included in the discussion of not only which values should be underpinned in our institutions but should also be working with scientists from the beginning. It is strange to observe that or in the case of Lake Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba offers fishers seats at the table, but exclude them from the process until the last minute when decisions have been mad already. This short circuit of consultation (Latour 2004) is detrimental to fishers' ability to protect their livelihoods or First Nations to protect their constitutional right to fish or fish for a moderate livelihood.

When the Province of Manitoba decided to buy back quotas and increase minimum mesh size, it did so on the basis of not only their own data Fishers interpretations were ignored and the fishers themselves did not have any role in collecting these data nor were they asked about the best way to collect reliable data. The Province consulted with a few 'experts' to validate their own interpretations. Being excluded during the whole process is difficult for fishers who have limited weapons with which to fight back, and it is even more serious for First Nations. The rights of First Nations to fish and to be consulted are guaranteed in the section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. However, as we have seen, the Province of Manitoba does not need to attack directly on the right to fish but undermines these rights in other ways. Good examples of this are the peat mining projects, hydroelectric developments or emergency channels that put fish habitat and spawning success in jeopardy. However, it was interesting to listen to Premier Pallister before the Provincial election in 2019 declaring in a press conference that the Progressive Conservatives had done "more than NDP did when it was in power" and he emphasized "[…] [i]have visited over 150 first nations communities and I can tell you that what we've been doing is genuine reconciliation. Building Freedom Road when the NDP could not get it done […](Kives 2019). They visit communities rather than actually having meaningful consultation with them. In the case of Lake Winnipeg and the decision of the Province to buy quota back, fishers or First Nations were not even invited for consultation. Such sentiment was expressed explicitly in a letter that the leadership of Fisher River Cree Nation wrote to Minister Squires after the emergency meeting. As the leadership emphasized,

> FRCN is disappointed that there were no consultations held with the various communities and other stakeholders that this program may impact. The document published by the Province tilted "lake Winnipeg measures to enhance sustainability "notes that part of Manitoba Sustainable Development's department mandate is to "develop comprehensive shared management strategies in consultation with First Nations, Métis and licensed hunters and anglers to give local communities a greater voice and ensure long-term sustainability of our fish and wildlife population". Had there been some discussion or even notification of the intention to create such a program, FRCN would have had the

> opportunity to ensure that all of its license holders were properly informed on what this decision may mean for them and the community going forward. (Appendix C)

Moreover, Fisher River also pointed out how they have been excluded in the process of the statistical collection, but the Province was very silent on exactly which data they applied;

> Given the stated justification provided for the creation of this program, being the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg, FRCN would request that your department provide us with a copy of the documentation and data confirming the dangers faced by Lake Winnipeg, which presumably formed the basis of the decision to move forward with this program. (Appendix C)

The silence from the Province on their intention to make those policy changes public was a big blow for many communities around Lake Winnipeg, especially First Nations. The Province did not gave the fishers or the communities sufficient time to collect funds to attempt to keep the quotas within the community. Many fishers could not afford to not sell their quotas, in some cases for $30,000. As I pointed out, many communities lost significant number of quotas. Overall, Lake Winnipeg's quotas have declined by 10.4% since 2012. Most of the communities that lost quotas are First Nations: Fisher River and Jackhead lost 9%, Grand Rapids 17% and Pine Dock/Matheson Island 15% (Department of Sustainable Development 2019). Those numbers do not include the fish deaths resulted by the emergency channel or the potential loss of production due to spawning failures from said channels. The numbers represent the inability of the communities to protect their interest because they were not permitted into the process until it was too late. The communities were not allowed by the Province of Manitoba to step in during the initial stages when the design of the projects or programs were being debated. Consultation should not be about how quickly government can approval on a project but, rather, how to fit different values and facts together and cultivate further co-operation between scientists and people on the ground.

8.3 Coda: Re-imaging small scale fisheries and the future of Lake Winnipeg

> The hidden reality of human life is the fact that the world doesn't just happen. It is not a natural fact, even though we tend to treat it as if it is – it exists because we all collectively produce it. We imagine things we'd like and then we bring them into being. But the moment you think about it in these terms, it's obvious that something has gone terribly wrong (Graeber 2015, 89)

I fully concur with Graeber's view that the world does not just happen, but it is produced collectively, including the values that one ought to hold in order to live a good life. Something has gone wrong because some people have radically more power to make change than others. In the case of Lake Winnipeg, experts such as Dr. Forbes and the Province of Manitoba have wielded disproportionate power to enact change. The political system and the way we apply 'democracy' to solve our environmental challenges is inadequate or "precarious at best" as Audra Simpson (2011, 209) described First Nations' experience with the Westernized vision of democracy.

