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The Challenge of Trawling in Norwegian Fisheries and Politics in the First Half of the 20th Century

The development of steamboat trawling from the 1890s onwards represented a clear step towards further industrialisation of the fisheries of northern Europe. The main aim of this article is to explain why large-scale trawling developed late in Norway, and also to focus on the restrictive laws that were passed against trawling.

From its early beginnings with small steam trawlers carrying out trawling close to the shore, this sort of fishing technology soon spread to other countries, steam trawlers rapidly taking a larger part of the total catch. Even before the First World War, British, German and French trawlers could be found fishing between the North Sea and the White Sea in Russia. After the war there was further growth, and trawling became a major part of the fishing industry in several countries.

Trawling is also a major factor explaining the large increase in total catches of fish in the North Atlantic.¹ From 1910 to 1934 the catches of bottom fish (most of it cod) increased from 1,127,000 tons to 1,854,000 tons, a growth of 65 per cent. It were the catches from the Barents Sea and the seas around Iceland that increased the most, with a growth of 144 and 176 per cent respectively. On these fishing grounds more than 69 per cent of the catches were taken by trawlers.²

In other countries, the development of a trawling fleet was responsible for a huge increase in catches. For instance, Germany's total catch increased by almost 350 per cent between 1913 and 1937.³ Countries like France and the Netherlands to some extent experienced a similar development. The French trawler fleet even had some of the largest and most modern trawlers of its time. In the Thirties the largest was of 1200 tons with a diesel engine and a crew of more than 50 men. The production on board was basically of salted fish (cod), but there were also small-scale plants producing cod liver oil and fishmeal. Some of the trawlers were even equipped with freezers.⁴ In general, then, trawling underwent an extensive modernisation during the interwar period: the boats were bigger, newly developed gear made it possible to trawl on deeper grounds, increasing fish production, and telecommunication was introduced into the trawlers in the Thirties.

In the north-western parts of the Soviet Union, too, in Murmansk and Archangelsk, the fish industry was partly based on large trawlers. In 1935 there were 77 active trawlers on the north-eastern coast of the Soviet Union.⁵ Even so, during the whole of this period Great Britain had the largest fleet, with about 1600 large steam trawlers in 1934.⁶ But many of these were older vessels, and of the 823 trawlers based at Hull and Grimsby, only 344 were less than 15 years old.⁷

All these fleets were fishing for home consumption, but in an export-oriented country like Iceland, too, trawler fishing became a very important basis for fish exports. The Icelanders bought their first trawlers shortly after the beginning of the century; in 1912 they had 20 trawlers, and by 1930 the figure was 40.⁸ In 1934 trawlers accounted for about 40 per cent of Iceland's bottom fish catch.

The exception: Norway

As we have seen, trawling was generally expanding in northern Europe during the early decades of the twentieth century, and thus was an important part of the expansion of fishing and fish-related industry in the various countries of this region.

However, in Norway the situation was rather different and it was not until after World War II that a relatively large trawler fleet was developed. Up to 1930 Norwegian-based trawling consisted of small-scale trawling only (with boats under 50 tons). Most of the trawlers were solely for shrimp fishing, a kind of fishery that for a few decades took on significant proportions. With a few exceptions, such as Norwegians undertaking straw man fishing in the Moray Firth, the small number of attempts to initiate large-scale trawling in Norway did not bring lasting business success. The first shift came in the early Thirties, as new measures to run trawlers profitably proved effective.

This happened at a time when, as we have seen, other countries had long since developed a considerable fleet of trawlers. Why was the development different in Norway? This is a difficult and far-reaching question, but some possible answers may be outlined. One possible reason is the condition of the Norwegian seabed, which only has a narrow shelf close to the shore, and then steepens. Also, a bumpy ground made trawling in Norwegian waters more challenging than in the western parts of the North Sea.

