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# Antagonism and Shared Survival of Fish and Fishermen in the Lofoten Islands

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## Abstract

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork and collected oral histories in 2019 in the Lofoten islands, as well as on archival research. I investigate the complex creation of kinship networks between humans and skrei in the Lofoten islands. I argue that the constant struggle to survive for both fish and fishermen embedded in larger capitalist ecologies of exploitation creates a symbolic shared substance between fish and fishermen, which, despite the often-unequal antagonistic nature of their relationships, allows us to rethink of definitions of kinship between humans and nonhuman others.

## Keywords

human-animal relations – fish – fishing – Norway – skrei – antagonistic collaborative survival – multi-species ethnography – oral histories

## The Wanderer

Fisherman Andreas<sup>1</sup> showed me the framed photographs on his wall, photographs of all the boats that belonged to his family, going back generations – the

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1 I have changed the fisherman's name to preserve his anonymity.

first one from 1925, the second one from 1975, and the latest one from 1998. When I visited him at his house in the Lofoten islands in Norway on a cold autumn evening in 2019, he shared:

My great grandfather, my grandfather and my father were fishermen. My great grandfather and grandfather built our first boat in 1925. My father started working there from when he was 16–17 years old and so did I. For me, I was very sure [that I wanted to become a fisherman] and I was joining my father from as early as I could. For me it was very natural.

Like Andreas', peoples' lives in the Lofoten islands are entangled with fishing, and with skrei. Skrei, carrying the scientific name Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) is a fish belonging in the Norwegian Atlantic cod family. The word "skrei" comes from the Old Norse word "the wanderer," and is reflective of skrei's nomadic life. Skrei lives in the Barents Sea and travels every year 1000 kilometers southwards to the Lofoten islands from January to early spring to spawn. There, it is fished, making the Lofoten fishery "the greatest cod fishery in the world," and historically, the foundation for the human settlement in the Lofoten islands (Skrei.Net, 2019a). Skrei is then processed, dried in the air or salted using traditional techniques, and shipped to various parts of the world, most notably to Africa and Southern Europe. Despite its nomadic life, skrei is deeply embedded in local history and culture, and remains with the islanders all year round forging various relationships and meaningful entanglements.

My interest in the nature of these relationships between fishermen and fish was piqued during my conversations with Andreas. As we talked about his life, when our discussion moved to skrei and fishing, I went on to narrate to him my own (admittedly unsettling) experience of killing a lobster a few years back. He then looked at me and said, "But if you had built this relationship, with the lobster, this relationship that you have with the things that you fish, would you think the same today as you did then [when you killed the lobster]?"

What was this "relationship that you have with the things that you fish" I wondered, as I set out to explore the meaningful moments of connection between fish and humans and the possibilities of kinship with a subject who is at the same time the object that fishermen kill and consume.

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork and collected oral histories in 2019 in the Lofoten islands. Here, I focus on the story of fisherman Andreas, whom I met during my time there. Andreas grew up in Lofoten and is a third-generation fisherman. He is the owner of the fishing boat, employs other fishermen, and lives in a large house surrounded by land on the outskirts

of a town on one of the islands. Building on his story and following skrei in histories, traditions, and cultural imaginaries of fishing in the Lofoten islands, I investigate the complex creation of kinship networks between humans and fish and unveil the nature of these relationships. I argue that both humans and fish in the Lofoten islands struggle to survive, and this shared symbolic struggle which is embedded in capitalist ecologies reveals moments of connection, moments which allow us to rethink the notion of kinship between humans and nonhuman others.

I begin this paper by sketching the theoretical and methodological framework. I then discuss the deep entanglements between fish and humans in the Lofoten world, exploring the nature of these relationships vis-à-vis ideas of antagonism in the local fishing cosmology. Next, I situate these entanglements in the context of capitalist ecologies and reveal how the shared need to survive becomes the foundation for the creation of unintentional symbolic relations between fish and humans. I conclude this paper with some reflections on the notion of relatedness with the nonhuman other.

