

PODCAST: EMBODIED INEQUALITIES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

EPISODE 2:

"We are Fishermen, not Predators: The Fight for Social Justice and Environmental Justice Against Large Fishing Companies in Peru"

0:00:01.0 Embodied inequalities of the Anthropocene. Building capacity in medical anthropology. A podcast series that analyses the human and non-human health impacts of this geological epoch of profound transformations.

0:00:20.5 Paola: Welcome to another session of "Embodied Inequalities of the Anthropocene." This is a collaborative space between University College London (UCL) in London, United Kingdom; Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil; and the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology, Pacific South Unit, in Oaxaca, Mexico.

In this series, we explore health related issues in this geological period, and cover areas such as indigenous experiences in the coloniality of the Anthropocene, gender, reproduction, reproductive and environmental justice, multispecies ethnography, human-animal health, pandemics, COVID-19, public understandings of the Anthropocene, and chemical toxicity and exposure. For this second episode, we bring together two great personalities who have dedicated their time to reflecting on and caring for the environment. Both are from Peru, a sister country, so we are pleased to connect with and explore this South American reality.

First, we have the sociologist and ecologist, María Elena Foronda Farro, who has focused much of her work on eradicating pollution from the fishing industry in Chimbote, a city in Northwestern Peru where she is from. In addition to being a social activist for democracy, justice, and human rights in her country, she has served as a congresswoman in Peru, representing the Áncash region. She was also awarded the Goldman International Prize in 2003, which has been given annually since 1990 to recognize and reward defenders of nature and the environment worldwide. This award has enabled her to enhance the activities of the Natura Institute, which was founded in the late '80s and is dedicated to promoting environmental education, environmental justice, risk management, urban-environmental management, and the sustainable management of marine, coastal, and indigenous Amazonian ecosystems.

Also joining us today is Lorenzo Macedonio Vásquez Contreras, the general secretary of the Chimbote and Annexes Fishermen's Union in Peru, and who represents fishermen from the Industrial Fishing Fleet. With his efforts, Macedonio has denounced the dehumanization and wild capitalism promoted by large fishing companies, which force fishing crews to go out to work, risking their lives, in addition to promoting indiscriminate fishing in the central-northern zone of the Peruvian coast, obviously endangering the seas and their health. Both guests are members of the network that coordinates the fight against the predatory fishing industry and mining and hydrocarbon extractivism in Amazonian indigenous territories.

I am Paola Sesia, from CIESAS Pacific South, and as part of our team, I will be hosting this conversation, and so with great pleasure, let's get started.

0:04:09.2 Paola: María Elena, Lorenzo, welcome to this session.

0:04:13.9 María Elena: Thank you very much, I am delighted to be with you.

0:04:17.3 Paola: Let's start with you, María Elena. First, we want to thank you for taking part in this podcast. We know that you carry in your blood the fight your father taught you with his example. But in your case, what were the causes—in terms of ecology and environmental justice—that triggered your activism in denouncing and defending the territory, nature, and its people not only in Chimbote but also in the Peruvian Amazon? Could you please share with us your experience?

0:04:54.3 María Elena: Of course. To start with, it's important to point out that Peru is one of the most biodiverse countries on the planet. We are home to 84 of the 102 life forms that exist in the world. We have an Amazon that, together with Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, constitutes the freshwater reserve of the planet, and also one of the most productive seas in terms of hydrobiological resources, as well as landscapes and ecosystems. This allows us to see all the valuable opportunities we have to sustainably harness our natural resources. However, upon arriving in Chimbote after studying abroad, I realized that what had been imposed in the city and the country was a negative mental model. In the case of Chimbote, the fishmeal and fish oil companies, which process and export flour to Europe and Asia, essentially what they do is grind up decomposed fish and transform it into flour for pig, cow, cat, and dog food. I realized that the mental model implemented here in Chimbote—due to the foul smell that is produced during the flour processing—is that when it smells, there is money; the smell of money was transformed into a common-sense mental model, not only for Chimbote but for the entire country, as a necessary condition for producing and generating wealth.