Another explanation might be found in the industrial situation. The Norwegian fish industry at the time was mainly established in western Norway, and was based not on bottom fish but on pelagic species like herring, brisling and sardines. The structure of the large companies in this industry was one of vertical integration, from modern fishing vessels to the production of label stickers. Trawling, on the other hand, was not a part of their integrated structure. However, it is interesting to note that before the First World War the largest factory in the Norwegian canning industry, Chr. Bjelland & Co. A/S, partly based its production on fish balls made from haddock and some cod provided by German trawlers. During the war this supply naturally ceased, and the company did not start its own trawling until after World War II, and then only for herring.⁹

While the part of the fishing fleet that was based on pelagic fish like herring received a high degree of modernisation and investment at an early stage, the development of the cod-based fishing fleet underwent modernisation of a different kind. New types of boats were introduced early in the twentieth century, and small engines soon became more common than oars or sail. But it remained a fleet consisting mostly of small vessels, and during the whole interwar period most of its catches were taken close to the shore. This is also the reason why the Norwegian share of the total catch in the north-east Atlantic was in steep decline between the wars. In 1913 Norway was responsible for 47 per cent of the total cod catch in the area, but in 1937 the figure was only 27 per cent. In the same period the total cod catch increased from about 750,000 tons to about one million tons.¹⁰

This also reflects the fact that for various reasons the Norwegian share of the cod market was declining. Although the consumption of fish in general had expanded since the beginning of the century, a large part of the growth was the result of different nations fishing for their home market, producing fresh fish, salted fish, canned fish, etc. In contrast, the Norwegian exports of cod were dominated by salted dry cod (clip fish) or dry cod (stockfish), products for which the market became difficult for various reasons during the interwar period. In important markets like Spain and Portugal the Norwegian exporters faced increasing competition from domestic companies who caught large catches around Newfoundland and Greenland, as well as from Icelandic cod which gained an increasingly large part of the market. From 1913 to 1937 Iceland increased its total catch by 361 per cent, while Norway's showed a growth of only 142 per cent. In addition, the international market itself became difficult because of protectionism, import

quotas and so forth. The market for Norwegian dry and salted cod was also severely damaged by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the ensuing sanctions against Italy, and also by the Spanish civil war and its impact on the market.

Trawling, a difficult issue for the Norwegian fisheries

This, then, was the situation at the time when the first Norwegian trawlers began to be operated at a profit. Why did trawling only become economically sustainable so late, and what were the political repercussions of this?

In 1930 the steam trawler D/T *BORGENES* was bought for fishing out of the town of Kristiansund, in north-western Norway. The trawler was originally registered at 289 tons and was built in Hull in 1906, but had been owned by Swedes since 1925. Before it came to Kristiansund both boat and gear had been modernised.

The trawler was mainly owned by fish exporting interests. In its first years the *BORGENES* was trawling partly for bottom fish and partly for herring using purse seines. The fish was either delivered fresh to the British market or salted.¹¹ This divided use, between herring and other fish, had been successful in small-scale trawling, but did not yield the same positive results with a larger trawler like the *BORGENES*. Profitability was first achieved after production was shifted to the salting of fish on board the vessel itself, delivering to the clip fish industry in Kristiansund, the main centre of that industry. As pointed out by Paal Christensen, this happened at a period when the regional catches were showing a marked decline.¹² As the coastal fishing fleet could not keep up with the demands of the clip fish industry, the industry was spurred on to take more control of this part of the production.

As it now seemed possible to make money from trawling, other trawler companies were soon established, and in 1936 Norway had a trawler fleet of eleven vessels, four located in Kristiansund and the rest in the towns of Bergen, Harstad, Bodø and Tromsø. With one exception, share owners were representing fish traders and fish factories. This development is thus quite similar to the organisation of contemporary British trawlers, although on a far smaller scale. These vessels were, like the *BORGENES*, older but modernised trawlers.

In total, the Norwegian trawler catch in 1936 is estimated at around 8,000 tons of (uncut) fish, representing 1 per cent of the total catch and 3.6 per cent of the cod catch. The trawlers' share of catches in distant waters was much greater, almost 30 per cent.¹³ Trawlered cod also made a large contribution to the manufacturing of salted cod and clip fish, with a share of 12.5 per cent. Although cod represented the most important part of the catch, both in quantity and in value, trawlers did of course take various other kinds of fish. In 1936, representatives from the canning industry claimed that the new factory in Harstad, built in 1934 and mainly devoted to the production of fish balls, received almost 70 per cent of its fish supplies from trawlers.¹⁴

The Norwegian debate on trawling

After Norwegian-based trawling was introduced, the issue of trawling soon became the subject of heated debate in some of the fishing communities, and before long it was also a political issue. The result was the temporary Trawler Act of 1936 that limited the trawler fleet to those vessels already in service and restricted it to the provision of salt fish only. In 1939 an even more restrictive law was passed.