### Animals as “Good to Live With”

In literature, animals have been cast as “good to live with,” situating them as active participants in human social lives (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010; see also Candea, 2010; Cassidy & Mullin, 2007; Vitebsky, 2005). Non-hierarchical alliances, symbiotic attachments, and multiple creative agents come to the fore (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010), engaging not only humans and animals, but also plants, fungi, bacteria or viruses, and so forth (Aronsson et al., 2020; Paxson, 2008; Tsing, 2015). As Tsing (2012) posits, human nature is “an interspecies relationship.” To this end, scholars have explored the relationships of fish and humans in various contexts. For instance, Probyn’s (2016) ethnography sees the ocean as the site of multispecies entanglements and argues for the embeddedness of human-fish relationships in food politics and ethics of taste and place. Lien’s (2015) ethnography on the Atlantic salmon explores the fragile relational practices in salmon aquaculture. It demonstrates how the increasing growth of marine domestication is blurring the traditional distinctions between fish and animals, rendering farmed fish as subject to animal-welfare legislation. In Greece, Kompatsiaris (2018) uses the figure of the toxic fish “lagokefalos”, its representations, and treatment by fishermen to address the limits of kinship towards nonhuman others. Building on this literature, I draw from ideas on multispecies ethnography, situating humans not as the center of

the universe, but thinking of the world as “a network with no centre to dictate order” (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010, p. 454), and seeking to rebalance the various threads and relations with the nonhuman other.

To do so, I draw from Tsing’s (2015) notion of collaborative survival. In her seminal work, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, Tsing (2015) discusses how she sees our world as one in which everything is in flux, including survival, and invites us to embrace this precarious world in our social analysis and way of thinking. She asks: “Can I show landscape as the protagonist of an adventure in which humans are only one kind of participant” (Tsing, 2015, p. 155)? Seeking answers, she follows matsutake, wild mushrooms that live in various human-disturbed forests, and illustrates what she calls “one kind of collaborative survival” (Tsing, 2015, p. 4). I therefore follow the “patterns of unintentional coordination [that] develop in assemblages” (Tsing, 2015) in the various entanglements of humans with skrei at various historical times and at different scales. I illustrate how these moments are situated in and derive from the need and desire to survive, which is shared by both fish and humans. Even though this mutual desire to survive often creates tension, as fish and humans are part of antagonistic relations, fish and fishermen create unintentional symbolic relations. I focus on moments when these entanglements become relationships of shared survival in a world of precarity and flux for both fish and fishermen.

These relations shape and are embedded in the shared ecosystem which fish and humans inhabit. This ecosystem includes not only nature, but also ecologies of power, culture, and capital. It is an ecosystem in which nature and capitalism are intertwined and interdependent. Seeing interspecies entanglements in this shared ecosystem and from the point of view of capitalist ecologies (Moore et al., 2021) reveals a more nuanced interaction between fish and humans, and can help us better understand the role of capitalistic forces in the creation of unintentional, yet meaningful, connections between fish and humans.

Using the above conceptual framework, I argue that these entanglements illuminate how skrei and fishermen can make kin. In defining kinship, I move beyond the notion of symbiosis, which in the natural world can take many shapes and forms, including parasitic relations.<sup>2</sup> I define kinship following Carsten’s “shared substance” (1995). Carsten, building on Schneider’s (1984) work redefines kinship as more fluid and flexible by challenging the

2 In a symbiotic relationship, two species can mutually benefit, or one species can benefit while the other neither benefits nor is harmed; in the case of parasitic symbiosis, one species benefits by living on or inside the other, who is ultimately harmed.

universality of the distinction between the biological and the social. Blood shared, rice meals cooked in the same hearth, or milk shared by the Malays form part of a “shared substance”, and her work illustrates how for them, “personhood, relatedness, and feeding are intimately connected” (Carsten, 1995, p. 224). This becomes particularly interesting when situated in the context of Norway, where the sense of people being “similar” is the foundation of egalitarian values (Gullestad, 1992). Aligning with Carsten’s (1995) definition of kinship, I analyze the moments of shared symbolic elements – of shared substance in the Lofoten world. These moments, built in the context of post-humanism, create notions of relatedness, and demonstrate how humans and nonhuman others can make kin, challenging the idea of fish-as-object which often appears in fishermen’s descriptions.

Such relationships are even more complicated when it comes to fishing, with water forming a boundary between the human and the wild animal. As Byron (2002) writes, the fishing economy, as opposed to agriculture that relies on land, relies on wild resources that are hunted or collected. Fish as “wild resources” are difficult to encounter. As Lien (2015) notes in her ethnographic account of salmon aquaculture:

Fish are cold. They live in water. They are mostly out of sight. They are silent. Their staring eyes show no visible emotion. Their body language is difficult to interpret. All of this limits the cues that humans can respond to. (p. 3)

In this paper, I navigate the structures of kinship fishermen build with those they kill. I search for the moments where skrei and humans forge meaningful symbolic connections and their implications and meanings vis-à-vis grander schemes, as they become a reflection of a political discourse.