The question I asked myself then is: wealth for where and wealth for whom? Wealth that was not reinvested in a city where paradoxically seventy percent of its child population suffer from acute anaemia despite having an abundance of proteins. On the other hand, I realized that in our Amazon, lived indigenous people who possess ancestral knowledge of life experiences and life conservation in the face of the absurd ecocide occurring on the planet. This ancestral wisdom is not only found in the Amazon but also on the coast. But we had been made to believe that development went hand in hand the destruction and contamination of ecosystems, and that these were part of the production costs, to grow and generate economic income in an industry that ranks third in the Gross Domestic Product in Peru. Seeing these inequities, these imbalances between people who had a lot of money and whose families did not live in Peru, or not even in Latin America, but in the United States, in Europe. The concentration of that massive wealth abroad, that was not reinvested in the development of our country, and that only left us with misery, backwardness, injustice, and disease, led me to say that we had to act, that we had to do something. I am from Chimbote, so my main motivation was: "I want my children to live in the same conditions of happiness, love, and harmony as the children of these entrepreneurs—who I call "entrepre-saurs"—who do nothing for sustainable development, for living in harmony with nature, and who violate environmental and labour rights, persecute leaders and criminalize social protest."

This was a gradual approach, and through action research, and the expertise and recognition of knowledge that people already possessed, which is so wise and generous—from our fishing brothers like my brother Macedonio—I learned a lot, and I decided to get involved. This stopped being a job and became a life project for me a long time ago for one simple reason: I want my—and many more children—to enjoy natural resources, biodiversity, healthy climates, healthy environments, beautiful, clean beaches and recreation, that we can still preserve and that, in some cases, they will no longer get to know because some species have already disappeared. This was one of the motivations, the recognition of people's affection, of the affection I felt, and I realized that we were not alone, that we could do more with the power of the people than with the power of money. An unequal struggle of David against Goliath, where many people told us: “You are wasting your time, there is corruption here, nothing can be done.” But despite this, there was the hope of wanting to make transformations that, with a grain of sand and with many people—it is no longer a matter of individualities but of processes—we are managing to build it.

0:10:23.2 Paola: Thank you very much, María Elena. So, if we understand correctly, there is evidently a material dimension in terms of injustice, the deeply unequal distribution of resources, and the power structures, but also an ideological dimension that relates to a coloniality of knowledge, in the sense of adopting a mindset that ultimately destroys us, and the only ones who ultimately benefit are the elites. What's more, in the case you tell us about, these are elites that do not live in the country and are not paying in any way for the environmental and social costs of the type of attitude and predatory capitalism you are talking about.

0:11:22.3 María Elena: And to verify, sorry, that only in this alliance of inequitable governance that shouldn't exist in environmental matters, the alliance occurs between the state and businesses, and civil society is left out. This is a perverse alliance, fuelled by acts of corruption; there is no other explanation. Or it's incompetence because they do not know what should be done—but they do know, because there is a robust legislative, institutional, and environmental framework that supports environmental rights, international agreements, a lot of agreements that are made but are dead letters in the face of the power of money. And given this, those who protest, those who decide to exercise their rights, are criminalized, stigmatized, or eliminated and murdered. Peru ranks seventh in environmental defenders killed for defending environmental rights. Just to make it clear for our friends, one fishing company out of 42 in our city, just one company earns in a fishing season—in 6 months—7 billion dollars. Multiply that by 42, and you'll have an idea of the amount of money that enters and is not reinvested in the area where they extract their resources. It's an extractivist, colonial model, where they have territorial control, including over the sea and land, and also the Amazon. They do not respect pre-existing rights and knowledge, nor the populations that inhabit those territories.

The decision is made by big capital with national entrepreneurs and their operators, and a state operating these policies that eliminates the basis of our comparative development, which, for me, is the preservation and conservation of biodiversity, knowledge, and wisdom. They put that aside, and only focus on generating this perverse relationship. The population does not have the space to participate in decision-making, and so not only are they part of the problem, but neither are they part of the solution. So, it is designed in such a way that

this neocolonisation remains structural, without adding more value to the resources we could harness for our own growth, but instead they only think of exporting or dying. That is the logic behind the state and big business.

0:14:03.1 Paola: So, you're talking about this oppressive squeeze, and how this alliance is made between companies, big capital, and the state. I would also like to ask you the following question, María Elena: what does it ultimately mean or how would you describe living in a contaminated coastal city? What does the landscape look like? How do people and other species live together in daily life? What impacts on life and health are experienced in this contaminated environment as a result of the oppression and colonialism, or the neocolonialism you are talking about?

