

Seeing like *hajiras*

relational perspectives and challenges at the intersection of gender and social ecological systems (SES) in dried fish

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SES attributes in dried fish

Patterned interactions among multiple actors, species and materials

Linkages: spatial, scalar, institutional

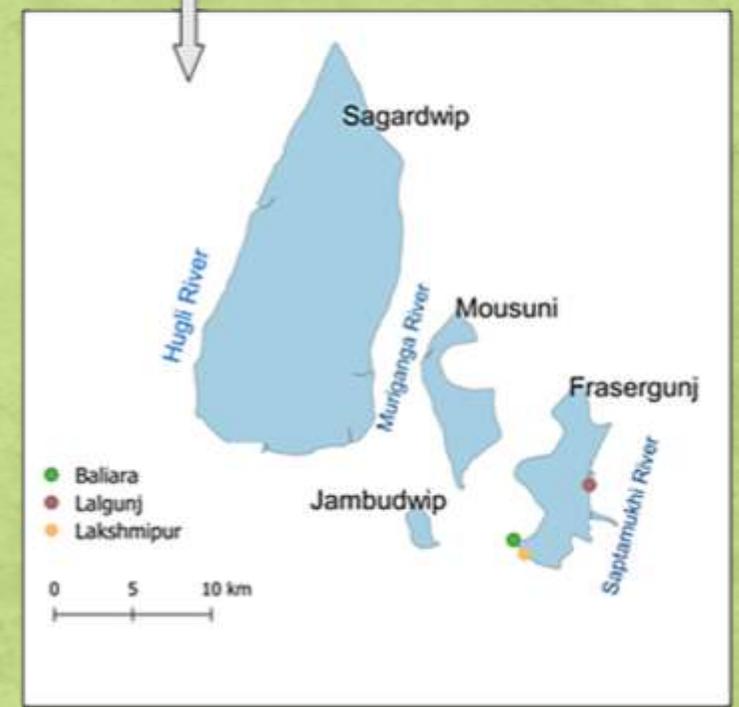
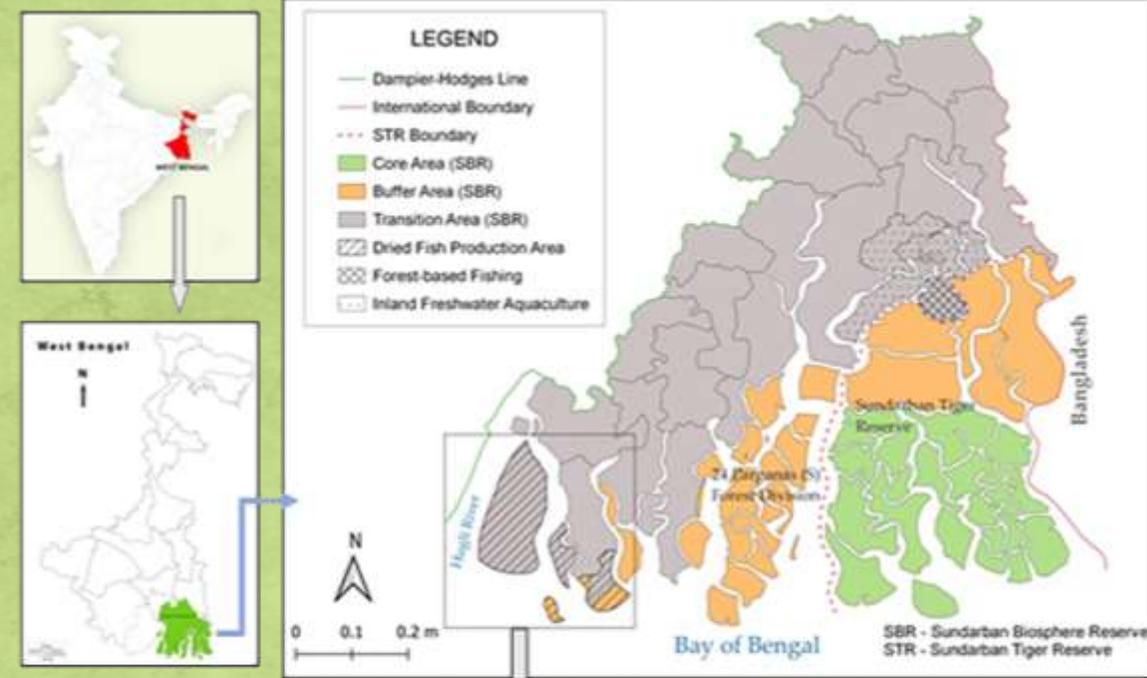
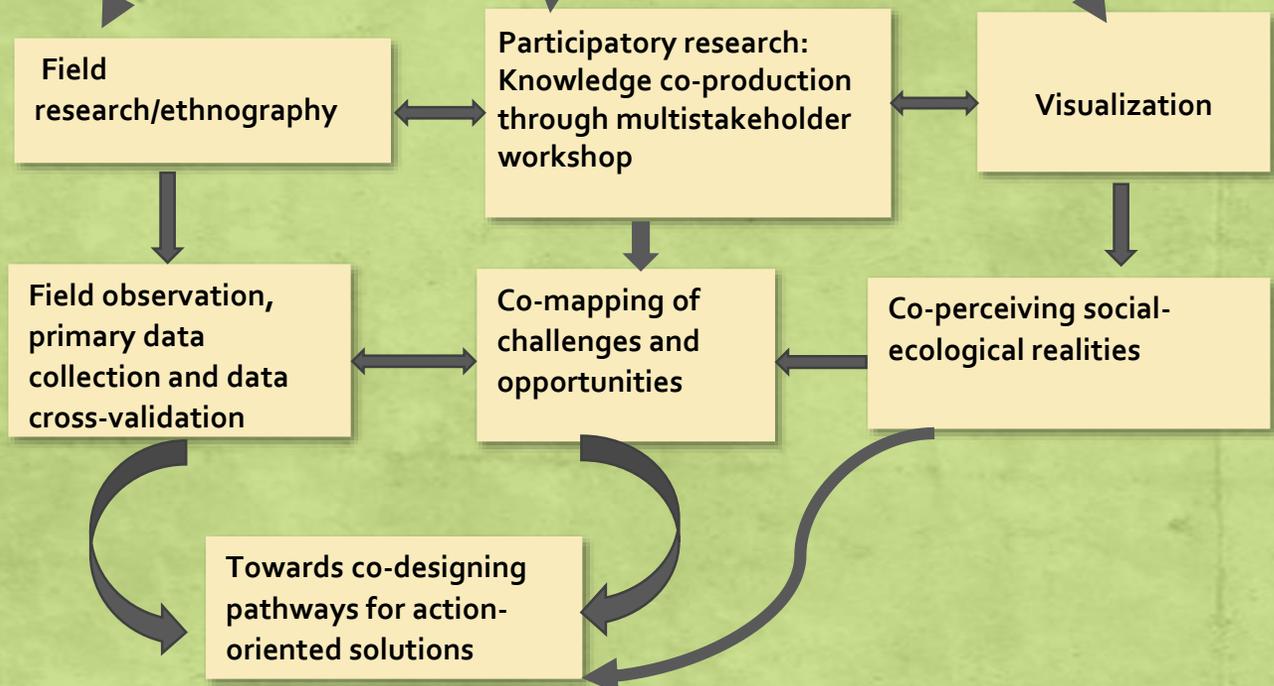
Social-ecological changes