### **The Antagonism in the “Nomadic Symbiosis” of Fish and Fishermen in the Lofoten Islands**

From when I was 8 or 10 years old I would accompany my father on Saturdays ... I would join them on the weekends as I had school, on the day trips. When I was 14, and 15, I was joining them in the summers ... my work was to put baits on the longline. We went from Lofoten to Finnmark. In the winter the fishing moves back to Lofoten as there are more fish, but in the summer, we move up there in Finnmark. (Andreas)

Most islanders share similar stories to Andreas', as skrei has throughout history been "the most important reason to live in the Lofoten islands" (Skrei.Net, 2020a) and "the most steady and regular resource in the area" (Jentoft & Kristoffersen, 1989, p. 356). Indeed, skrei and fishing were historically part of the Lofoten world. In the Lofoten islands there is evidence of fishermen from 10,000 years ago, and there are mentions of the Vikings in the Lofoten area as fishermen, while Norwegian stockfish (air-dried cod) exports started in the 12th century, creating connections with Southern Europe and the world, transforming Norse economy (Keller, 2010). Even Jules Verne's famous 1870 novel, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, ends in the Lofoten islands and the main characters are said to be conceived "in a fisherman's log in Lofoten" (Jentoft & Kristoffersen, 1989, p. 355).

These diachronic entanglements between skrei and the islanders appear in historical and present narratives, in changing ideas around economic development and progress, but also in changes in the physical and political landscapes: As I have explored elsewhere (Papacharalampous, 2020), skrei becomes part of the human worlds in the Lofoten islands, shaping the creation of cuisine, and conjuring a newfound sense of belonging as it becomes part of an imagined community in the Lofoten islands, in Norway and beyond. As such, in the local cosmology of fishing, skrei is a source of nourishment and "good to eat" (when viewed via the traditional lenses of "fish as food"), but also is an important part of identity-making and nation-building processes when viewed as part of truly multispecies entanglements (Papacharalampous, 2020).

In this "nomadic symbiosis" (Papacharalampous, 2020), islanders and skrei in the Lofoten islands share the space and ecosystem in and around the fjords, along with many other types of fish, whales, and sea life (cf. Holm, 2020). All around the archipelago surrounding the Lofoten islands, there are movements of fish and fishermen: In January, skrei moves from the Barents Sea south to the Lofoten islands to spawn, and there come the fishermen. The Vestfjord, the sea space between the islands and the mainland, is said to be both the "world's biggest maternity ward", but also, the place where "the world's greatest cod harvest ... takes place from January to April" (Skrei.Net, 2019b; see also Jentoft & Kristoffersen, 1989). In the spring, skrei leaves the Lofoten islands to return home to the Barents Sea, and fishermen move to Finnmark for the summer to fish other types of fish, like haddock. In this context, skrei is also, in many respects, unpredictable, as in the Lofoten fishery there are various annual variations: when exactly skrei will arrive or how deep into the fjords it will go. Its movements have even caused political unrest, as in the famous battle of Trollfjord in 1890, during which traditional open boats with oars and sail protested against the industrial steamboats which blocked the fjord

mouth, resulting in the banning of closing nets in the Lofoten fisheries (cf. Papacharalampous, 2020; Skrei.Net, 2020b).

These mirroring movements between skrei and fishermen in and around the Lofoten islands and Northern Norway date back centuries. Like Stammler and Beach's (2006) special issue surrounding reindeer and herders in Siberia, the movements of both humans and fish are interconnected: Fishermen alter their movements according to those of the fish, while the fish alter their movements both to get to their spawning place, but also to avoid the fishermen, toward reproduction, life, and death (see also Cassidy, 2012).

These physical entanglements between fish and fishermen in the Lofoten islands become symbolically meaningful if one considers the very nature of fishing: Between hunting and farming, fisherman Andreas tells me "fishing is closer to hunting." He adds how fishing is a way of making money, but also a "way of life": "The hunting, finding the fish, catching the fish, it's like hunting, we have to be [a] special kind of people, the hunting gives us a kick." He goes on to explain how in the 1970s and 1980s, a lot of people stopped fishing because it yielded poor income (a point to which I will return), but as Andreas says:

Some of us continued, and there has to be a reason for that, and maybe the reason why we continued ... We have one extra hunting gene ... there are often many days without catch, so something must make us do it. There are many days with no catch ...