0:14:48.1 María Elena: Perhaps the phrase will sound very harsh, but I rely on a statement made by a foreign bishop who came to Peru, a leader in environmental matters, many years ago. We had the most beautiful bay known as "La Perla del Pacífico Sur" (The Pearl of the South Pacific) for the beauty of its geomorphology, climate, wetlands, abundant fishing. That marvel had transformed into the largest sewer in Peru, and he named this city "The Fetid Paradise." In other words, the residents are exposed 24 hours a day—because they work 24 hours a day during the fishing season—producing fishmeal and fish oil. They inhale emissions that not only get into their lungs but also lead to skin diseases, eye diseases, and pulmonary diseases that turn into lung cancer, and children are contaminated with heavy metals due to exposure to emissions containing sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, soot particles, and fishmeal particles that they breathe in 24 hours a day with impunity.

The other issue is that this is a bay—as I described earlier—that has 2.8 metres of organic matter in a state of decomposition. That means we have a sea, and in front of the sea we have rocks—we don't have any sand because there is an erosion problem where the sea enters the city due to the destruction of ecosystems, and this is a sea that is no longer productive. The fishermen used to have to navigate for 12 or sometimes 14 hours offshore to find resources. It is a city that is entrenched in contaminated water, air, and soil, with a poor quality of life for its inhabitants despite our struggles. It is a city that also reflects these structural imbalances in its poor health conditions. We live with smoke of various colours—white smoke that comes from fishmeal, black smoke from carbon monoxide, but behind these fumes are all the gases, which put this city on the brink, at the limit of survival. As someone once said, "We are a city of survivors."

We are among the 13 most critical cities in environmental terms. A city that once had many opportunities and where you now see fishermen begging in the street because they no longer have resources to work and live. That is the scenario, the panorama that I wish could be different, but despite all that, we try to see beauty, because there are 1,800 hectares of wetlands, there are still bays that can be recovered, we have islands where some marine ecosystems still persist. So, these strong contrasts give us hope that even though we might not have experienced the beauty of the past, some of it still remains, which makes it still worth fighting for.

0:18:08.7 Paola: Thank you very much, María Elena, and especially for thinking about the future generations, as you mentioned earlier. Now it's your turn, Macedonio Lorenzo, thank

you very much for agreeing to be here with us today. To give some context to our listeners, could you briefly tell us about your journey—because we know it's been a long one—could tell us about the path you took to reach the point you are currently at, advocating for fishing that is fair for those who sustain it—the workers—and at the same time can be considered “friendly to the environment” (in quotes) for both human and other species? The floor is yours, Macedonio.

0:18:57.4 Macedonio: Thank you, Sesia. Look, I am an industrial fisherman, and I have always been concerned about the struggles we face. My father was also a fisherman, he worked for a company called ENAPU Perú, but I come from a family of politicians. I learned later, after my father had passed away, from my older sister that he had also been a unionist and had been persecuted. But the important thing was that when he saw me getting involved in the teachers' struggle and the fishermen's groups as a young person, he never forbade me from going to the marches, and I grew up in that environment.

When I became a fisherman, I saw the injustice being committed against the workers and, as they say, I experienced pollution first hand, which I have seen since I was a child. Because in that bay, I was still able to bathe in the water, which was crystal clear. There was biodiversity, and you could go with your little line and catch fish. Now you can't catch anything, there is only black mud. When the water is stirred up during storms, there is a very foul smell, and black water. It is no longer the paradise it used to be. Over the years as I worked, I became more involved in union issues, fighting for labour rights, and for anchoveta conservation.

We had historical data that in 1973, an average of 12 million tons of anchoveta was captured in a year. But looking at the reality of the factories where the anchoveta was unloaded, the scales were not electronic like they are now; they were made of metal. They calculated the weight of the catch with a box—so to speak, for you to get an idea—that could supposedly hold 5 tons of fish. So you filled it with 5 tons and unloaded it; that's how the unloading was counted. But those boxes were not 5 tons; they were 6 or 7. So, the fishermen, many of them have come from the Andean regions with very little education, they were well-paid for that time, and they did not pay attention to overfishing.

So, that year it is said that 12 million tons were caught—an exorbitant amount, right?—and this port became the world's leading fishing port in fishmeal exports. But looking at the reality, I don't think it was 12 million tons; I estimate it was about 20 million, because later the anchoveta, or as you call it, the anchovy, disappeared for 10 years. Fishermen did not catch anchoveta for 10 years, and what happened to them? Unemployment came, many had to move to other cities, and those who stayed swept the streets, cleaned the beach, and painted schools to receive their weekly food bags. It reached these extremes because in the false prosperity that had occurred, fishermen could afford, there was a petromax lamp—I don't know if you ever knew these, a kerosene lamp with a wick—they took a bill and lit it, and with that, they lit their cigarettes. There was so much money that they didn't pay attention to the pollution caused by the companies and the overexploitation of resources, right? And this led to a breaking point in the anchoveta's reproductive process, and it became extinct for 10 years.