Although large-scale trawling began late, the Trawler Act of 1936 was actually the third law on this issue in Norway. As early as 1908 a general ban was placed on trawling in Norwegian

waters. However, this law was merely designed to prevent foreign trawling taking place through the use of Norwegian straw men after foreign fishing had been banned two years earlier. A new law on trawling that was introduced in 1925 also regulated shrimp trawling.

Despite these laws, foreign trawling was considered a growing problem even before the First World War, both on the fishing banks and in some fjords and other fishing grounds close to the shore. Norwegian jurisdiction over territorial waters was strongly challenged by Britain and others, and Norwegian fishermen along parts of the coast often reported that they found their gear destroyed by foreign trawlers, both outside and inside the territorial limits.

The question of territorial limits at sea became an enduring dispute between Norway and Britain, which was not resolved until a legal settlement at The Hague in 1951 decided the matter in Norway's favour. These jurisdictional disputes, combined with the conflicts on the fishing grounds, gave trawling in general a bad reputation. In ongoing debates the foreign trawlers were often referred to as the "scourge of trawling" (trawlerplagen).

Naturally the conflict over fishing limits at sea was also hotly debated by the Norwegian public, but to some extent a clarification of the matter was reached in 1935 when the Norwegian government formally defined the fishery limits in most of northern Norway in accordance with what was claimed to be established Norwegian custom and with coastal interests. However, at that point the question of Norwegian trawling was raised.

As foreign trawling was considered to be chiefly a problem for the fisheries in northern Norway, it was in this region that the debate about Norwegian trawling seemed to become most acute. This happened soon after the first trawler, named MARIE JAQUELINE, was bought for use in northern Norway by an investment company in the town of Tromsø in September 1935.

While foreign trawling was seen primarily as a threat to passive gear and to the resources on the fishing grounds, Norwegian trawling also represented an immediate challenge to the local market and – for the longer term – posed the question of how the fisheries should be organised in future.

The fish market was difficult in the Thirties. By the time of the development of a trawler fleet in Norway, the market in general was characterised by low prices and a profitability problem in many of the fisheries. The problems seem to have been greatest in cod-dependent districts in northern Norway. Although the fisheries had been considerably modernised over the preceding decades, the economic crisis in general had resulted in over-employment in the fisheries, or, as a contemporary commentator put it, "the fishing fleet has turned into a rubbish bin". Particularly in the seasonal cod fisheries, especially in Lofoten, it was common to see both smaller and larger modern motorised vessels alongside simple boats with oars or sail. Some of them were manned by people with no fishing background, people without jobs or on low incomes who engaged in cod fishing as a temporary employment and in the hope of better prospects. However, many of them had no success on the fishing grounds, and so the minister for trade (and thus minister for fisheries) Alfred Madsen warned them and others not to seek work in the cod fisheries, as it was a risky and often unprofitable business.¹⁵

Since the trawlers, Norwegian or foreign, were not permitted to fish beyond the territorial limits, the immediate impact of trawling was on the market and not on the limited resources of the fishing grounds. Outside Norwegian waters the problem posed by trawling was in some areas a major one, regardless of the nationality of the trawlers. Although the main product of the trawlers was salted cod for the clip fish industry, it was the landing of fresh fish that created the greatest immediate problems from the point of view of the small-scale fishermen. Until the late Thirties trawling was mostly carried out off Finnmark, and therefore conflicts between trawlers and others developed first in that region. Only one month after the first northern Norwegian trawler had been put into service, it was reported that with a single landing of fresh fish it had knocked the bottom out of a local first-hand market in the region.¹⁶

This was in 1935, and in that same year the local fishermen's union (fiskarlag) of Vardø issued a statement to the effect that "Norwegian trawling practically amounts to a war against the tens of thousands of fishermen who are still tied to the old fishing methods."¹⁷

But even though the problems of the first-hand market were first and foremost a problem in the north, the trawler issue in general mobilised fishermen from all along the coast to question how and in whose interest the future of the fisheries should be organised.¹⁸ Naturally the most vigorous complaints against trawling came from fishermen in the north, especially those who found their gear swept away by trawlers, but the ban of 1936 was strongly supported by all the fishermen's unions from north to south.¹⁹ At this time the issue of trawling transcended the various conflicts between different groups of Norwegian fishermen.