To move beyond traditional democracy, we are forced to expand the social. It requires us to consider, as Graeber (2015) argued, "[…][t]he ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make, and could just as easily make differently […]" (89). The illustration of the failure of the Co-management Board on Lake Winnipeg is not an indictment on Co-management Boards worldwide or the Co-management Board as a concept. However, we need to make changes to their democratic procedures in ways that might take lessons from First Nation and Métis insights into and experiences of democratic procedures. Doing so will help not just First Nations and Métis to protect their rights but other fishers as well to maintain their livelihoods.

One of the problems with the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board was the hierarchical structure of its democratic process. Fishers never got a chance to discuss the issues in the beginning of the process when it mattered and their legitimate questions and concerns were met with the sound of silence (Kunreuther (2018). As Graeber (2002, 2013) and Alfred (2005) have highlighted,

historically First Nations governance models have a close tie with anarchism in the sense that they refute hierarchical politics:

> […] It is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties, or corporations; networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy. Ultimately, it aspires to be much more than that, because ultimately it aspires to reinvent daily life as whole […] (Graeber 2002, 70) [My emphasis].

Graeber's paragraph resonates well with Peter Kulchyski's (2005) observation on First Nations' politics and how they revolve around discussions between people, regardless of an individual´s education or status. More radically, Peter Kulchyski also emphasized that in these settings, full agreement is needed instead of a simple majority. Such a transition would have been welcomed in the Lake Winnipeg Fisheries Co-management Board where the Province held all the cards and did not need to rely on any voting to get their will through. What is interesting, as I pointed out in chapter 7, in the terms of reference for the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board, the decisions were supposed to be made on a consensus basis, which turned out to be irrelevant since the board rarely voted on important matters anyway. The crux of the problem as many fishers and a few politicians pointed out was that the Co-management Board did not have any political teeth to be effective. There was no provision that stated that issues regarding Lake Winnipeg needed to go through the Co-management Board before it went to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly or to the Minister's desk. Transition from a hierarchical political framework to non-hierarchical one is a larger political project, but it would be worthwhile to experiment with a non-hierarchical Co-management Board that allows all participants to actively participate in discussion on matters that influence their own livelihoods. The democratic problem would not be solved completely since the board would still be part of a hierarchical machine which would require an even larger political overhaul. More broadly more effort needs to be made to enhance the power of fishers and First Nations to be stewards of the lake. This would necessitate expansion the public

sphere in a way that more issues are debated in fisheries governance and fishers have a venue to talk about these issues from the beginning.

8.3.1 Reformulation of environmental politics

The anthropology of difference has helped us to understand that different people will assemble nature and the social differently and such a mindset is vital for environmental politics (Blaser 2009, 2010; Nadasdy 2003, 2005; Povinelli 2001, 2011). I illustrated the point that fishers on Lake Winnipeg assembled the social and nature differently than the bureaucrats and politicians which resulted in a different view on sustainability. However, it is not enough just to acknowledge people might assemble their reality differently than others, we also need to be aware that we need to talk differently about environmental issues. In some ways, as I have explored, Interactive Governance Theory is useful to analyze the interaction between natural, social, and political systems. As an analytical tool it opens a space for us to investigate both the system-to-be-governed and governing system and the effectiveness of those systems to negotiate values that underpin how the fisheries ought to be and the success of reaching those ideal goals. Nonetheless, IG theory does not go far enough. We need to add to it Moore's (2015) idea of the 'co-production of nature'. No longer should we be driving a wedge between system-to-be-governed and governing system. Rather we should be bringing everything together into a 'world oikos'. Within the social, robust democratic deliberation includes co-operation between scientists and ordinary people establishing facts together in ways that that considers values and other important issues that influence people's lives. Certainly, with its new emphasis on transdisciplinarity, the IG theory has made that connection (Jentoft, and Chuenpagdee 2019). Again, it is not about just about making those connections that matter, but the quality of those interactions which will not be resolved until a framework such as IG theory becomes more power sensitive. That is, the disparity of power results

in short-circuit of consultation as it illustrated on Lake Winnipeg. Here I want to switch the focus away from governability or meta-values such as sustainability as a gold standard of fisheries and place more emphasis on the process. Process means, how many voices are being heard? What is being included and discussed in the social? How is the co-operation between scientists and, in this case, fishers going? Each society is different and to use arbitrary meta values ignores the process of collectively finding out how the world ought to be. Again, theoretically, we can have highly governable systems that have strong numbers indicating certain definitions of sustainability that have been achieved at the expense of fishers' freedom or fisher's ability to have a say in how the fisheries are being governed.