Fortunately, with time, anchoveta stocks have been recovering, and again, the business sector of the National Fisheries Society, in collusion with the Institute of the Sea of Peru (IMARPE), which is a scientific entity that evaluates the sea territory to determine the biomasses of different species such as anchoveta, "narusa," "bonito," "curel," "mackerel," and according to that study, the Ministry of Production gave a quota. But it turns out that the National Fisheries Society has hijacked this scientific entity. So, IMARPE says there are 10 million, and informs the Ministry of Production, and the Ministry of Production gives the maximum amount, which translates into a 3 or 3 and a half million quota, when in reality there aren't 10 million in stock; there are 7, or there are 6. So, more is being caught than should be.

That's why we have gotten to a place where the biological cycle of anchoveta reproduction has been broken. And this season, which we practically haven't had because we went out to explore, an exploratory fish, we found anchoveta only 10 centimetres long, which are very small and not suitable for consumption. In other words, it's no good for processing fishmeal, because the fish disintegrates very quickly in the hold when captured, then it loses weight during the transportation process to the processing plants, and so we lose money, this is not convenient for us.

0:24:49.9 Paola: Alright, Macedonio. Listening to you and hearing this historical narrative of how anchovy overexploitation has created serious problems—not only in terms of pollution but also problems of disappearing resources and a break in the reproduction chain and in the chain of a possible sustainable exploitation—the question I would like to ask you, based on your experience and your social struggle and your own reflections, is sustainable fishing possible? Is it possible to have sustainable fishing in Peru today? What would we have to do for that to happen?

0:25:41.6 Macedonio: Currently, we face a global phenomenon, climate change, pollution. That's why our struggle is for sustainable fishing over time. But to achieve a sustainable fishing over time, the entire fishing sector must be formalized. The fishing sector is practically informal, and the industrial sector takes advantage of this informality to overexploit resources. Yes, sustainable fishing is possible, despite all the climate change we are experiencing, because anchoveta, we should know, is the first link in the trophic chain for all species. If the seas heat up, anchoveta may disappear or decrease in number, and other species will have nothing to eat because they all feed on anchoveta—wolves, birds, whales.

So, by reducing anchoveta, species will decrease, and this will generate a chain, a tsunami effect, because if birds die, there is no organic fertilizer for organic producers or prices rise. Therefore, it is a very disastrous effect; species decrease in size and number because they have nothing to eat, and that is what is happening. Fishermen are reducing the mesh size of their nets to catch much smaller species because they no longer find bigger ones due to the absence of anchoveta. With the seas warming, anchoveta has gone deeper—100 fathoms deeper. In other words, the artisanal fisheries that use selective nets are closer to the coast, so they won't find much—and what little they do find is small.

Yes, it is possible to achieve sustainable fishing, but with clear rules, clear regulations, and clear laws that are enforced—they should be enforced. And if the mafia in the National Fisheries Society is tackled. IMARPE must be involved, because this scientific entity has been

manipulated, and this was proven in 2000, and in the second season of 2019, where IMARPE said there were 8 million 780,000 tons of stock. We also had information from IMARPE—from the same institution but from honest scientists—who spoke of only four million. And when we went fishing, that was confirmed.

That's why we fishermen decided, on January 2, 2020, to close Port Malabrigo. We closed it; no one could go out. The police came, the Navy came, a big problem was created, and the Minister called us. The Minister called me specifically, and I had to explain why—she asked “Why are you opposing this? You have opposed this before going fishing and after going fishing.” I told her, “Because the reality is that there are not the 8 million that you say, but only four, and here is the report”—I had the real report. And that's when Minister Rocío Barrios denounced all the scientists at IMARPE, who are still involved in a legal process, but they defend themselves with the support of the National Fisheries Society. Barrios even issued an urgency decree, Decree 015, to restructure IMARPE so that all scientists must apply for positions through public competition. Now, those listed there do not want that; they even have the support of Congressman José Cueto, who has presented a bill to guarantee that members of the navy will always be at the helm of IMARPE, in other words, to guarantee ongoing corruption. Doctor Rocío Barrios practically wanted to clean up IMARPE, but to date, this has not yet been achieved. Cleaning up IMARPE, along with a good Ministry of Fisheries, this would lead to sustainable fishing over time.

0:30:05.8 Paola: Just for our radio listeners, the IMARPE is the Institute of the Sea of Peru, right?