Feedback mechanisms and adaptive capacities

Dried fish

- is an important source of food and **livelihoods for coastal communities**
- involves **participation** of people in a series of activities
- shapes and gets shaped by social relations and **social-political norms**
- experiences **climatic** and **ecological threats** influencing the **social equations** in multiple ways and generating **differential responses**

Methodology



- *How do gendered relations link value chain and SES in dried fish?*
- *How are vulnerabilities of women shaped by gendered relations in the risk-prone dried fish economy?*
- *What practices/measures could be used to improve women's conditions and implement long-term solutions?*

Shukani-Bachhuni – those who sort and dry the fish

- *Dadan* (moneylending) system is prevalent
- Preparing drying yard, fish cleaning, sorting, drying, tending – activities of the women *hajira* workers at the value chain nodes
- Recruitments in the camps (*shabar/khoti*) are based on the work requirements and age; camp owners contact directly or through brokers
- Women workers often join from the same family and mainly belong to non-fishing castes
- Husbands are either daily wage agricultural labourer, migrant labourer or fishing labourer
- Some small camps (*khoti*) are jointly owned by husband and wife who works with the *hajira* workers as well as monitors others' works



Hajira labourers constitute more than 50% of all participants at the peak time of the drying season



Grand challenges

Labour conditions

- Stratification on male-female identity – ‘typical female tasks’, huge workload yet paltry wage
- Organizational hierarchy and insecure livelihoods

Hazards and ecological threats

- Unhygienic fish drying conditions
- Pressures on business lead to loss of livelihoods or reduction of wage
- Damages to households and resources

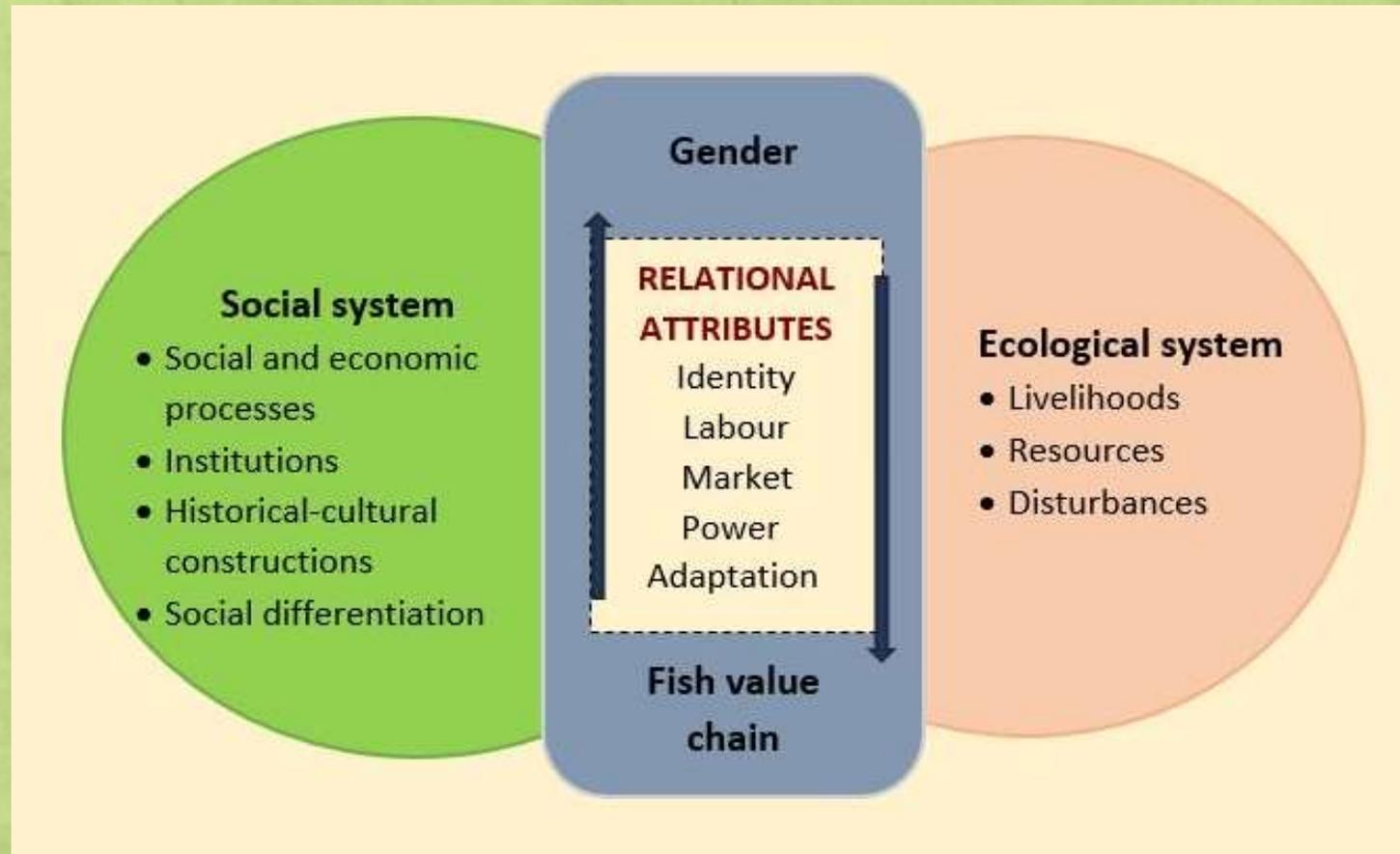
Social and political aspects

- Limited access to resources, markets, participation and education
- Burden of poor households
- No recognition at policy levels and research



"We cannot talk to you now. If the owner finds us talking to you, our hajiras will be forfeited!"