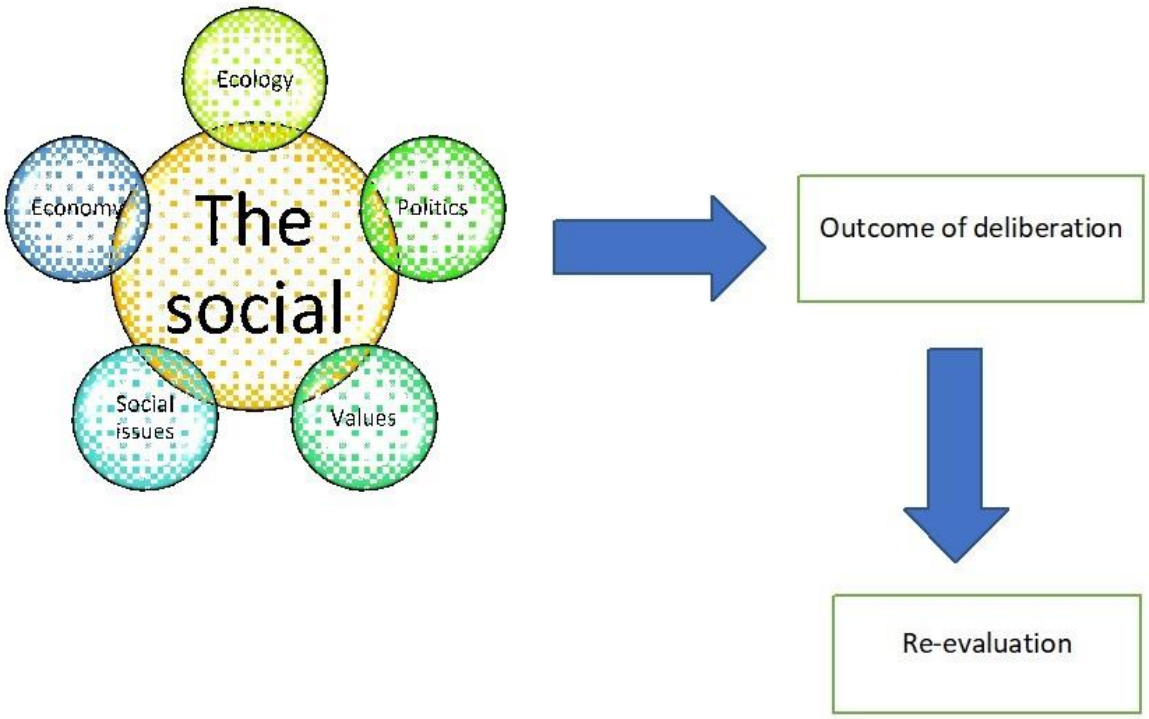

Figure 14: Expansion of the social

Lake Winnipeg showcases the current limitation of democratic deliberation iin its example of how interlinked issues were separated and treated as different. As an example, Bill 23 and increasing minimum mesh size are heavily interlinked but opting out of FFMC really hurt some

fishers, especially those who live far from the main centre of Manitoba, Winnipeg. Those fishers rely heavily on FFMC for buying their fish, but many other buyers would not fetch fish from those points further north simply because it is not economically profitable. And as I mentioned in chapter five, many fishers also perceived FFMC as a source of freedom but by having a more guaranteed income through FFMC allows them and their families to enjoy other things in life, such as freedom to play or freedom of being their own bosses. However, by deciding to increase minimum mesh size, the Province of Manitoba possibly threatened the financial base of FFMC. As I mentioned earlier in the thesis, in a meeting in Fisher River Cree Nation in the spring of 2019, a FFMC representative believed that the change of mesh size restrictions would cost the FFMC over three million dollars. However, only the future can tell, as Covid hit in early 2020 which paralyzed market for Manitoba fish, which means that it is yet unclear, how much damage the mesh size restriction might have on FFMC. That made it more difficult for the FFMC to return profit to the fishers and made it even more expendable in the eyes of politicians. Furthermore, the buy back of over 500,000 kg of quota from fishers also undermines the FFMC since fishers who sold the quota sold most of their catches to FFMC. Fishers in the North Basin are heavily reliant on FFMC to buy their fish. Overall, the decisions might have been different had the Province allowed the fishers themselves to collaborate with scientists to deliberate all these issues as one. Overall, the political hierarchy and the eagerness of politicians to showcase that they have done something, prevented the fishers from participating in meaningful deliberations to protect their fishery. Slowing the consultation process and allowing more people to participate meaningfully in establishing guiding values would have given fishers the chance to protect their livelihood while also deepening the decision-making process. However, such an approach will not be sufficient if the broader political and economic context remains intact.

As described in this thesis, the past few years have been monumental on Lake Winnipeg with many controversial decisions. This makes the coming years also very important. It is vital for First Nations fishers and other small-scale fishers to use the next few years wisely to gain further rights to the rural space through political and economical means, which should help them protect their livelihoods and the rights to fish commercially. Fishers need to assert their role as stewards of the lake and the best way to do so is to gain more economic control.