0:30:10.6 Macedonio: Yes, correct.

0:30:13.6 Paola: Thank you. So, Macedonio, you tell us a lot about this coexistence of political corruption and corruption among scientists. Among people who should have a technical profile and provide reliable information to make public policy decisions. However, they are co-opted by power and do not do the work they should. So, the answer in this regard would be a rejection of corruption if we truly want to have sustainable fishing. Thank you very much, Macedonio.

We have other questions that we have thought for both of you, and I will ask them to both of you, and I would like you to answer freely, first Maria Elena and then Macedonio. Answer the ones you'd like to and consider most relevant to the public. There are four questions: The first has to do with the consequences on human well-being and health, but also the health of other species, both in terms of individual and collective health. If you can think about or can consider what consequences for well-being and health could these extractive processes linked to big capital—against which you and many others have organized and fought—generate? The second question is: what relationship do you see between social justice, or rather social injustice and environmental injustice? Can one be promoted without the other? That is a basic question, and we consider it crucial. What are the consequences for well-being and collective health? A third question has to do with the following: what you would say to those who argue that health impacts are the inevitable costs of development and generating employment? The last question that is also crucial for us is: do you believe that industry and

collective health and well-being can coexist? What reflections do you have on this? Maria Elena, over to you.

0:32:48.5 María Elena: I believe that the consequences we are currently experiencing and the limit we are reaching is due to the absurd belief that humans are a species above others, and that we don't understand the intrinsic correlation between conservation, nature, elements of the ecosystem, biodiversity, and humans. I don't know when we got this idea into our heads that we are a superior species. Superior in what? When our lives, our interdependence, not only in the present but across generations, depends on the intrinsic correlation we establish with nature, the emotional connection we have, which is translated into how our indigenous peoples view elements of nature as sacred, an ancestral wisdom that is now fading due to the negative imposition of extractivist models where making money, where Mr. Money takes centre stage in reflection and supposed well-being.

I think it's the opposite, as Eduardo Galeano said, we are in an upside-down world. Latin America has been assigned a primary carrier role, and we have been made to believe that all we have to do is extract stones and export them, catch fish and turn it into feed for pigs, not for our own development, right? When we see a beautiful lagoon like our Yacumama, we see the money and minerals beneath it, and that we need to eliminate the lagoon and build dams that are much more efficient according to our modern technology. These mental models are causing us tremendous harm because they have imposed the negative mental model that tells us that pollution is a necessary part of growth.

The little phrase "all human activity pollutes" is true, yes! But there are differentiated responsibilities, right? It is not the same level of pollution when a forest is cut down for survival by a family that lives from the firewood they collect because they have no other energy source, as grabbing and clearing an entire primary forest for palm oil. We cannot put these activities on the same level of responsibility. On the other hand, I consider that these consequences are pushing us to the limit of climate change. We have been saying it for many years; nature is speaking for itself. We don't recognize it as an ally, and in urban areas it's terrible what is happening. Here, people don't understand that cities are living ecosystems. They think wetlands are filthy puddles that need to be destroyed for real estate projects to keep on growing, as has happened in Mexico City and other experiences on the planet, destroying a way of life in harmony with nature. In other cities worldwide, it's the opposite, right? In Europe, they are at the end of the movie, and we are at the beginning. But there they have money. When they reclaim a river, it's because they have funds to do so. Here, when a river is polluted, it means death. That's the small difference. Another issue I see in this intrinsic relationship between social injustice and environmental justice. It's not a coincidence that the highest number of deaths and criminalization of social and environmental protests that have occurred in Peru are where extractive projects exist. These projects are imposed with blood and fire, with death, and those of us who oppose them are called terrorists. Therefore, this is a model of injustice that is linked, because the state needs the revenues from acts of corruption and because there is a model—as Macedonio has already mentioned—that we call the "revolving door." The ministers of production who are in fisheries end up being presidents of the National Fisheries Society. Political power is hijacked by economic power. In this model of injustice, these so-called gaps, which I consider inequities, are generated. For them, these are incidents, but for me, they are crimes.

