Resistance to Globalisation in the Context of Pluriactivity

More Opportunities or More constraint?

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Abstract
This paper examines responses to globalization by pluriactive small holders in Carna, a coastal community in the west of Ireland. For over 100 years, Carna was the focus of state led development efforts, which ignored pluriactivity and instead imposed an agrarian development model, confronting small producers with inappropriate policies and practices. The outcome was the marginalization of agriculture in the context of national trends, the underdevelopment of maricultural resoures and overall decline in the local economy. Globalisation is the most recent challenge confronting the small producers of Carna but to understand their responses to this challenge, we must widen the focus from contemporary material and discursive practices and onto how these are embedded in historical precedent in confronting the encroachment of capital. Historical precedent has informed the economic rationale of pluriactive households and has shaped their reproductive strategies. It has also shaped discursive practices surrounding different forms of production and work.

In the contemporary phase, these sets of factors are intertwined: how small producers confront processes of globalization and their capacity to exercise agency reflect the interconnectedness of economic decision making at household level and social capital at the local level. Particularly important is the valorization of work within the community, the ability to moblise local networks and the ability to mobilize discourse. This paper will show that different economic activities are valued differently both in material and symbolic terms and this has a key bearing on how small producers respond to globalization.

An Overview of Pluriactivity in Carna

To understand pluriactivity in Carna and the implications for responses to globalisation, it is necessary to view it in its historical context. In 1890, Carna came under the remit of the Congested District Board (CDB), a body appointed to address the endemic poverty in over populated areas. The CDB documented the economy of Carna noting a general economic precariousness and three main activities: farming, fishing and kelp production. For the next thirty years, the CDB implemented a set of economic policies the most notable feature of which was the almost total neglect of maritime activities in favour of efforts to create an agrarian petty commodity economy linked to national and UK markets. The CDB ignored the fact that the impoverished households of Carna were already linked into global markets but through the sale of fish and kelp and not through the sale of agricultural products which were almost exclusively for subsistence.

Thirty years later, small holders of the western seaboard assumed a considerable ideological and cultural significance to the newly independent Irish state – due both to the struggle for

independence being bound up with land reform and to the role of the Irish language in nation building. Consequently, areas like Carna continued to be a focus of state policy. But these too prioritised agriculture even in the face of national trends which were undermining the viability of small holdings: as early as the mid 1920s fewer than 5% of holdings in Carna were economically viable.

Between 1935 and 1960, the pattern of pluriactivity crystalised into three principle economic activities: involvement in local and migrant wage labour, participation in fishing and other maritime activity for the market and the production of subsistence agriculture. Subsistence agriculture provided a buffer between the household and its harsh economic environment: it allowed it to withstand fluctuations in the market for labour and for fish and other maritime products, to avail of limited markets for surplus produce, and to mobilise the non-valorised labour of women and young children without compromising its scope to allocate the labour of its men to more lucrative activities.

As resources fluctuated in value, households and individuals moved with relative ease from one to another, but always within a coherent rationale. This rationale sought not to reproduce any one resource, but to reproduce the capacity of the household to be pluriactive, that is its ability to engage in a range of activities and to move in and out of these activities. In reproducing pluriactivity, the household sought to maximize returns on labour, minimize investment and risk, and retain flexibility and autonomy in relation to the exploitation of resources

The maintenance of flexibility and autonomy was necessary to ensure the household could respond to internal changes (primarily the availability of labour) and to external factors such as market demand. Maintaining flexibility and autonomy in turn required that investment (in terms of both capital and to a lesser extent skill acquisition and time allocation) in any one resource was limited. This meant a lack of development in the forces of production which remained unchanged. The resistance to investment did not reflect backwardness on the part of households but a rational economic choice. Finally, maximising returns on labour was achieved through its strategic allocation. Labour which was in demand on local and other markets was allocated to income generating activity, while that for which no demand existed was expended in subsistence production. As a result, the labour of old people, women, girls and young children was largely confined to subsistence agriculture thus freeing up the more valuable labour (in market terms) of men and older male children.

From the 1970s on, significant changes began to emerge at the level of the household, the local economy and the international context. The most significant amongst these were the commoditization of agriculture and processes of globalization in fishing and other maritime activities. How the historically pluriactive households of Carna responded to these can help our understanding of the capacity of small producers to shape processes of globalization but their responses must be understood within the broader context of pluriactivity and the economic rational that underpins this.

