

FILM

Oceans, the Voice of the Invisible

The 56 min. film clearly brings out the double side of INGOs

This review is by **Alain Le Sann** (ad.lesann@orange.fr), Honorary Member, ICSF and translated by **Daniele Le Sann**

The documentary film “Oceans, the voice of the invisible” by film maker Mathilde Jounot, is a bold step in denouncing the role played by large international non-government organizations (INGOs) such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), in association with investment banks and multinational corporations, to control the oceans. The film clearly brings out the double speak of these organizations, and shows how artisanal fishworkers around the world can no longer be fooled by the rhetoric of these INGOs.

The idea of making the film to expose the dubious role of the INGOs came to Mathilde from her friend Robert Bouguéon, a Breton fisherman whom she met in 2015 when both happened to be on the same panel as jury members during the film festival “Fishermen of the World”. He suggested to her to investigate the role of big INGOs in controlling the discourse around oceans. This was not an easy project to undertake. When she first presented it to the National Cinema Centre and other

television financiers, she met with a blunt refusal, despite her credentials as a documentary film maker. The INGOs with their reach and power are considered sacred cows even within documentary film circles. However Mathilde did not give up her resolve to go ahead with her project, and, through crowd funding as well as support from local television channels and the French organization Mission de la mer (Apostleship of the sea), she was able to raise the necessary resources.




Mathilde Jounot

The 56-minute film documentary follows various conferences and discussions within the official Conference of Parties (COP) 21 in Paris in December 2015. The film reveals Maria Damanaki, former European Commissioner for Fisheries, in her new role as TNC head advocating the transformation of marine areas into huge reserves to serve tourism interests with help from the World Bank and private investment banks, as TNC has done in the Seychelles Islands. A lawyer and an academic decipher for the viewer the unholy alliance of INGOs and multinational corporations in weakening state regulation of ocean resources to the great detriment of local artisanal fishworkers.

Next we hear the voices of dissent within the COP 21. In a dark basement, amidst the roar of protest, representatives of the fishworker's organizations (WFF and WFFP) such as Riza Damanik, Herman Kumara, Sherry Pictou and Margaret Nakato denounce the privatisation of the oceans and forcefully assert the human rights of fishers. Testimonies from various artisanal fishworkers are heard. There are no INGO representatives here.

Since its start in 2008, the festival “Fishermen of the World” has presented hundreds of films on fishworkers worldwide. However, even within this milieu, this particular documentary stands out as a searing critique of INGOs and their unholy alliance with investment banks and multinational interests. Viewers reacted saying that the film was a “staggering blow” that exposed the sordid reality of INGOs. Nevertheless, the portrayal of the resistance of fishing communities across the world to these developments makes the film an optimistic one. The fishermen present at the screening said that they were “relieved to be finally understood”.

Made in French, this film deserves to be disseminated beyond the French speaking public. An English version of the film will be available soon. 



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women

and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

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