The fishermen's unions represented a complex group of fishermen who fully or partly owned their own boats and gear, a deeply rooted tradition. It was therefore feared that the growing development of a Norwegian trawler fleet was simply the beginning of a rapid change whereby large parts of the fishing fleet, owned and operated by fishermen, would be replaced by investment companies and so-called "speculators". The development of the industry in Great Britain was often held up as an example to be avoided. A parliamentary committee that was set up to discuss the problems of low profitability in the fisheries produced – probably unintentionally – a somewhat frightening scenario. According to their calculations a trawler fleet of 200 trawlers with a crew of 25 men each would be able to land Norway's total catch of about 200,000 tons of cut cod.²⁰ At the time approximately 50,000 men were active in the cod fisheries.

But the question was not only about how many men were needed in the fishing fleet, but also about how fishing should be run, and by whom. Disputes between active and passive ownership had created considerable conflicts earlier, chiefly in northern Norway, as in 1890 when, in the so-called Battle of the Trollfjord, the bitter rivalry over resources flared up into a fight between small-scale fishermen and the crews of steam vessels in the narrow fjord of Trollfjorden in Vesterålen.

The battle resulted in the 1891 law restricting fishing with seines, and in 1936 the continuing conflict resulted in a temporary law prohibiting any further development. In 1939 a new law confirmed these restrictions.

The Labour Party and the question of trawling

As the 1936 and 1939 laws were passed during the first and second terms in government of the Norwegian Labour Party²¹, it is worth taking a closer look at that party.

According to its political platform the Labour Party was characterised by a strong policy of modernisation in the fields of industry, technology and social organisation. Given this background, one would expect a positive attitude towards the technology represented by trawlers. A Labour Party might also be expected to support the seamen on the trawlers rather than the "small capitalists" on fishing boats. But this was rarely the case. Although the Labour Party was divided on the question, the dividing line lay between those who wanted a total ban on trawling and those who argued for a policy of merely restricting it. Hardly anyone connected with the party openly supported increasing the role of trawlers in the fishing fleet. In fact it was the Labour members of parliament who argued most aggressively against trawling.

The explanation for this lies partly in the fact that since 1903 the Labour Party had had an extensive following in large parts of northern Norway. These supporters represented small-scale fisheries, a sector that was facing major economic challenges in the Twenties and Thirties. These circumstances led the Labour Party to focus mainly on the social challenges that the fisheries were facing, and hence on the situation of the fishermen and their families. The party also

stressed the role of “capitalist exploiters in the fisheries,”²² a group that could include those who had invested in trawlers.

Although other political parties did not focus quite so strongly on this issue, the combination of problems in the fish market and over-employment in the fisheries made it difficult to introduce drastic remedies to effect a restructuring of the fishing fleet.

A liberalisation with considerable reservations

The Trawler Act of 1939 outlasted World War II; although it was challenged by the occupation government, confrontation over the issue was avoided.²³ The war itself had reduced the numbers of large trawlers in operation to only five.

The ending of the war had changed many of the premises on which the earlier laws on trawling had been based. The situation on the international fish market seemed positive, and unemployment was no longer a problem.

The Labour Party won a majority in the first election after the war, its main goals being the post-war rebuilding of the country and the speeding up of modernisation and industrialisation, in the fisheries as in other sectors. Trawling had a natural part to play in these ambitions. Importing countries like Spain and Portugal experienced a substantial increase in the size of their trawling fleets, and, just as in the pre-war period, Iceland’s fleet was growing, having built up a large freezing capacity during the war.²⁴ In 1947 the government set up a committee to propose measures to rationalise and modernise the fisheries. The majority of the committee, supported by the leadership of the party, pointed out that an economically sustainable future for the fisheries required a rationalisation whereby trawlers and other larger vessels would form the cornerstone of the fishing fleet.

The Norwegian fisheries underwent a noticeable change during the first decades after the war, in terms of both the fishing fleet and industrial growth on shore. Even so, the direction taken in Norway was different from that taken in the other North Atlantic fisheries.

The Trawler Act of 1951, a problematic issue for the Labour Party

A new law on trawling was passed by the Labour government in 1951. This law opened the way for further development of a trawling fleet, and did not, like the law of 1939, set explicit limits on the numbers of trawlers. Nevertheless, the law was restrictive and a far cry from the ambitious aims the party had set forth soon after the end of the war.