Relational attributes of gender linking SES and value chain

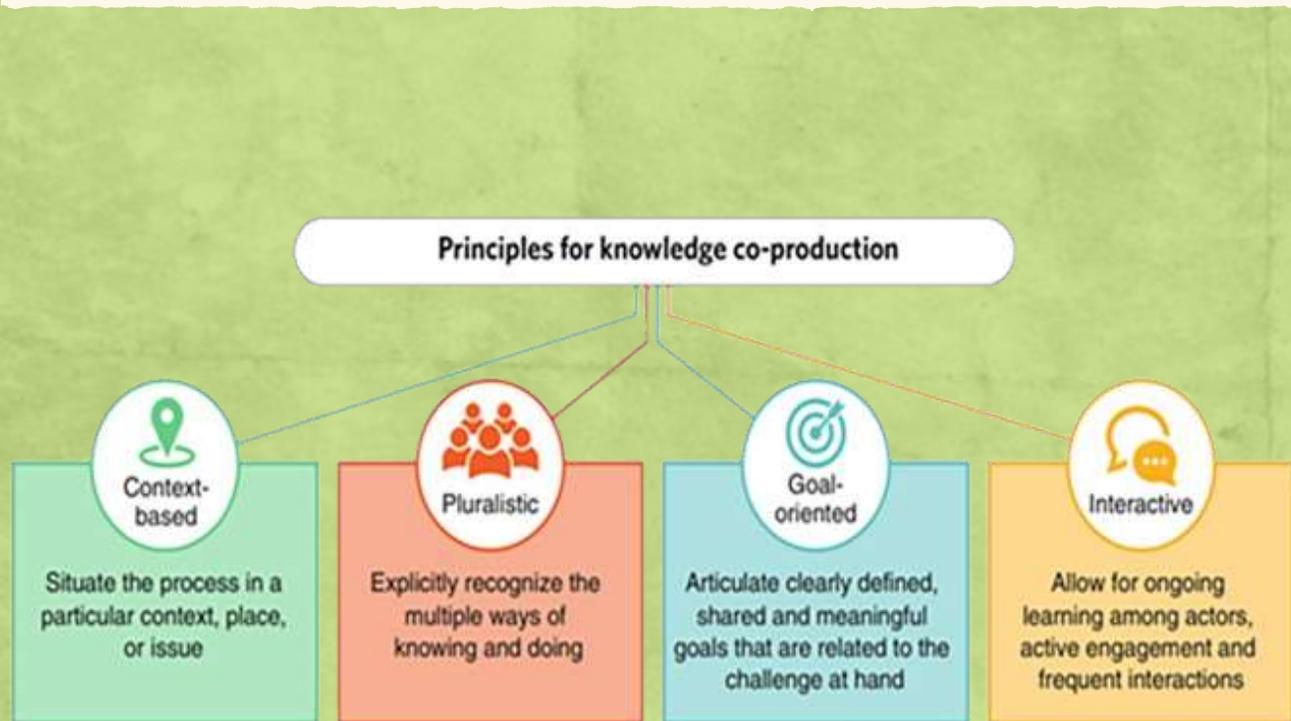




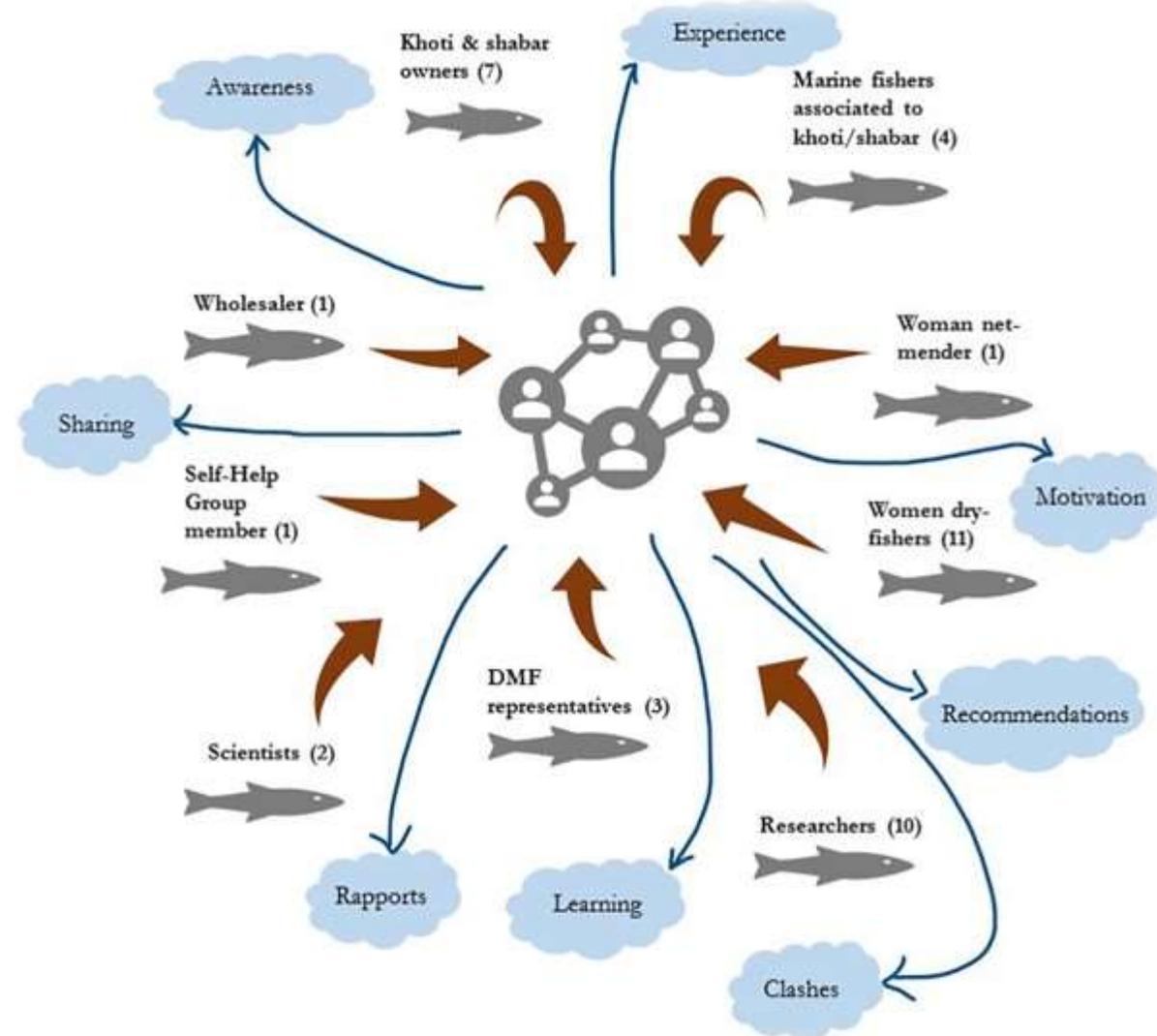
No gender segregated data for dried fish production in West Bengal

Percentage of fish catch allocated to fish curing in India, 1991-2017
(source: Handbook on Fisheries Statistics, India)

Knowledge co-production through multi-stakeholder workshop



Source: Norström et al. 2020: 184



- Housing conditions in shabar/khota should be improved
- Pension and compensation should be regularised
- Better sanitation and water availability
- Insurance and diesel subsidies should be provided
- Measures need to be taken to protect fish stock and check overfishing
- Flood/cyclone relief centre should be distributed evenly
- Embankments need to be maintained and monitored
- Relief from dadan and credit support system should be provided



Short-term steps	Intermediate-term steps	Long-term steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audio-visual dissemination at academic, organizational and departmental levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy brief • co-organizing training programmes on livelihood diversification (preparing dried fish products - shrimp pickle and papad) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving participation of self-help groups for strengthening livelihood diversification plans (through loan support and building network) • intervention on a disaster forecast system

“It is encouraging to see how livelihood issues of hajira workers are surfacing in these discussions. My urge is to provide attention to the transport for the women from their village to the camps”



When women become gender