In 2019 the minister of Fisheries and Oceans appointed an interlocutor to travel to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Northwest Territories to discuss with fishers the future of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. The interlocutor then established an *interim committee of Inland Fisher Harvesters* to search for alternatives to turn the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation into a fisher led corporation. In his report to Minister Bernadette Jordan, the interlocutor recommended the Minister give this *Interim Committee of Inland Fish Harvesters* one more year to look for alternatives to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation in a way that could benefit fishers. This is a unique opportunity for the fishers to either take over FFMC or simply turn it into a co-operative to assert greater control of their product that ultimately would enhance their economic power within Manitoba. Greater economic power could force the Province to listen to fishers on the fishers' own terms. Just governance of small-scale commercial fisheries in Manitoba requires a substantial re-alignment of democratic process in favour of fishers.

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Appendix A: FFMC pricelist 2019/20

FFMC 2019/20 SPRING INITIAL PRICES TO CONTRACTED FISHERS
FOB WINNIPEG LOOSE - EFFECTIVE MAY 5, 2019 - AUGUST 3,2019
FREIGHT COSTS HAVE TO BE DEDUCTED TO ARRIVE AT LAKESIDE PRICES

SPECIES	GRADE	SIZE	PRODUCT CODE	May 5/19 - Aug 3/19 $ / kg	$ / lb
WHITEFISH					
EXPORT DRESSED	SML	(0.45 - 0.85 kg)	01201	1.65	0.75
	MED	(0.85 - 1.3 kg)	02201	2.43	1.10
	LGE	(1.3 - 1.8 kg)	03201	2.51	1.14
	JBO	(Over 1.8 kg)	04201	2.67	1.21
CONTINENTAL DRESSED	SML	(0.45 - 0.85 kg)	01203	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
	MED	(0.85 - 1.3 kg)	02203	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
	LGE	(1.3 - 1.8 kg)	03203	1.65	0.75
	JBO	(Over 1.8 kg)	04203	1.65	0.75
EXPORT HEADLESS	SML	(0.45 - 0.85 kg)	01301	1.65	0.75
	LAKE RUN	(Over 0.85 kg)	05308	1.65	0.75
CONTINENTAL HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05303	1.65	0.75
CUTTER HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05307	1.65	0.75
ROE			05109	TO BE ANNOUNCED	
PICKEREL					
ROUND	SML	(27 - 41 cm)	01110	2.75	1.25
	MED	(41 - 52 cm)	02110	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
	LGE	(Over 52 cm)	03110	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
HEADLESS	SML	(25 - 30 cm)	01310	4.40	2.00
	MED	(30 - 37 cm)	02310	6.11	2.77
	LGE	(37 - 41 cm)	03310	5.34	2.42
	JBO	(Over 41 cm)	04310	4.15	1.88
ROE			05119	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
SAUGER					
ROUND	SML	(27 - 29 cm)	01120	2.20	1.00
	MED	(Over 29 cm)	02120	3.15	1.43
HEADLESS	SML	(25 - 28 cm)	01320	3.09	1.40
	MED	(Over 28 cm)	02320	4.41	2.00
PERCH					
ROUND	LAKE RUN	(Over 20 cm)	05184	3.42	1.55
NORTHERN PIKE					
DRESSED	MED	(0.5 - 2.2 kg)	02240	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
	LGE	(1.8 - 4.1 kg)	03240	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
	JBO	(4.1 - 6.1 kg)	04240	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
HEADLESS	SML	(0.7 - 1.9 kg)	01340	0.88	0.40
	MED	(1.9 - 4.0 kg)	02340	1.12	0.51
	LGE	(Over 4.0 kg)	03340	0.88	0.40
ROE			05149	TO BE ANNOUNCED	
LAKE TROUT					
DRESSED	SML	(0.7 - 1.8 kg)	01230	1.04	0.47
	MED	(1.8 - 3.6 kg)	02230	1.04	0.47
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	(Over 3.0 kg)	05330	0.81	0.37
ROE			05139	6.00	2.72
GOLDEYE					
BELLY SPLIT	MED	(0.35 - 0.45 kg)	02283	2.75	1.25
	LGE	(Over 0.45 kg)	03283	3.09	1.40
TULLIBEE					
ROUND	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05158	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
DRESSED	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05258	0.46	0.21
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05358	0.46	0.21
ROE			05159	TO BE ANNOUNCED	
INCONNU					
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05382	2.27	1.03
WHITE BASS					
ROUND	LAKE RUN	(Over 23 cm)	05191	0.53	0.24
CARP					
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05370	1.10	0.50
HEADS			05174	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
ROE			05179	2.31	1.05
MILT			05177	1.46	0.66
MULLET					
ROUND MULLET	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05160	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	
HEADLESS FINS OFF	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05460	0.89	0.40
HEADS			05164	0.33	0.15
FRESHWATER DRUM					
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	[illegible]	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY	

Appendix B: FFMC pricelist 2017/2018

FFMC 2017/18 INITIAL PRICES TO CONTRACTED FISHERS
FOB WINNIPEG LOOSE - EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 3, 2017
FREIGHT COSTS HAVE TO BE DEDUCTED TO ARRIVE AT LAKESIDE PRICES