Moreover, the law was not passed without major resistance from the fishermen’s unions and from the Labour Party’s own representatives in parliament. Neither the Labour Party nor the unions at this point argued against trawling in principle, but the demand was voiced that only trawlers under the control of the government or of the fishermen’s unions should be allowed. Both of these demands were at odds with the Labour Party’s further move away from socialism as indicated in its revised programme in 1949.

The resistance from parts of the Labour Party to the new Trawler Act of 1951 was so strong that the government actually had to seek support from the conservative opposition in parliament. In addition, the Labour Party had to use strong measures to curb its internal conflicts on the matter. The prime example of this was the treatment of one of the most influential agitators against a liberal law on trawling, Jens Steffensen. He was the leader of the fishermen’s union and represented the Labour Party in parliament; with the connivance of the Labour Party he was manoeuvred out of his position, mainly because of his campaign against the new Trawler Act.²⁵

There followed a rapid increase in the number of large trawlers (of more than 200 tons), so that in 1952 there were 29 large trawlers in operation. In addition, there were 115 trawlers between 20 and 200 tons. This increase continued. Even so, trawlers did not replace the smaller fishing vessels, and the debate about the ownership and structure of the fishing fleet continued to be a troublesome political issue in the following decades. The leadership of the Labour Party did not succeed in gaining full control over the party on this issue and other issues related to fisheries policy.

Although during these postwar decades neither the market nor the general economic situation in Norway posed major problems any more, the policies adopted during the crisis of the interwar years seem to have consolidated a regionally based view on how the fisheries should be structured. Even though the party had a majority in parliament until the election of 1961, it could not afford to risk a confrontation with part of the party's heartland. The further course of events therefore shows continuous development and modernisation of the small-scale coastal fleet, and the – albeit strictly regulated – development of a modern fleet of trawlers and larger deep-sea vessels.

Notes:

- 1 The statistics include the Baltic Sea, but fishing off the Greenland and Newfoundland coasts is not included.
- 2 Thor Iversen, *Trålfiskets historie* (Bergen, 1937): 41.
- 3 Gerhard Meidell Gerhardsen, *Våre fiskerier* (Bergen, 1946): 18.
- 4 Thor Iversen, *Trålfiskets historie* (Bergen, 1937): 26.
- 5 Thor Iversen, *Trålfiskets historie* (Bergen, 1937): 38.
- 6 Thor Iversen, *Trålfiskets historie* (Bergen, 1937): 20.
- 7 *Om fiske med trål. Innstilling fra en av handelsdepartementet 1 1936 nedsatt komite* (Oslo, 1937): 14. This was a committee set up by the department of trade to evaluate Norwegian trawling.
- 8 Jan L. Backer, *Trålersaken og torskfiskets rasjonalisering* (Kristiansund, 1946): 20.
- 9 Carl Fred. Kolderup, *Chr. Bjelland & Co. 1882-1982* (Stavanger, 1982): 73.
- 10 Jan L. Backer, *Trålersaken og torskfiskets rasjonalisering* (Kristiansund, 1946): 5.
- 11 Thor Iversen, *Trålfiskets historie* (Bergen, 1937): 59.
- 12 Paal Christensen: 1991, "En havenes forpester – et kjempestinkdyr. Om trålsjørsmålet i Norge før 2. verdenskrig," *Historisk Tidsskrift*, nr. 4, 1991: 629.
- 13 Thor Iversen, *Trålfiskets historie* (Bergen, 1937): 61.
- 14 *Om fiske med trål. Innstilling fra en av handelsdepartementet 1 1936 nedsatt komite* (Oslo, 1937): 86.
- 15 Jan L. Backer, *Trålersaken og torskfiskets rasjonalisering* (Kristiansund, 1946): 17.
- 16 *Fiskaren*, 18 September 1935.
- 17 Johan Johansen, *Trålfiske og trålerdebatt* (Trondheim, 1972): 66.
- 18 A look at the newspaper *Nordlys* for 26 February shows that other questions related to trawling were also raised: for example there was a public meeting in Tromsø on trawling and prostitution. The town's medical officer maintained that the problem was not the crew on the trawlers, but the girls in the town who "threw themselves at the fishermen."
- 19 A survey conducted by the committee on trawling shows that all the fishermen's unions which responded to the survey broadly supported regulations on fishing with larger trawlers.
- 20 *Om fiske med trål. Innstilling fra en av handelsdepartementet 1 1936 nedsatt komite* (Oslo, 1937): 95.
- 21 The Labour Party was also in office for a few weeks in 1928, but then had to resign before it could embark on any real work.
- 22 *Samfundet. Velgerens oppslagsbok ved valget 1933*.
- 23 Bjørn Sagdahl, *Trålfisket i norsk fiskeripolitikk – et konfliktskapende fiske?* (Bodø, 1982): 147. The collaborationist NS (Nasjonal Samling) regime did not want a conflict with the fishermen's union over this matter.
- 24 Harald Helmich Pedersen, *Problemer i norsk fiskerinæring. Trålersaken* (Bergen, 1946): 5.
- 25 Rune Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger*, (Oslo, 1998): 361.