Responses to Commoditisation in Agriculture

From the 1960s, the increased penetration of agriculture by capital was leading to the decline of small-holdings nationally. Alongside an increased role for credit finance, some forms of production (notably poultry, egg and pig production) had been monopolized by agri-business,

other activities such as dairying and beef production became concentrated on larger, heavily capitalised units (see Breen et al, 1990; Hannan and Breen, 1987). From the mid 70s onwards, these trends were exacerbated by the Common Agricultural Policy with its production based subsidies which reinforced the wellbeing of larger units at the expense of smaller ones. Nationally, these trends resulted in a growing socio-economic differentiation and income inequality within the farming sector with small-holdings increaslingly confined to low return activities.

The pluriactive households of Carna responded to these trends in two main ways. Firstly, they moved out of subsistence production, gradually but definitely. By the early 1980s, poultry, foul and pigs had almost disappeared, only a small number of households kept sheep and vegetable growing was reduced to a small 'garden' of potatoes. Secondly, they increased their involvement in production for the market by becoming involved in dry stock production.

The withdrawal from subsistence production corresponds to national patterns and it is tempting to conclude that the small producers of Carna were simply being marginalized within the national trends but this would be a simplistic interpretation (see also Leeuwis, 1989). Instead, we need to situate these changes in the context of pluriactivity and when we do so, three factors are particularly important. Firstly, since the mid-1960s, there were growing opportunities in wage work and in fishing resulting in a greater range of options for the deployment of household labour. Secondly, welfare payments had become widely available in the 1960s and meant that households had a minimum cash income and if they chose, could buy the produce that was increasingly becoming available in local shops thereby eliminating the need to produce it themselves.

Thirdly, due to smaller family size, retention of children in education and decline of stem family arrangements, the amount of household labour was decreasing. As a result, and in the context of the increasing range of alternative economic activities becoming available, subsistence production could be engaged in only by foregoing involvement in other activities. From a previous situation in which subsistence production was the cornerstone of the pluriactive household, it now became incompatible with the objective of maximizing returns on labour.

The movement out of subsistence production was not only rationale in economic terms, but made sense too in the context of increased personal choice. The adversity associated with small-scale agriculture and the lifestyle that accompanied it has been recognised as a factor in the flight from the land in the earlier decades of this century (O'Dowd, 1987). It has rarely been acknowledged that the same exigencies could prompt those who remained on the land to relinquish the burden of subsistence production if an opportunity to do so became available. In Carna, there is consensus regarding the hardship and poverty associated with small-holding in the past and in particularly with the burden of work which fell to women recalled by both men and women alike, simply as 'slavery'. Not surprising, then, coinciding with the withdrawal from subsistence production, there was a reassessment of the cultural norms surrounding it. The "shame" which had previously attached to buying vegetables and other products, traditionally produced on the holding, gave way to a different set of norms. Within this, the expenditure of labour on an activity which was neither necessary nor financially worthwhile came to be seen as a particular form of irrationality. The need to secure food for household consumption became separated from any cultural prescription as to how this should be achieved.

The withdrawal from subsistence production coincided with a move into dry stock production for the market which by 1990 was the cornerstone of agricultural production and the only form of incorporation into agricultural markets. Dry stock production is underpinned by headage payments but this is not the only factor influencing participation. Despite being a low return activity, dry stock production fits neatly into the economic rationale of the pluriactive household and has been managed in a way which ensures optimum correspondence between the allocation of labour and financial returns while also minimizing the need for capital investment.

The system in practice is the production of calf to store cattle. Animals produced on the farm or bought in are kept for one year and then offered for sale at local markets or sometimes further afield. If demand is low and prices are poor animals will be reluctantly retained for a second year, as it is perceived that the additional costs of feeding an animal will ot be recouped in higher market prices for beef cattle nor will it be compensated fully by headage payments. For the same reason, there is no desire to move into calf to beef production. A two year system would require a greater investment of labour and, in the perception of some small-producers, a greater reliance on bought in foodstuffs. The confinement of activity to store cattle production, therefore, is a reflection of the desire to minimise labour and capital investments, and also to minimise dependence on external markets for both inputs and products. Routine day to day tasks, which are demanding in terms of time, and in terms of requiring an on-farm presence, are frequently performed either by the small-holders wife or by one or other of the elderly couple if these reside on the holding. In this way, the management of dry stock production has been assimilated into the reduced labour complement of the household.