In other countries, they are judged differently. Therefore, as long as this persists, we are going to reach the limit. In Peru, we are currently experiencing an extreme summer; we haven't had winter, and the rainy seasons are coming. In arid ecosystems, the climate is turning tropical; it's snowing in the Amazon! This is not a coincidence; it's part of the imposition of this absurd model of oil production at all costs, which generates Greenhouse Gas impacts and climate change. Yes, our impacts are local, but the effects are global. And if we don't understand this in the context of what we are discussing we won't have a complete picture. There is social injustice associated with climate injustice and environmental injustice. To dispossess indigenous peoples of their territories without prior consultation, even though the ILO Convention 169 exists, affecting uncontacted peoples, like Perenco wants to do in France, over territories that belong to them ancestrally, and where Peru recognizes them, but congressmen come and change these laws for money, destroying the livelihoods of current and future generations. I believe that it is possible to coexist with companies, economic development, and collective well-being and health. I do think it's possible. We are not against investments; we are not anti-investment. But it should be done with clear rules, by states that aren't corrupt and who don't serve economic power and big capital, but those who consider our comparative advantages and the collective rights of the peoples, recognizing the rights of nature—countries like Bolivia and Ecuador are already doing this—especially in societies like Peru, which are not only megadiverse but also pluricultural.

I believe that entrepreneurs can play a different role, and not just think about short-term profits. They are scared right now with what is happening; they are shooting themselves in the foot, the golden goose is running out. They have already extinguished sardines, and now they are going after anchoveta, and their company is going to collapse. They don't want to understand that. So, when you talk to them, the only language they understand is the language of money. There is no other logic behind it. As long as we have these "entrepreneurs," it will be very difficult to change. So, our strategy has to look in another direction, towards sustainable ways of life, resilient city models, cities for life, integrating ecosystems with a basin management, urban agriculture, organic farming, sustainable tourism, and development projects where fishermen, with their ancestral fishing, can recognize that this is also an important livelihood for them.

In summary, I see in Latin America a country I admire a lot, with its ups and downs, but at least, it has a different model, which is Costa Rica. Ecotourism has become its main source of income, and these have not been isolated processes. So, it is important for us to politically debate these things and place them at the ideological level so that they understand that environmentalism is not only a romantic issue with birds and trees. It is a matter of rights, justice, and the viability of the planet. If we can understand that, I believe we still have time. I feel very bad talking about these things because I feel that what we have been able to do is very little, and we are losing the game. But as long as there are spaces for collective resistance, linking indigenous peoples, linking fishermen with ethics that exist, I believe we have hope and we can't to give up on this fight; we have to achieve it because if not, we will head towards our own destruction, and I believe that humans are the only species in the world that self-destructs.



0:42:46.5 Paola: Thank you very much, María Elena. I think you rounded off the ideas with your presentation, with your intervention. Macedonio, what would be your assessment regarding those four questions about consequences, the relationship between social justice and environmental justice, the impacts, the relationship between employment and development on one hand, and the impacts of this economic model on health? The question of whether industry can coexist with collective well-being and health. Over to you.

0:43:23.5 Macedonio: The consequences on human and non-human well-being—both individual and collective—well, we are already experiencing that. The well-being of the people here is not so good because we have a child anaemia rate of 46%, despite having such a rich, productive sea. Instead of processing this anchoveta or part of it into omega-3 capsules—the phospholipids that this little fish contains, which are so powerful for human nutrition—we give it in flour form to animals, cats, dogs, and neglect the health of our population. Imagine if we fed pregnant mothers and children from 0 to 5 years old with these phospholipids, omega-3, omega-6 that anchovy produces, we would save on healthcare because a person who consumes anchovy or marine fish very rarely falls ill. They can even withstand adverse climates, like us fishermen who go out in adverse weather. There are very harsh winters outside; we can even endure the hard work we do because we eat marine fish, that is, we consume part of what we fish.

That's what is affecting, as I was saying, other non-human species, such as wolves. When there is a shortage of this, they die in significant numbers. The numbers of birds have decreased; there was an average of 60 million, now there is only an average of 20 million birds. This is what big industry, capital, generates. They say we are rational human beings; I say we are the opposite because wherever we go, we destroy it to generate money. We have palpable evidence here in Chimbote with the bonanza that occurred, it was very strong, very big; many people came to work here, but also the generations that left went away because there are no opportunities, it's not a modern city. For example, my brothers all studied, and left here to study in Lima and they have stayed there. The only one who has stayed in Chimbote is me. I returned, because I also went to Lima. And now I have gotten involved in this fight for the conservation of natural resources, which is more than anything about anchoveta, which is very important for me and I believe for the world as well.