Über die Herausforderung der Schleppnetzfisherei in der norwegischen Fischereipolitik während der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Aufsatz wird die Frage diskutiert, warum sich die norwegische Schleppnetzfishereiflotte im Vergleich zu jenen anderer Fischereinationen im Nordatlantik relativ spät entwickelte. Im Mittelpunkt steht die Untersuchung, wie und auf welcher Grundlage die Schleppnetzfisherei zu einer politischen Fragestellung wurde. Der Aufsatz beleuchtet die Rolle der Arbeiterpartei, die 1935-1963 an der Macht war und die von den Fischern bedeutsame Unterstützung erhielt.

Seit ihren Anfängen im späten 19. Jahrhundert in England war die Dampferschleppnetzfishereiflotte im Nordatlantik rasch angewachsen. Bald war es möglich, mit diesen Fischereifahrzeugen beträchtliche Fänge zwischen der Nordsee und dem Weißen Meer in Russland zu erzielen. Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg wurde ein weiterer Zuwachs verzeichnet, allerdings gewann die Schleppnetzfisherei während der zwanziger Jahre auch in anderen Ländern an Bedeutung und wurde dort ebenfalls zum Hauptbestandteil der Fischindustrie. Die Entwicklung der Schleppnetzfishereiflotte spielte eine wichtige Rolle, was sich beispielsweise im Gesamtfang Deutschlands widerspiegelt, der zwischen 1913 und 1937 um mehr als 300 Prozent angestiegen war. Andere Länder wie Frankreich und die Niederlande wiesen gewissermaßen eine ähnliche Entwicklung auf. Jene Länder besaßen Flotten, die für den Inlandsverbrauch Fischerei betrieben, doch auch für exportorientierte Länder wie Island wurde die Schleppnetzfisherei ein sehr bedeutender Bestandteil der Fischindustrie.

In Norwegen war die Situation eine ganz andere. Obwohl die Gesamtfangmenge auch in Norwegen zur gleichen Zeit anstieg, wurde nur ein geringer Teil des Fisches von Schleppnetzfangfahrzeugen angelandet. Ein erstes Gesetz über das Verbot der Schleppnetzfisherei in norwegischen Gewässern war bereits 1908 erlassen worden. Neue Gesetze, die in den 1930er Jahren erlassen wurden, ließen bis zur Nachkriegsperiode nur eine sehr eingeschränkte Schleppnetzfisherei in Norwegen zu.

Bis in die 30er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts stellte das Schleppnetzfishen hauptsächlich eine politische Herausforderung für die bilateralen Beziehungen zwischen Norwegen und Großbritannien aufgrund der strittigen Grenzen der norwegischen Hoheitsgewässer dar. Als norwegische Interessengruppen in den 30er Jahren in Schleppnetzfangfahrzeuge investieren wollten, wurde die Schleppnetzfisherei ebenfalls zu einer schwierigen inneren Angelegenheit. Diese Debatte lieferte nicht nur einen neuerlichen Beleg für den dauerhaften Konflikt zwischen mittelständischen und groß angelegten Fischereien, sondern sie war zudem ein begehrtes Thema für die politischen Parteien.

In den 1930er Jahren beendeten restriktive Gesetze vorläufig die Weiterentwicklung der norwegischen Schleppnetzfishereiflotte, indem diese auf elf Lizenzen beschränkt wurde und auch den rechtsgültigen Lieferungen strenge Limitationen auferlegt wurden.