SPECIES	GRADE	SIZE	PRODUCT CODE	Sept 3/17 - Nov 11/17		Nov 12/17 - May 5/18	
				$ / kg	$ / lb	$ / kg	$ / lb
WHITEFISH							
EXPORT DRESSED	SML	(0.45 - 0.85 kg)	01201	1.70	0.7711	1.70	0.7711
	MED	(0.85 - 1.3 kg)	02201	2.31	1.0478	2.71	1.2292
	LGE	(1.3 - 1.8 kg)	03201	2.40	1.0886	2.80	1.2701
	JBO	(Over 1.8 kg)	04201	2.55	1.1567	2.95	1.3381
CONTINENTAL DRESSED	SML	(0.45 - 0.85 kg)	01203	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY			
	MED	(0.85 - 1.3 kg)	02203	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY			
	LGE	(1.3 - 1.8 kg)	03203	1.65	0.7484	1.90	0.8618
	JBO	(Over 1.8 kg)	04203	1.65	0.7484	1.90	0.8618
EXPORT HEADLESS	SML	(0.45 - 0.85 kg)	01301	1.65	0.7484	1.90	0.8618
	LAKE RUN	(Over 0.85 kg)	05308	1.65	0.7484	1.90	0.8618
CONTINENTAL HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05303	1.65	0.7484	1.90	0.8618
CUTTER HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05307	1.65	0.7484	1.90	0.8618
ROE			05109	7.00	3.1752	0.00	0.0000
PICKEREL							
ROUND	SML	(27 cm - 41 cm)	01110	3.15	1.4288	3.86	1.7509
	MED	(41 cm - 52 cm)	02110	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY			
	LGE	(Over 52 cm)	03110	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY			
HEADLESS	SML	(25 cm - 30 cm)	01310	4.85	2.1999	5.55	2.5175
	MED	(30 cm - 37 cm)	02310	6.61	2.9983	7.13	3.2341
	LGE	(37 cm - 41 cm)	03310	5.74	2.6036	6.26	2.8395
	JBO	(Over 41 cm)	04310	4.54	2.0593	5.24	2.3768
ROE			05119	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY			
SAUGER							
ROUND	SML	(27 cm - 29 cm)	01120	2.20	0.9979	2.50	1.1340
	MED	(Over 29 cm)	02120	3.15	1.4288	3.86	1.7509
HEADLESS	SML	(25 cm - 28 cm)	01320	3.09	1.4016	3.79	1.7191
	MED	(Over 28 cm)	02320	4.41	2.0004	5.09	2.3088
PERCH							
ROUND	LAKE RUN	(Over 20 cm)	05184	4.41	2.0004	4.96	2.2498
NORTHERN PIKE							
DRESSED	MED	(0.5 - 2.2 kg)	02240	0.94	0.4264	0.94	0.4264
	LGE	(2.2 - 4.1 kg)	03240	1.27	0.5761	1.27	0.5761
	JBO	(4.1 - 6.1 kg)	04240	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY			
HEADLESS	SML	(0.6 - 1.9 kg)	01340	0.93	0.4218	0.93	0.4218
	MED	(1.9 - 4.0 kg)	02340	1.17	0.5307	1.28	0.5806
	LGE	(Over 4.0 kg)	03340	0.93	0.4218	0.93	0.4218
ROE			05149	0.00	0.0000	7.00	3.1752
LAKE TROUT							
DRESSED	SML	(0.7 - 1.8 kg)	01230	1.04	0.4717	1.24	0.5625
	MED	(1.8 - 3.6 kg)	02230	1.04	0.4717	1.24	0.5625
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	(Over 3.0 kg)	05330	0.81	0.3674	1.01	0.4581
ROE			05139	5.00	2.2680	0.00	0.0000
GOLDEYE							
BELLY SPLIT	SML	(0.20 - 0.35 kg)	01283	0.47	0.2132	0.47	0.2132
	MED	(0.35 - 0.45 kg)	02283	3.43	1.5558	3.43	1.5558
	LGE	(Over 0.45 kg)	03283	3.59	1.6284	3.59	1.6284
TULLIBEE							
ROUND	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05158	0.34	0.1542	0.34	0.1542
DRESSED	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05258	0.52	0.2359	0.52	0.2359
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05358	0.52	0.2359	0.52	0.2359
ROE			05159	15.43	6.9990	0.00	0.0000
INCONNU							
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05382	2.26	1.0251	2.26	1.0251
WHITE BASS							
ROUND	LAKE RUN	(Over 23 cm)	05191	0.54	0.2449	0.54	0.2449
CARP							
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05370	1.00	0.4536	1.00	0.4536
HEADS			05174	0.30	0.1361	0.30	0.1361
ROE			05179	2.20	0.9979	2.20	0.9979
MILT			05177	SPECIAL ORDER ONLY			
MULLET							
ROUND MULLET	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05160	0.39	0.1769	0.39	0.1769
HEADLESS FINS OFF	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05460	0.85	0.3856	0.85	0.3856
HEADS			05164	0.33	0.1497	0.33	0.1497
FRESHWATER DRUM							
HEADLESS	LAKE RUN	ALL SIZES	05390	0.52	0.2359	0.52	0.2359