When I asked Andreas if skrei is smart or easy to catch, he paused and then shared the following:

Mackerel is difficult to catch because they are very quick fish. Skrei is easier to catch. We thought that skrei was stupid [because it was easier to catch]. But some fishermen take skrei alive onto the boat so as to store it alive on board. What they've seen is that it's more difficult to keep skrei in the nets than it is with salmon for example. If there is a small hole in the net, then skrei slowly eats it [the net] and escapes. Salmon doesn't do that. So this [skrei] may be smarter than what we'd like to think because it is trying to get out of the net by biting it [and succeeds]. They have to be smart in one way, they must have some kind of intelligence.

He then refers to tons of fish swimming together and changing direction when the boat makes a noise, "without speaking to each other," also illustrating the importance of fishing habits and behavior in shaping fishermen's knowledge

(see also Grant & Berkes, 2007; Lien, 2015). As Andreas' words elucidate, for him, there is an antagonistic relationship with the hunting object, which is often a challenging one when skrei outsmarts the fishermen by chewing through the nets and escaping.

Implicit in his words is also how this antagonistic relationship with the fish defines and shapes fishermen's personal identities, guiding the making of a fisherman and of entire communities. Fishermen "become with" the fish, in the sense that they become professionals, but also find some life purpose, as his words such as "a way of life" or "extra hunting gene" elucidate. This process of becoming with the fish, meaning not only learning how to fish, but also how to embrace the identity of the fisherman, (which of course deserves a deeper ethnographic exploration), reveals the more complex bonds that are forged between fish and fishermen. Even though this relationship can be seen as one-sided (as fish at the moment of fishing are trying to escape death), it nonetheless renders fish from passive, hunted objects into active subjects as they take part in the making of fishermen's identities and worlds.

Having sketched the embeddedness of skrei in the Lofoten world and the meaningful complex antagonistic entanglements between fish and fishermen, I seek to unveil facets of the nature of these relations. I analyze the deep entanglements of fish and humans in capitalist ecologies which, albeit not new, become very visible in the changes in the fisheries in the last few decades. Echoing Tsing's (2015) views on multispecies survival in precarious worlds, I demonstrate the shared struggle of fish and humans to survive in interconnecting precarious worlds and explore how this creates Carsten's shared substance that makes kin, which leads to unintentional relations between skrei and fishermen. Without disregarding the power inequalities and anthropocentricity in these relationships between fish and humans, the following sections illuminate these meaningful connections, illustrating the complex, multi-layered and often conflicting ways in which kin is negotiated.

## Embedding the Lofoten Fisheries in Capitalist Ecologies

### *Skrei's Struggle*

Delving deeper into the nature of relations between skrei and humans in the Lofoten islands, I begin by exploring how skrei has been part of Lofoten's commercial trade. Since the Medieval period (Keller, 2010), skrei was caught and dried "in such large quantities that it was not only food for the locals, but a commodity" (Skrei.Net, 2020a), beginning the commercial trade of stockfish. "Stockfish is money", all of my interlocutors in the Lofoten islands mentioned – so much so that as most of it was sold abroad, until recently, there



was no stockfish or fresh codfish in local markets (Papacharalampous, 2020). And indeed, stockfish formed part of historically and geographically vast trade routes, from the Middle ages to the present – and notably during the “golden age” of cod fishing in the 19th century – and from the Lofoten islands to Africa, Southern Europe, and various other parts of the world.

As skrei entered the capitalist supply chain, fish life was converted into a commodity, into capital and profit. It was also embedded in the narratives of exploitation, violence, and abuse which accompany much of the food industry. For instance, as a commodity, and to gain value for its quality (Norwegian Seafood Council, 2019), the fish’s guts must be removed and blood must be drained immediately after the catch, as fisherman Andreas explains:

The whole point is to do the cutting when the fish are alive, so that the blood leaves. I’ve been doing this since I was a child, it’s natural. I don’t think about it ... It’s not things we are speaking of, or thinking of, if the fish feels pain.