As for social injustice and environmental injustice, well, there is injustice on both sides because, in terms of labour, capitalism always tries to crush the worker in a very dishonest way, so to speak. When we fish, we use a boat that can carry 200 tons; when it goes to the scale and unloads, it only shows between 140 to 150 tons. They are stealing 50 to 60 tons from us. Capital is very savage; the worker sacrifices himself to extract the product so that they win. They practically steal from us, that is the word; they steal from us in weight, they steal from us in salary too, because there are agreements signed in 1985, 1988 that practically say that they should pay 7 soles per ton, but they only pay 4 soles, 4.30 sometimes when there is a variation in the dollar. And there is environmental injustice consequently, that is the effect that the industrialist causes in our environment, which practically generates a tsunami that affects the entire natural environment in which we live.

It is terrible what is happening because, in addition to this depredation, as I call it, of anchoveta, we also have hydrocarbon contamination in the northern part of our country. We

had a spill due to negligence in Ventanilla, because that discharge should have been suspended because the Tonga volcano had erupted, and we had an international alert. Chile followed the international alert, so did Ecuador, and Peru, which was in the middle, did not follow it. The tides rose well above their normal levels; they obviously broke the pipes, and since the spill was at night, they only noticed the next day when the whole sea was black, obviously generating pollution in all those areas and affecting fishermen, businesses, and the population due to water, land, and air contamination. There is a lot of injustice being committed here, especially in the Amazon because that news practically doesn't reach the capital; it is not publicized, the press is silent, and we don't find out about it.

We found out about what happened in Ventanilla because it was practically in the capital; otherwise, we wouldn't have known about it. That's how the system works here in Peru, with this corrupt government and corrupt scientists who appear on television channels saying that everything is fine, that it's already clean, that the anchoveta is at its best, that IMARPE has been internationally acclaimed, and that it has been awarded by the FAO. I would like the FAO to come here and see how the Peruvian territorial sea is being depleted. Industrial fishing is very wild, and they don't care about sustainability at all because their capital is in real estate and agriculture. All their money goes there, and when there are phenomena like what we are experiencing now, the state gives them moratoriums, so they don't have to pay the banks or their interest. That's why they survived those ten years without anchoveta. How did the industrialists survive? Because there was a moratorium; they no longer paid their debts. If a fisherman doesn't pay, the bank takes his house. That's how things are managed. That's why they are not interested in sustainability. They extract until it's gone and leave like locusts, depleting everything, destroying everything, and moving on. That's what the industry is like.

0:50:41.0 Paola: Thank you very much, Macedonio. Sorry, but this metaphor of locusts coming, devouring everything, and leaving seems to really encapsulate what you are telling us. It's a very powerful metaphor. I think we will keep that metaphor. To finish up, because time is pressing, I would like to ask you both a question. You are social and environmental activists. What lessons learned could you share with our audience? What lessons could you share with us so that we could not only reflect on but also learn from your struggles and experiences to transform these realities that affect not only Peru but all of Latin America, and I would dare to say, the entire southern world? Over to you, María Elena, please.

0:51:51.4 María Elena: I think one of the things we have had as a strategy, learned through trial and error, is that there are no unique processes; they are built through a process of continuous learning. First, it's been crucial to recognize and understand the problem from the inside, what it's all about. We have had to investigate—in the case of the fishing industry—every stage of the production process, to understand the impacts they generate. Technical knowledge is essential; a multidisciplinary approach is vital, along with information. Without information and a multidisciplinary approach, a good strategy cannot be built.

The third is the acknowledgment of popular knowledge and how to connect that approach with the common sense of the population. The mobilizing focus of our struggle was the idea of the family, children, health, and decoding and demonstrating how much companies earn, how much they actually invest, the local effects, how they express themselves globally, and

by conducting a continuous, persistent, generational capacity-building and learning process. We worked on various levels.

We worked simultaneously with schools, leaders, and residents on the same issue. A problem that was focused on a town, a community, became a problem in the city, a problem in a region, and a problem in the country. However, because this alliance between states and companies is so perverse, the experience led us to international spaces where big-money decisions are made, to the buyers of fishmeal and fish oil. We reached an international organization that regulates them, called the World Organization of Fishmeal and Fish Oil Producers. So, using their own ethical codes of responsibility, responsible fishing, and the FAO's arguments, we denounced these companies to their buyers with a simple video made by English friends that circulated throughout Europe. The video exposed that what we were saying wasn't a lie but part of reality. It revealed their double discourse, their double morality—because if you check their website, they are more environmentalist than Macedonio, you, me, and everyone, forget it! ISO here, ISO there, certifications. Oh! They hug bears, right? Forget it; I mean our sea lions. So, they are super environmental activists. But when you demonstrate to them with people's testimonies, they came here and confirmed that what we were saying was true, and in a year and a half, they did what they hadn't done in 25 years because their money and prestige were at stake.