Alongside these material changes in agricultural production there have also occurred interesting discursive changes. Primarily, these relate to the devaluing of farming as an economic activity and a denial of the kind of 'knowledge through experience' that is often seen to underlie the economic strategies of small producers. This discourse of denial – reflected also in the devalorization of farming work at the local level – is shared by those involved in farming. Thus, alongside the shedding of an economic resource we can also see the shedding of a set of knowledge and skills and of claims to status based on socially valued work.

To sum up, responses to commoditization in agriculture by Carna households can be understood in terms of the operationalisation of a pluriactive rationale in the context of both the constraints emerging from the wider system of agricultural production and the policy context surrounding that, and in terms of the increased alternatives at the local level. One might suggest, nonetheless, that the scaling down of agriculture on pluriactive holdings was in fact the only response which was available to households, that the changing economic and policy context presented barriers beyond which action was inconceivable (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994). This interpretation however fails to take account of the fact that Carna households willingly abandoned an activity that was not longer providing adequate returns. It also fails to take account of the very different capacity small holders displayed in their resistance to globalization of fishing and maritime activities.

Responding to Globalisation in Fishing and mariculture.

Two developments had occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s which led to an increase in the significance of fishing in the area. First, in response to the decline in a number of activities which had complemented fishing, fishermen campaigned successfully for the official extension

of the scallop season, allowing the fishing year to be extended. Secondly an initiative by Gael Linn (a state funded local development agency) to provide motorized boats on an easy payment scheme meant that fishing households now relied less on neighbours and kin for crew while their own productive capacity increased..

The outcome of these developments was that more households became involved in fishing and to a greater degree. But the movement into fishing also reflected the overall rationale of the pluriactive household. Fishermen limited their involvement to a scale commensurate with achieving a worthwhile economic return, on the one hand, and minimising capital investment, on the other. Boats remained small and no specialization occurred. In this way, they were able to incorporate fishing into the household's economic portfolio without sacrificing their flexibility and responsiveness in the longer term. In this regard, their responses to changes in fishing shared certain similarities with their response to processes of commoditization in farming. Where the experience of fishing diverges markedly from that of farming, however, is in the extent to which fishermen collaborated to pro-actively secure their well-being in the face of external constraints and in so doing resisted the pressures of globalisation with remarkable results.

Resisting Globalisation

The concept of resistance has a relatively long history within the sociology of development and has been used to assert the agency of small producers against allegations of backwardness (see for example Hutton and Cohen 1975) or passivity (Grossman, 1998). Scott (1986), has defined resistance as "whatever peasants do to mitigate or deny claims by appropriating classes or to advance their own claims vis-a-vis these superordinate classes (p. 22)". A more holistic definition has been provided by Turton (1986), using Foucoult's work on power:

"...it is not only 'claims on its surplus' that are being resisted by peasants but also other claims and assaults on their social being in a wider sense including cultural forms of life, their dignity and human value in its specific cultural conceptions" (Turton, 1986: 37)

But the concept of agency goes beyond this and allows that small-producers have the capacity not just to resist the claims of others, but collectively, to negotiate their own claims against competing and/or hostile challenges. Long and van der Ploeg, stress how rural producers devise ways of dealing with problematic situations and creatively bring together resources, especially practical knowledge derived from past experience (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994: 69). In doing so, they draw attention to the collective dimension of this:

... agency (and power) depend crucially upon the emergence of a network of actors who become partial through hardly ever completely enrolled in the projects and practices of some other person or persons (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994:66)

The first example of fishermen's resistance occurred in the late fifties, soon after the introduction of the motorised boats. The agency for engines and spare parts had been awarded to a local fish buyer who was economically quite powerful. This fish buyer attempted to use his power as agent to coerce fishermen into selling their catch exclusively to him: "no catch, no spare parts" being the essence of his proposal. This would have rendered the fishermen almost

completely powerless in the market. Consequently, they boycotted the fish buyer and negotiated directly with the UK based motor suppliers to supply spare parts and engines.

Ten years later a very different type of confrontation occurred when the rich maritime resources of the area drew the attention of multinational companies. An American company moved into the area and attempted to commercially exploit the rich lobster beds in Kilkerrin Bay. The company proposed to provide large boats and large capacity (parlour) lobster pots to local fishermen who would be paid on the basis of their catch. The company claimed there was six million pounds worth of lobster in the bay and it intended to fish these intensively over a two year period.