His words illuminate how taking life is, for him, a “natural” act – and not only that, but part of his daily work. His words echo ideas around necropower (cf. Mbembe, 2019),<sup>3</sup> but also remind us of Kohn’s (2013) “various dissolutions of self” (p. 104), in which animals, when shot by a hunter, are transformed from “a self” into “a thing,” that is, into inanimate objects like dead meat. Similarly, in Andreas’ description we can see during those moments the transformation of skrei from a self into an inanimate object of material value. This becomes part of the fishermen’s habitus, similar to Kohn’s (2013) hunters in a “vast ecology of selves, in which one must stand as a self in relation to so many other kinds of selves who one then tries to kill” (p. 105). In the local fishing cosmology, fishermen overcome these “difficulties” that Kohn narrates via the “relationships that you have with the things that you fish”, that fisherman Andreas shared during our discussion on killing lobsters and fish, in the beginning of this paper.

Nonetheless, relationships between skrei and fishermen were transformed by the industrialization of fisheries, which entangled Lofoten fisheries in capitalist ecologies. Over the years, more efficient boats and methods of fishing were invented, such as automated longlines and improved fishing nets. As a result, the changes in technology and the increased fishing capacity led to more fish being caught. This endangered the ecosystem. Historians of fisheries have highlighted the role of fishing laborers in community and resource

3 It also illuminates the anthropocentricity and the unequal degrees of “freedom” for humans and nonhumans within this setting, as people are not killed or sold as commodities.

conservation in the coastal ecosystems, as the fishing industry became more and more industrialized (Howell, 1995; Judd, 1988; McEvoy, 1986; Payne, 2013):

Skrei is enormously important to us in the archipelago ... it is well worth protecting it ... to protect the sea ... we think of it as our blue garden and that we need to have the same values both at land and at sea and the archipelago is worth protecting. (Skrei.Net, 2020c)

But even though such fishermen tried to limit the impact of industrial capitalism and often sought to closely steward the resources, their practices reveal more complex and nuanced motives, illustrating not only conservationist, but also capitalist behaviors (Payne, 2013; see also Holm, 2020). As skrei became part of the capitalist supply chain, sea life was depleted: Fish were caught faster than they could reproduce, and this led to the collapse of the fish populations that fishermen's livelihoods depended on (cf. Byron, 2002).

Skrei's struggle as a commodity since the Middle Ages became even greater during these long historical processes of industrialization of the fisheries, especially as these became even more entangled with growth and profit-making. This embeddedness of the Lofoten fisheries in capitalist ecologies, via the commodification of skrei and the industrialization of the Lofoten fisheries described above, kindled new relationships between skrei and fishermen, as these processes became the arena for "one kind of collaborative survival" (Tsing, 2015, p. 4). This becomes all the clearer when one considers the changes in the fisheries during the last few decades, when not only skrei but also fishermen became even more embedded in structures of exploitation and precarity.

### *Fishermen's Struggle*

In the 1990s, to prevent skrei's extinction and protect sea life, strict fishing quotas were imposed. The industry became heavily regulated, and whereas in the past anyone could go out and fish, as the locals tell me, after the quotas were imposed, this was no longer possible. This meant that fewer fishermen could actually work: "We are now about 10,000 fishermen in Norway. In Lofoten and in the Vestfjorden half of them fish in the winter ... while there were 60,000 just in Lofoten in the 1950s", says fisherman Andreas. His observations illustrate the complexities in the quotas imposed in order to ensure a sustainable harvest. Fishermen had already struggled because of the industrialization of the fisheries, where, taking advantage of the technological advancements over the years, the boat owners reshaped the industry, replacing human labor and embedding fisheries deeper in capitalist supply-chains. This is particularly pertinent to Lofoten fishermen, whose livelihoods and survival depend on

the death of skrei. This consolidation of the industry as a result of long-term industrialization processes and of the new quotas imposed left fishermen in precarious existences.

At the same time, institutions of growth and profit-making also affected local culture, fueled by the influx of migrants offering cheap labor. More specifically, up until the 1980s and 1990s, the local community was deeply connected to the sea. Like Andreas, local children and teenagers would accompany their fathers at sea, putting the bait in the longline and helping on the boat. Others, as my interlocutors shared, would also be somehow involved with the sea, for instance by partaking in the traditional activity of cutting the fish tongues once the fish arrived at shore so that they could be sold separately. These practices taken on by locals created deep connections with the sea. But such practices like the cutting of fish tongues which involved the local community changed in the 1980s and 1990s, as migrants from Eastern Europe came to Lofoten offering cheaper labor. "It's a question of cost," fisherman Andreas tells me as he describes how the jobs of putting bait in the longline or cutting fish tongues are no longer performed by local children. This led to the disconnect and rupture of the local community from the fishing culture (Papacharalampous, 2020), illustrating once again in the Lofoten fisheries what Tsing (2015) refers to as "the conversion of indigenous knowledge into capitalist returns" (p. 64).

