

Intern Summary

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Internship/Thesis Research Title:

Tracing a trajectory of transparency: a case study of governing traceability in an Indonesian tuna supply chain.

Introduction:

As issues around the sustainability of tuna are coupled with information uncertainties, there is an increasing demand for tuna fisheries data and value chain transparency for environmental management. The gaps in fisheries data and non-transparent supply chain practices provide an opportunity for international interventions, such as supply chain traceability, a market-based transparency intervention. The implementation of traceability initiatives are often led by civil society actors (i.e. NGOs and universities), responding to needs unsuccessfully addressed by conventional routes. This thesis investigated the introduction and governance of a traceability tool in an Indonesian tuna supply chain. This thesis falls under the IFITT project (Improved Fisheries Information and Traceability for Tuna).

Internship Objectives:

This thesis aimed to understand and explore the concepts and understandings of governance interventions through an assessment of the prescription and performance of a traceability initiative in an Indonesian tuna supply chain in Lombok. Specific emphasis is placed on how the prescription (i.e. goals, expectations, etc.) of traceability influences the performance (implementation) in reality. The aim was an understanding of how the implementation of interventions, such as traceability, can be improved through performance.

Methods:

Empirical data was obtained through participant observations, document reviews (mainly the IFITT proposal), semi-structured interviews with actors who demand, design, implement, and are involved in traceability. The interview questions were targeted to understand their role, goals and expectations regarding traceability. One supply chain in Labuhan Lombok was the focus of the research, with

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interviews conducted with various stakeholders associated with the chain at different levels.

Results:

1) Prescription draws on international and expert notions of sustainability and transparency. “Prescribers” of traceability in this research are MDPI, researchers from Wageningen University and managers of ThisFish (a consumer-facing traceability model developed by the Canadian NGO EcoTrust).

2) Successful implementation of an intervention, such as traceability, does not hinge completely on the prescription of the intervention, (i.e. on the projected goals, expectations and design of traceability). Other factors that influence traceability success include business relationships, historical relations, social rationalities, etc.

3) Implementation of traceability is affected by business characteristics. Different supply chain actors were found to have different interests:

- Fishers disclose information because of trust and acceptance of the presence of MDPI enumerators rather than as a response to the open-source data available for participants. Fishers are not aware of, nor have interests in, sustainability and traceability, and accept data collection practices as it does not change fishing or unloading practices.
- Suppliers know about on-going traceability activities, but are too busy to be involved in traceability efforts, granting access to enumerators because they believe they are doing ‘good work’.
- Processor shows interest based on benefits from internal traceability (to trace down bad quality product, so it can have fewer rejections and thus maintain selling price). The concern of the processor is rather quality of tuna rather than sustainable tuna.

Discussion:

Supply chain actors were identified as social units (i.e. fisher, supplier, processor, trader). They are portrayed as business agents, managing risks and responding to business incentives. As an example, during the project, the trader stopped buying tuna from the Indonesian processor sourcing from Lombok. Since the trader

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stopped sourcing from Labuhan Lombok, the processor discontinued traceability practices in its factory (he does not see the need to separate traceable tuna from non-traceable tuna). This shows how a push from the market side can make a mid-chain actor change its practices, and highlights how full-chain traceability is prone to dynamic business relations.

As of now, availability of data itself does not create an incentive to participate (government and private actors do not actively use the I-Fish data, and not many click on the link to the open-source webpage). One of the solutions are the Data Management Committees (DMCs) that help in raising awareness on the importance of data for fishery management and to give stakeholders ownership over the information they disclose. At the moment, DMC meetings are still largely dependent on MDPI's efforts.

This thesis considers the harnessing of social relationships vital to generate change during the implementation of traceability or other interventions. The function, relationships with stakeholders and role of actor organisations, such as MDPI, play a fundamental role in the governance of interventions, such as traceability, and in achieving big sustainability goals

Conclusions:

1. Data availability does not play an important role in relationships in the fishery community, instead it's based on social relationships where MDPI plays a role as expert agent allowed to intervene into the supply chain.
2. Traceability is prone to challenges when actors have different interests and levels of expertise.
3. Supply chain is dynamic (e.g. a processor shifts into a market with different demands in terms of transparency objectives).
4. In prescribing interventions like traceability, governance should be carefully considered, in particular focusing on key organisations and how their relationships and resulting dynamics in the communities can affect the performance of the intervention.

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Follow-up steps for MDPI:

- MDPI should continue to facilitate gatherings through DMC meetings.
- As the main performer of the traceability practices, MDPI should pass on knowledge (capacity building) through trainings on enumeration, data protocols and supporting the staff to convince and enroll the Lombok supply chain and the Indonesian government in traceability practices.
- Try to continue traceability practices upstream in the supply chain.
- As many studies focus on the fishers, further research might be interested in understanding the challenges in steering mid-chain actors towards traceability.
- Study how the use of technology (e.g. mobile app) could bring new actors to the field, enabling or disabling governance for some existing actors.



A fisher (middle) chats with enumerators (left and right)