Nach dem Krieg verschob sich die Politik in Richtung der Schleppnetzfisherei, und eine beachtliche Flotte von groß angelegten Schleppnetzfahrzeugen erwuchs aus dem neuen Vermächtnis. Trotz der ehrgeizigen Bestrebungen einiger Schlüsselpersonen in politischen Führungspositionen wurde die Schleppnetzfisherei immer noch stark reguliert. Es ist der Beständigkeit von Interessengruppen der Fischer und ihrer Wortführer zu verdanken, dass eine Weiterentwicklung und Modernisierung einerseits der mittelständischen Küstenflotten und andererseits der modernen Schleppnetzfishereiflotten und größeren Tiefseefangfahrzeuge möglich war.

Les enjeux du chalutage dans la politique de la pêche en Norvège au cours de la première moitié du XX^e siècle

Résumé

Cet article traite du développement de la flotte norvégienne des chalutiers, relativement tardif en comparaison des autres nations pratiquant la pêche dans l'Atlantique nord. Au centre de l'analyse se trouve la question de savoir comment et sur quelle base la pêche au chalut en arriva au statut de question politique. L'article éclaire le rôle du Parti des travailleurs, qui était au pouvoir en 1935-1963 et qui recevait un important soutien de la part des pêcheurs.

Depuis ses débuts, à la fin du XIX^e siècle en Angleterre, la flotte de chalutiers à vapeur s'agrandit rapidement dans l'Atlantique du Nord. Grâce à ces navires, il fut bientôt possible d'augmenter considérablement les captures entre la mer du Nord et la mer Blanche en Russie. Après la Première Guerre mondiale, un regain d'accroissement eut lieu, toutefois, au cours des années vingt, la pêche au chalut prit de l'importance dans les autres pays également, y devenant aussi le secteur le plus important de l'industrie poissonnière. Le développement de la flotte de chalutiers jouait un rôle important, ce qui se reflète par exemple dans les captures totales en Allemagne, qui augmentèrent de plus de 300 pour cent entre 1913 et 1937. D'autres pays comme la France et les Pays-Bas, d'une certaine façon, font preuve d'une croissance semblable. Ces pays possédaient des flottes qui pêchaient pour répondre à la consommation nationale, mais pour des pays orientés vers l'exportation comme l'Islande, la pêche au chalut devint une part importante de la pêche industrielle.

En Norvège, la situation était tout à fait différente. Bien qu'à la même époque, la capture totale en Norvège ait également augmenté, seule une quantité moindre de poissons fut amenée par des chalutiers. Une première loi sur l'interdiction de la pêche au chalut dans les eaux territoriales de la Norvège avait déjà été promulguée en 1908. De nouvelles lois, promulguées dans les années trente, n'autorisèrent qu'une pêche au chalut très restreinte en Norvège et cela, jusque dans les années d'après-guerre.

Jusque dans les années trente du XX^e siècle, la pêche au chalut était principalement un enjeu politique dans les relations bilatérales entre la Norvège et la Grande-Bretagne, en raison des limites contestées des eaux territoriales norvégiennes. Lorsque des groupes d'intérêt norvégiens, au cours des années trente, voulurent investir dans la pêche au chalut, celle-ci tendit également à devenir une affaire intérieure complexe. Non seulement ces débats redonnaient cours au conflit latent entre la pêche pratiquée dans les moyennes entreprises et celle pratiquée à grande échelle, mais elle devint un thème favori des partis politiques.

Durant les années trente, des lois restrictives empêchèrent provisoirement le développement de la flotte des chalutiers norvégiens, réduisant le nombre des licences à 11 et soumettant les livraisons valides à des réglementations sévères.

Après la guerre, la politique se déplaça vers la pêche au chalut et une flotte considérable de chalutiers, très équipés, vit le jour de ce nouvel héritage. Malgré les efforts ambitieux de quelques personnes-clé à des postes politiques chargés de responsabilités, la pêche au chalut continuait à être fortement réglementée. C'est grâce à la ténacité des groupes d'intérêt des pêcheurs et de leurs porte-parole qu'un développement et une modernisation furent possibles, d'un côté des flottes de cabotage moyennes, de l'autre des flottes de chalutiers modernes et de navires de pêche en haute mer.