This proposal was interesting in the context of the local economy and the preferences of small producers to minimise risk taking. It was effectively providing an opportunity for fishermen to avail of an almost guarantied income for a period of two years, without requiring any capital investment on their part. As such it appeared to be very much in line with the preference for short-term pragmatism favoured by the small producers. However, the fishermen recognised that the company's proposal would ultimately threaten the long-term viability of the lobster beds and their own autonomy in regard to exploiting these. They began to mount opposition, initially manifested in fairly passive ways. The company persisted with its endeavours, however, until one of its boats was blown to pieces in the bay, whereupon it abandoned its plan and left the area.

Little more than a decade later the fishermen were again at the forefront of a confrontation with would-be developers. This time the source of the conflict was efforts by Gael Linn to improve the commercial viability of the oyster beds. Despite being in private ownership for over 300 years, the beds were regarded as a local resource whose exploitation was not premised on legal title. Local fishermen had fished the beds at will for as long as a market had existed and this was not seen as poaching either by those who fished or by the rest of the community. In 1979, in a very controversial move, Gael Linn bought out ownership of the beds. Although Gael Linn had the objective of improving the capacity of a local resource for the benefits of local producers, its purchase of the beds established a new order in which ownership and the right to fish them (or to grant the right to others) became linked in practice.

Gael Linn had taken over the beds in order to apply a more scientific approach to the fishing, preservation and cultivation of oysters. It tried to cultivate stocks and it imposed a 2 year ban on oyster fishing in the bay. This was a fairly ambitious undertaking as it required convincing the fishermen of the value of foregoing short term income in favour of increased longer term viability and because the prohibition was almost impossible to police given the ecology of the area. Nevertheless, the ban achieved a certain amount of success, mainly because fishermen had come to respect the interventions of Gael Linn, with the result that the oyster stocks did increase over the two year period.

But when Gael Linn sought to extend the ban on fishing for a third year the fishermen, already resenting the loss of two seasons, reacted. They organised a protest "fish-in": for one whole week every boat in the area openly poached the beds from morning till night until they were virtually cleared out. Although those involved were poaching on what was now undeniably private property, the fishermen had taken the precaution of taking out shell-fishing licences thus ensuring they did not infringe fishery regulations. Subsequent to the very obvious failure of its

efforts in this area and the social tensions which these had generated, Gael Linn abandoned its endeavours in regard to the oyster beds.

Resistance as Negotiation

A different type of confrontation occurred in 1986 following the public announcement by a major multinational, Carrolls, of its plans to develop a large intensive salmon farming operation in Kilkerrin Bay. Prior to this, the five small scale salmon farms which were already in operation were the subject of much comment but little controversy. The arrival of such a big player as Carrolls, and the scope of its planned activity, led to concern over possible negative effects on both wild salmon and inshore fishing and on shellfishing. The effect of farmed salmon on the price of wild salmon was a cause of concern, but the small fishermens' greatest fears related to the impact of large scale salmon farms on their oyster fishing. They feared an increase in pollution in the bay would damage the breeding grounds of the oysters, that the diseases to which farmed salmon are prone would damage stocks, and that their access to shellfish beds would be blocked or hindered by salmon cages.

Once again, the fishermen reacted, but this time they were formally organised as a registered co-operative. The co-operatives resistance to the multinational was conducted in formal legal terms: it sought and was granted a series of public meetings and official enquiries to debate the granting of state licenses to the salmon farm. Although the co-operative had widespread formal support (expressed in terms of membership), there were divisions within the community. Fishermen themselves were adamant that the salmon farms could only do harm to their livelihood and they mobilised a discourse of environmentalism to support this, although arguably their real concern was with a more immediate loss of earnings. Other sections of the community were less critical of the developers, perceiving them as a source of employment opportunities. These divisions, however, did not lead to any real conflict, remaining as tacit undercurrents within more generalised and overt support for the fishermen.

The public enquiries took several months to complete. Meanwhile Carrolls took every opportunity to ingratiate itself with the local community. It sponsored cultural, provided financing for small scale tourist promotion and subsidised some small firms, particularly those involved in providing services to fish-farms, or in cultural activities. And crucially, it let it be known that its development would provide considerable employment opportunities and that its "commitment" to the area could extend beyond fish farming into tourism activities. This strategy on the part of the company was regarded with a certain amount of cynicism on the part of the local population, but it nonetheless succeeded in softening the general climate of opposition. Finally, the fish-farming licence was granted and Carrolls began preparations to establish the salmon farm. In this, it had to move very cautiously. The fishermen had not withdrawn their opposition and throughout the summer of 1986, their discontent festered. The multinational remained mindful of the history of violent resistance to its predecessors - a particularly significant issue given the vulnerability of fish-farms.