Appendix C: Fisher River Cree Nation Letter to Minister Squires regarding the Buy-back quota program

Fisher River
CREE NATION

March 18, 2019

VIA E-MAIL

Minister Rochelle Squires
Department of Sustainable Development

Minister Squires:

RE: Lake Winnipeg Quota Buy-Back Program

Fisher River Cree Nation ("FRCN") is writing to you today in relation to the Lake Winnipeg Quota Buy-Back Program. There is significant concern about this program and what impact it may have on the future of commercial fishing within the community.

While FRCN recognizes that this initiative has been implemented in the name of conservation and sustainability and supports those goals, the manner in which this program has been implemented is of concern. Specifically, FRCN is worried that some of its members who are licensed quota holders may not be fully informed and realize what implications selling their quota may have on them and their livelihood in the future. This concern is most acute with regards to some of FRCN's most vulnerable, who may jump at the short-term benefits that this program may offer. Notably, the short window provided in which fishers have the opportunity to express their interest, a mere 10 days, puts further pressure on them to make a quick decision that may lead them down the path to ultimately selling their quota when that may not be in their best interests for the long term.

FRCN is also concerned about the potential impact of this program on the future of the commercial fishing industry within its community. This program may act to prevent younger individuals seeking to enter the industry from doing so. This program will cause there to be less quotas available and these young fishers are being put at a disadvantage with Province acting as a bidder who is offering more to near-retirement fishers for their existing quotas.

FRCN is disappointed that there were no consultations held with the various communities and other stakeholders that this program may impact. The document published by the province titled "Lake Winnipeg Measures to Enhance Sustainability" notes that part of Manitoba Sustainable Development's department mandate is to "develop comprehensive shared management strategies in consultation with First Nations, Métis, and licensed hunters and

anglers to give local communities a greater voice and ensure long-term sustainability of our fish and wildlife populations". Had there been some discussion or even notification of the intention to create such a program, FRCN would have had the opportunity to ensure that all of its license holders were properly informed on what this decision may mean for them and the community going forward.

Additionally, the news release from the Province indicates that a 30-day consultation period has now begun on sustainability regulation measures such as net minimum mesh sizes and recreational angling length retention limits, though no such consultation period was provided on this issue. FRCN hopes that whatever feedback the Province obtains from fishers through this new consultation will be heeded and incorporated into any future measures, though it is noteworthy that that the "Measures to Enhance Sustainability" document already indicates that these changes are expected to be implemented by November 1, 2019, irrespective of the feedback received in this consultation process. If this is the case, it is unacceptable to FRCN.

As the province is well aware, fishing is an important industry within the FRCN community. These changes may have a significant impact on many of its members and ought not to be made without proper consultations, accommodation, and the provision of adequate information and time prior to implementation. Greater involvement of FRCN and other First Nations communities in these decisions ought to be provided, as the mandate of your department demands.

Given the stated justification provided for the creation of this program, being the sustainability of Lake Winnipeg, FRCN would request that your department provide us with a copy of the documentation and data confirming the dangers faced by Lake Winnipeg, which presumably formed the basis of the decision to move forward with this program.

We thank you for your time and consideration of FRCN's position on this matter.

Sincerely,

FISHER RIVER CREE NATION

[redacted]

Chief David Crate, C.M.

[redacted]

Councillor Darrell Thaddeus

[redacted]

Councillor Carl Cochrane

[redacted]

Councillor Vincent Crate

[redacted]

Councillor Shirley A. Cochrane

Box 367 Koostatak, Manitoba R0C1S0 | [redacted]

Appendix D: Letter explaining the fishers' decision to dissolve the Co-Management Board

Hon. Rochelle Squires
Minister of Sustainable Development
Room 344 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8
[redacted]

VIA E-MAIL

May 8, 2019

Dear Minister Rochelle Squires:

Subject: Dissolvement of Co-management board as it currently exists

I am writing to you today informing you that the fishers' representatives on the Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board voted unanimously this morning to dissolve the Co-management board as it currently exists. We do this, with a heavy heart but the Province of Manitoba has left us with no other choice. The Co-management board was revived a few years ago, with a promise of shared decision-making process, like co-management arrangements are supposed to work. Our experience has been, unfortunately, the opposite where we find the board ineffective. The province has consistently practiced politics that does not have anything to do with a good governance, or what should be acceptable in a democratic society. The past couple of years, the Province has undermined the purpose of the Co-management board by making decisions behind close doors and therefore circumvent the Co-management board. We feel that all the trust we have in the government has deteriorated to a point that we can no longer, with a clean conscience work within the current form. The province as a whole have made a mockery of the consultation process by claiming to have consulted with fishers regarding the buy back quota program and the net mesh size changes, when in fact, such consultation never took place.