So, there we found the key that we now use whenever there is any complaint, like the one Macedonio had, which before would have cost him his life if he had reported it IMARPE. But with that international process, it made us visible, we took the issue to a global level, and many television channels from around the world came to see what Chimbote was; they could no longer hide. Therefore, it was a unifying strategy to safeguard our own integrity because, believe me, they don't win if we are not there. But for me, that has been the main lesson—research and science in service of a social project, a good advocacy strategy refined through trial and error, ethical leaders—because there is a lot of money involved—and then persist, persist, and persist.

Let me summarize it for you. For us, it has been like a motto: “here those who get tired loose; this is a race.” So, we are betting on life, and they are betting on corruption and money. This is a matter of justice, struggle, and ethics. We find new recruits—and young people are wonderful; they come, strengthen us—and obviously, allies right? Without allies like you, we wouldn't achieve anything. We learn a lot from people like you, like our colleagues in Mexico, who share principles and justice, recognizing that there are people who cannot be bought, and the rights of nature and the rights of people are non-negotiable. That's what has allowed us, with these mottos and phrases, to address complex issues that are sometimes not easy to understand. And obviously, putting passion and courage into everything we do.

0:57:09.4 Paola: Passion and courage. Macedonio, over to you.

0:57:20.6 Macedonio: Extractivism, as I repeat here, has been very wild. Technically, defenders like me are marginalized everywhere, even on the vessels. They sent me to the smallest boat in the company, a 220 boat. But, on the contrary, this has given me more strength, more desire to fight, because they won't break me just like that. I believe they won't be able to. It's a job that I think will yield results because we are fighting them with their own

weapons, with the information that IMARPE provides. There are two sets of information. As I told Dr. Rocío Barrios, who was the Minister of Production, I gave her the report. She reviewed it and said, "Yes, this is the manipulated one, and this is the real one." When she saw it, she asked, "Who gave this to you?" I said, "There are honest scientists." I told her, "But these scientists have been marginalized just like me. They can't come out into the light to bring this report because, logically, they are in danger, but I am bringing it to you."

That's why Rocío Barrios filed a complaint against those scientists, and they are still undergoing a money laundering process for inflating the biomass and profiting from that money, because there was a lot of money involved. In the first season of 2020, the National Fisheries Society earned one billion dollars; in the second season, two billion dollars, and we were in the midst of a pandemic. They practically forced the fishermen to go out fishing, without any support. The fisherman went to work, got sick, what did they do? They put them in a hotel, and when they were seriously ill, they sent them to EsSalud to die. Why to die? Because EsSalud was overwhelmed. It was overwhelmed; the sick were on the streets, in chairs, lying on cardboard in the street; there was nowhere to treat them. The employer never said, "This is my worker; I'll take him to a clinic; he's making me money." No, he said, "It's a common illness; go to EsSalud," and there they died. Many have died there, and many have died in hotels as well. In this way, it has been dehumanized. I believe the industrialist is the most irrational creature on the planet because animals hunt to eat, to survive, but the industrialist destroys everything wherever they go; they destroy everything.

1:00:22.3 Paola: Thank you, Macedonio. I believe that with this idea of this predatory, dehumanized model, which also makes people, humanity, disposable as long as and when it doesn't make money, we are left with these reflections that you shared with us. We truly appreciate your presence, your words, your wisdom, and we hope to continue learning about your upcoming initiatives. Finally, we also want to thank our listeners for tuning in and invite them to continue reflecting with us from other disciplines, from the interdisciplinarity mentioned by María Elena, from initiatives and perspectives around all these enormous challenges that the Anthropocene, health inequalities, big capital, and the money God, pose for human and non-human populations. With this, we conclude, and thank you very much.

1:01:34.1 Macedonio: Just to add, just to tell you that in the fishing sector, we have two important slogans: one is "We are fishermen, not predators," and the other is "Fishing yes, oil no."

1:01:52.6 Paola: Thank you very much, and with this slogan, we conclude the session. Thank you very much.

1:01:59.4 María Elena and Macedonio: Thank you, colleagues. A hug. Goodbye.

1:02:04.6 This episode was recorded virtually between Mexico and Peru. This interview was hosted and conducted by Paola Sesia. The script was prepared by Gabriela Martínez, Paola Sesia, and Laura Montessi. The production and general coordination were handled by Gabriela Martínez, and the audio editing and post-production were done by Juan Mayorga.



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