Meetings between the fishermens co-operative and representatives of the multinational went on throughout the summer. Although this interaction was formal, the potential for wild-cat violence was always a perceptible under-current. The outcome of this situation was that Carrolls agreed to negotiate with the fishermens' co-operative in order that both the company's and the fishermens' interests in the bay could be realised and protected. As a result of these

negotiations, Carrolls agreed to permit public monitoring of the levels of pollution in the bay, and to wind up their activities within 24 hours if the levels rose above an agreed minimum.

There was a far more significant outcome to the negotiations however. As part of the settlement, Carrolls agreed to financially and legally assist the co-operative to buy out Gael Linn's ownership of the oyster beds. Consequently, these inshore fishermen gained legal control of an extremely valuable resource. The socio-economic implications of the fishermens' struggle for control of economic resources can be grasped from the fact that the co-operative hopes, through the extensive cultivation of shellfish, to provide a livelihood for 500 fishermen. The alternative, capitalist enterprise, could farm the same beds with a workforce of 20. The passing of control of this valuable resource into local hands, together with the emergence of an organisation capable of exploiting it effectively, demonstrates the contribution small producers can have in determining the outcome of capitalist development efforts and in negotiating processes of globalization, .

Significantly, the mobilization of a discourse of environmentalism on the part of the fishermen has led to an increased perception of these as involved in skilled, knowledge-based activities. Moreover, this incorporation of scientific knowledge has not challenged the 'knowledge through experience' of the fishermen but has been incorporated in such a way as to reinforce their experiential knowledge. Whereas the marginalization of farming within the survival strategies of the household was accompanied by its marginalization within discursive processes of valorization, in fishing resistance to globalization has had the opposite effect.

Understanding Resistance to Globalisation

The responses of Carna households to developments in fishing and in farming share certain similarities. But they also display marked differences. They are similar in so far as both responses derived from the specific economic rationale of pluriactivity and the structuring of involvement in both fishing and farming has been managed in such a way as to enable the household maintain autonomy and flexibility, while also maximising its returns relative to inputs of both labour and capital.

The differences between the two responses are more marked and potentially more interesting. The response of pluriactive households to the declining value of agricultural production took the form of the voluntary shedding of an activity no longer providing satisfactory returns on labour and the refinement of involvement in farming into an economically worthwhile if marginal activity. In contrast, the responses of small-producers to developments within fishing and mariculture took a very different form. The resistance on the part of the fisherman to external developers and their negotiation of the processes of globalization in fishing raises the question of why such diverse responses occurred in relation to different resources? More specifically, how were fishermen able to secure the co-operation and support of the wider community in pressing their claims against those of global capital?

In addressing the first of these questions, we must look at the precise way in which the various branches of capital which have penetrated the local economy have taken hold of the pre-existing economic situation. What is especially important here is the nature of the threat which they have been perceived to present to the small-holders control over the exploitation of resources. While capitalist intervention in agriculture, fishing and mariculture have all posed a threat to

economic resources, it is only in fishing and mariculture that developments have directly threatened the small producers control over these resources. The declining returns from subsistence agriculture was brought about by the penetration of commodity capital, while such commercial farming as did exist was undermined by the concentration of agricultural capital which was occurring at a national level. But both of these processes left control of the means of production in the hands of the small holders. In contrast, the potential multinational takeover of mariculture, posed a direct threat to small-producers' control over the resource base. In this context, the constraints which would have resulted from the activities of developers were, to put it in Longs terms, 'barriers to be moved'.

But it is also the case that the efforts of the fishermen to press their claims were supported by the wider population even when those efforts took violent forms and potentially threatened employment creation within the area. To understand this, we need to look at the valorization of work at the local level, how this reflected economic changes and how it has facilitated the exercise of agency on the part of fishermen.

The allocation of the status of work or occupation to a specific activity or set of activities is a complex process reflecting, inter alia, economic, cultural and ideological factors (see for example, Halpern,). Historically, the inhabitants of Carna, and particularly those living closest to the coastline were not named by a particular activity but by their environmental situation and the activities which this gave rise to. Cladori was the term used, which can be translated as "shore dweller" and incorporates the types of economic activity engaged in by shore dwellers such as fishing, kelping and including farming. The term cladori no longer exist s and the concept of work tends to be separated from the concept of occupational identity. Work is what one does, occupation is what one is and descriptions of people in economic terms tend to emphasise the former. That is, what people do rather than what they are takes precedence in describing their economic activity. Just two exceptions to this conceptual framework exist, both now and in the past. These are the concept of tradesman and the concept of fisherman.