We represent over 800 fishers all around Lake Winnipeg and we take our responsibility towards governance of the lake seriously. To fishers, fishing is not just an occupation, it is a way of life. Commercial fishing in Manitoba is a vibrant industry that does support the Manitoba economy extensively and provide food security for our neighbours as well. It is therefore beneficial for everyone in Manitoba to see the commercial fisheries thriving. It is a tragedy that the province has decided to ignore hundreds of years of experience of commercial fishing in the decision process to improve fisheries governance.

Lake Winnipeg is our life, and we are committed in seeing both the lake and the commercial fishery thriving for decades to come. The attempt to push commercial fishery out of Lake Winnipeg has only helped us coming together as a group. Even though we are hereby dissolving the existing Co-management board, we will pursue other groups such as the Pioneer Commercial Fishers of Manitoba to organize us better as a united voice to fight for our rights. The right to make a living for our families. We are committed to good governance of the fisheries and we know the importance of working with a government that takes commercial fishery and the health of Lake Winnipeg as serious as we do. The

government has to acknowledge, that whatever issues might arise regarding Lake Winnipeg, no solution will be found without an active involvement of commercial fishers.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Sam Murdock

Former co-chair of Lake Winnipeg Co-management board
Director of Operations, Fisher River Cree Nation
Email: [redacted]
Phone: [redacted]

CC: Representatives of Lake Winnipeg Co-management Board

Appendix E: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Consent Form

Research Project Title:

Lake Winnipeg in a different light: Re-imagining well-being and environmental politics in a small-scale fishery.

Researcher

Sölmundur Karl Pálsson for doctoral thesis

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and understand any accompanying information.

1. The main object of the study is to get an insight of the social realities among the fishers on Lake Winnipeg and how, themselves, envision how the governance of the fisheries should be. To do so, the researcher will examine the opportunities the fishers have according to the current regulations to maintain their way of life and whether they have a sense of control through the lenses of social and ecological well-being analysis. Furthermore, the object is also to shed a light on how the fishers themselves re-imagine both how life should be and how a good life should be conceptualized through how the fishers affect their current situation. It is hoped that this research will enhance our understanding of the dynamic of the fishery to make regulations more culturally and politically appropriated.

2. Your participation in this research will involve responding to the researcher´s questions to the extent that you are able and willing to do so.

3. The risk involved in this research is minimal meaning that it is not greater than that which a person would experience in everyday life.

The benefits of the research are minimal in the short run. There are no monetary benefits for participating in this study. However, the benefits in participate in the research can be as follow:

- The research is to an extent an assessment of the current management of Lake Winnipeg, and therefore it will shed a light on how well or badly the Province of Manitoba is upholding treaty rights that are secured by the section 35 of the Canadian constitution. What findings my dissertation will produce the Fisher River Cree Nation can use in a battle with the Province of Manitoba or even the Federal Government to protect their space and livelihood.
- The research will also shed a light on how the fishers and the community leaders imagine how the fisheries on Lake Winnipeg should be managed to support their way of life better. This will provide us with a new alternative or possibility on how management of the lake should look like and give the fishers a tool to work with, again to fight against any unfair regulations that the Province of Manitoba or Federal Government may try to implement to constrain fishers even more.
- The dissertation emphasizes the moral, political and social values among fishers to shed a light on what fishers and community leaders value the most in life. This can be a strong argument to protect your space against, for example, Manitoba Hydro or Anglers. This is an attempt to underline that values in life should not measure solely with money, but in values of having, for example, thriving employment in your community, a clean river, or having the opportunity to provide fresh fish every day.

4. The interview is expected to require an hour and will be recorded on a small audio recording device, only if you give explicit consent. The interview will take place at a location that is mutually agreeable between you and the researcher. The questions revolve around the three themes of the dissertation; well-being, social justice of the institutions and the Fishers voice within the government:

- **Well-Being:** The researcher wants to learn how the fisher on Lake Winnipeg imagine how the good life should look like. That is, he wants to know what the fisher on Lake Winnipeg wants to be able to do, so he believes that he is living a fulfilling life. The researcher wants to explore whether the current system on Lake Winnipeg is supporting or make it available for the fisher to do what himself deems to be important or value the most. The researcher also would like to know, if the current system is not supporting what the fisher value the most, and then ask him to imagine how the fishery should be managed to support fisher's way of life even better. And last, the researcher wants to ask the fisher how he sees the well-being of Lake Winnipeg (and the fish) in relation to his own idea of the good life.
- **Social Justice of Institutions:** Here the researcher would like to examine what kind of outcomes the Government and associated agencies such as FFMC, Manitoba Hydro and the quota system are producing. That is, the researcher will ask the fishers if and how those agencies affect their fishery; whether the institutions are hindering or enhancing the fisher to live the life that he believes is a good one. Additionally, the researcher will ask whether the fishers believe those same institutions (FFMC, Manitoba Hydro for example) are supporting or constraining the inherent rights that they hold and are guaranteed in section 35 in the Canadian Constitution.