This "question of cost" in the milieu of a consolidated and industrialized industry ultimately affected labor relations. Deeply embedded in capitalist ecologies, fishermen's labor was turned into an object, similar to the fish they catch. Fisherman Andreas' words illustrate this point: "The quotas were so low that it was not enough to make a living", he says, and explains how fishermen who work on board (with the exception of the captain who earns a monthly salary), do not get regular payment (per workday), but instead get a percentage from the money earned from the sale of the catch of the fish. Boat owners, therefore, not only translate the fish-as-laborers into profit, but also indirectly translate the fishermen-labor into profit by not compensating them if the catch is bad. Both fish and humans become labor that gets turned into profit. Therefore, both fish's and fishermen's livelihood and survival depend on the outcome of the catch. The more fish are caught, the more likely it is for fishermen to survive, and conversely, the more fish who survive and escape capture to return to the Barents Sea, the fewer fishermen are to survive.

The capitalist ecologies in which the Lofoten fisheries are embedded, and the turning of both fish and fishermen into objects, subjects to the logic of profit, derives of course from an anthropocentric system, organized by human institutions. Nonetheless, I have described how the embeddedness of the Lofoten fisheries in capitalist ecologies creates a shared struggle and a need

for survival in precarious worlds, shared by both human and nonhuman others who inhabit the worlds in the Lofoten islands.

### The Shared Struggle to Survive in a Precarious Ecosystem

In this historical and cultural milieu, and fueled by the institutions of growth and profit-making that I have presented above, the human and nonhuman horizons collided and clashed: Short-term, antagonistic relations between fish and fishermen came to the fore, as fishermen's goals had to do with maximizing profit, to catch more fish, process it, and sell it so that they could make a living. Fish, of course, seek to survive. However, longer-term horizons also collided when the survival of fish was deemed to be of utmost importance, albeit from an anthropocentric point of view, as the caring for the ecosystem was to ensure that there would be fish to catch after a generation. The clashing of these different goals illuminates the complexities in the desire of both fishermen and fish to survive.

It is this pendulum that creates a shared substance in the Lofoten world: Embedded in capitalist ecologies, both fish and fishermen struggle to survive in their precarious shared ecosystem. This shared struggle and desire to survive, although antagonistic, echoes Carsten's (1995) symbolic "shared substance", and is similar to the non-biological ways of relating of the Malays. As a result, it creates strong bonds between fish and fishermen.

More specifically, relatedness for fishermen and fish derives from the exact same capitalist forces that create these extended codependent networks of life and death. Deeply immersed in capitalist supply chains, the shared substance between fish and fishermen becomes that of a struggle to survive, as fish and humans face a common symbolic enemy: the commodification of fish and human life. This results in fishermen living with and symbolically relating with "the other," whom they are, at the same time, trying to destroy. The foundation of kinship lies in this symbolic substance, which is the struggle to survive as part of capitalist ecologies, one that is shared by fish and human and leads to the creation of unintentional symbolic connections and relations between fish and humans.

### Conclusions

In this short paper, I have tried to shed light on some of the elements that this complex relationship "that you have with the things that you fish", as fisherman Andreas said, entails.

The unintentional symbolic relations between fishermen and fish that I have described, embedded in capitalist supply chains, reveal a more fluid notion of kinship, one which includes both humans and fish. As both fish and fishermen turn from subjects into objects (albeit at different scales and with unequal power relations), by revitalizing these connections as political tropes, grander ideas against the capitalistic exploitation of ecologies come into play. These allow us to consider new forms of coexistence. Despite the inequality of power in the relationships between fish and humans, there are subtle connections they share in this ecosystem of capitalist ecologies.

Though further ethnographic work is needed for a deeper understanding of the nuances in such relationships with nonhuman species, the nature of the encounters between the islanders and skrei in the Lofoten islands allows us to rethink notions of kinship, creating new avenues of intellectual inquiry vis-à-vis ways of relating, offering insights into the question of with whom we can make kin.

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