Specifically, the category of farmer is absent from the local conceptual framework of occupations within the area. But not only is there no conceptual coherence to the category of farmer, there is an explicit denial that such agricultural activity as takes place constitutes "farming". Involvement in agricultural activity is seen as comprising a series of specific tasks (making hay, going after cattle, cutting turf and so on) but these activities do not crystalise into a coherent and integrated occupational identity. In conjunction with the shedding of experiential knowledge discussed earlier, this leads to a situation where farming is devalued within the local economy in both economic and ideological terms.

In contrast, fishing does constitute a coherent set of practices which combine to form a concept of fishermen. And, as noted, their involvement in resisting globalization processes has reinforced this both for themselves and for the wider community. The heightened awareness of their own capacity to act on the part of fishermen can be seen at least in part as stemming from their long experience of encounters with would be developers. These struggles over ownership and control of resources has engendered confidence among the fishermen and at the same time a growing consciousness of their position as producers within a capitalist system.

However this process has produced a remarkable phenomenon at the wider social level. The local society has, as a whole thrown, it its lot, in ideological terms, with the fishermen and has

defined itself as a fishing economy. The interests and well-being of the fishermen are seen as the interests and well being of the entire area. Local people invariably refer to the area in such terms as "this is a fishing area" and "everybody here fishes, its all they've got" and so on. Yet there is no objective validity to this. Out of about 400 households in the area, less than half (at most about 180 in all) contain full-time or regular fishermen. Nor can this phenomena be explained by the sort of visual prominence usually characteristic of fishing villages or towns. Because of the type of fishing involved and the natural resources of the bay, fishing is almost an invisible activity. There are no big harbours, just a few small high-water piers and many smaller boats do not use these, fishing instead from smaller covers and natural inlets. The catch is not landed, but stored in sea crates until the point of sale. There is, therefore, none of the quayside activity normally associated with fishing and nothing which could lend itself to or engender in any way a self image of a fishing community.

The perception that the interests of fishermen are the interests of the community are, therefore, not based on any material or symbolic reality. This perception has been achieved through the capacity of the fishermen to achieve ideological dominance within the area, or to put that another way, to construct and impose their representations onto others. Verschoor (1992) defines a representation as a discursively assembled actor world based on capacity and knowledge (Verschoor, 1992: 180). He also uses the concept of problematisation to describe a strategy whereby representation is rendered indispensable to others. Problematization is achieved by defining a simplified general problem that can only be resolved by following a specific path of action which is composed of many and more specific sub-problems. As long as actors can maintain and give coherence to the simplifications they make, their definition of the situation will not be challenged. It was precisely in the ability of the fishermen to maintain and give coherence to their simplifications that their capacity to mobilise the support of the wider community lay.

Conclusion

This discussion of pluriactivity and responses to globalization has, for reasons of space, focused on just two activities – farming and fishing. In farming we have seen the decline of small scale agriculture and the confinement of small producers to low return production. It is important, however, to interpret this response in the context of pluriactivity and the alternative opportunities and constraints that arise in this context

It is also apparent that the responses to external factors at the level of pluriactive households and at the level of pluriactive economies are embedded within historical precedent. The interaction of Carna households with processes of commoditization and globalization in regard to agricultural production and to fishing cannot be comprehended simply in terms of the contemporary processes. That historical precedent has informed the economic rationale of pluriactive households and has shaped the major objective within their reproductive strategies. But it has also shaped discursive practices surrounding different forms of production and work.

Consequently, responses to developments in fishing were accompanied by powerful discourses which referenced not alone the skills and occupational identities of the individuals involved, but also the historical and contemporary identity of the entire area. This is in marked contrast to the discourses surrounding farming which act to negate its value as a form of work or a basis of occupational or social identity.

Finally, the relationship between agency and compliance with or resistance to globalization highlights the complexities surrounding these processes. In Carna the agency exercised by fishermen was underwritten by a social institution which succeeded in overcoming what are assumed to be the individualising effects of globalization. Studies elsewhere have shown that peasant organizations are often at the forefront of struggles against neo-liberalism in their efforts to gain greater access to and control over productive resources (Desmarais, 2002). But the capacity of these organisations to emerge, survive and achieve their objectives may owe more to their historical context than we have tended to acknowledge and to their ability to mobilize discourses to their advantage.

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