- **Fishers voice within the government:** Here the researcher will ask the fishers whether they feel like the government is listening to their concerns or opinions on how the lake should be managed. The Co-management Board will be in scrutiny here because the researcher will ask whether the fisher feels that the Co-management Board is effective or what changes they think should be done to make the Co-management Board more effective for you as a fisher. Moreover, the researcher will ask about the consultation process in regard to the decision of the Province of Manitoba for opting out of FFMC.

5. The material collected will be analyzed and interpreted by the researcher and will become a part of the written dissertation. However, the dissertation will not in any way allow others to identify the fisher. Further, to protect both your identity and confidentiality, all interview material will be kept in a password protected file for the duration of the project. No one beside the researcher will have the access to the files.

6. Furthermore, to protect your anonymity, I will assign you a numerical code name (A01, A02 etc.) in the transcribed interviews. However, in the final version of my dissertation I will assign you a pseudonym to protect your anonymity even further.

7. The researcher will transcribe the interview shortly afterwards and will send you the copy of the transcription for you to read and approve whether the transcription conveys our discussions correctly. You are, however, not constrained to only approve the transcription of the interview but you are also encouraged to make any changes to your previous statements if you feel your identity might be compromised in the final version of the document. The only copies of the transcribed interview that will be kept are the ones that the interviewee has read, edited and approved. The other copies of the transcriptions will be destroyed immediately after I have received an approved version from you, but no later than May 30, 2019. Additionally, the audio record of the interview will be destroyed within a year of submitting my dissertation, but no later than May 30, 2019. However, if you require, you can have a copy of your own interview for your records and reference.

8. Participant Observation. I might ask you to take me with you out to the lake and observing your daily life to help me to get a deeper understanding of the dynamic of the fishery. If you are interested and willing to allow me to tag along with you during your workday, I will try to help you with your work as much as I am capable of.

Participant observation involves me following you and your crew around during the working day, where I will be observing your daily interaction with the environment, government officials or your crew/fellow fishers and other people (family member/friends etc.). I will write down some interesting details, with your permission, that I think is relevant for my study, which I believe that could help me to understand the dynamic of the fishery even better. All of my observation will be written down in my notebook which will be in Icelandic to maintain your confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, if my notebook contains any details that might reveal your identity, I will ask you whether you want that part be on or off the record. This will be an ongoing process through our interaction.

I will ask you to read and approve any details of our time together that I might reveal in my presentation in your respective community or in my final version of my written dissertation. You are not only constraint to read and approve the details, but you can also remove any statement or actions that you feel might compromise your anonymity or confidentiality in my final product.

9. There will be no monetary compensation for your participation. However, you will receive small honorarium for your participation in form of either lunch, or University of Manitoba gift ware, such as pen, mugs, caps and etc..

10. Debriefing. In December 2018 the researcher will send you a brief, non-technical summary of initial study result to the email or address that you provided. The researcher will give you the opportunity to send him your feedback to his email or office address that is mentioned below. Furthermore, in April 2019 or a month before the researcher need to defend his dissertation, he will give a short presentation in your town where the researcher will present his final analysis of the study. You will have a chance there to share your opinion or concern. If you cannot attend the presentation, the researcher will send you the presentation electronically or by mail. However, the dates of the debriefings might fluctuate, but the researcher will let you know about the final dates.

11. Communications. What is your preferred way of communication? That is how would you like to receive both the non-technical summary of the initial results and the copy of the transcribed interviews? Please indicate your preference by checking either of the boxes:

☐ Email

☐ Regular mail

The email/home address: _____

All the emails or letter communication between you and the researcher that will contain transcribed interviews, or other information that might link you to participation of the study will be destroyed within a year of me submitting the dissertation, but no later than May 30, 2019,

12. Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and that you agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Sölmundur Karl Pálsson
Advisor: Derek Johnson

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research

is being done in a safe and proper way. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Ethics Coordinator at 204.474.7122, or e-mail Pinar.Eskicioglu@umanitoba.ca or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for you records and reference.

☐ By checking the box I, hereby, give the researcher a permission to record the interview on a small recording device.

Participant´s Signarature_____Date_____

Researcher´s Signarature_____ Date_____

Contact Information:

Sölmundur Karl Pálsson
Anthropology Department
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB
R3T 5V5
palssons@myumanitoba.ca

Dr. Derek Johnson
Anthropology Department
University of Manitoba
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