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SALONE DEL GUSTO 2022

FOOD REGENER ACTION

SLOW FISH
TERRA MADRE REPORT 2022

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Slow Fish Terra Madre Report 2022

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Introduction

The law establishing the commons was unwritten, not only because people did not care to write it down, but because what it protected was a reality much too complex to fit into paragraphs.

Ivan Illich

There is no cure for the condition of belonging to the world. But, by taking care, we can cure ourselves of the belief that we do not belong to it.

Bruno Latour

The Slow Fish Network is an international consortium of fisherfolk, scientists, entrepreneurs, social researchers, chefs, activists, artisans, short-chain distributors, government lobbyists, artists, thinkers, authors, fishmongers and beyond. Together with other Slow Food International members and partners, they convened a five day series of presentations and meetings at the 2022 Terra Made biannual in Torino, Italy. Each day was filled with prepared food talks, forums, food tastings, improvised discussions, raucous laughter in the evenings at the enoteca, fiery exchanges in strategic meetings, filmed interviews, first introductions and emotional farewells. This assemblage of cultural experiences and diverse interactions offered a potent space for spreading ideas quickly and generating a sense of shared community.

Unlike previous iterations, this year's Terra Madre was held beneath the open-air shell of an abandoned car manufacturing plant in the Parco Dora. Intentionally or not, it served as a metaphor of the event's overarching theme: regeneration. Its shattered concrete walls were decorated in brightly-colored graffiti art. Its towering iron columns were dressed in vibrant green vines. There was a sense of the social and the natural returning to a place that had once been industrialized and stripped of such qualities. So it was fitting that many of the network's conversations revived topics from previous events. These took aim at dispossession, colonization, and practices of enclosure; but also celebrated projects fighting for diversity, localization, self-management and the defense of the more-than-human societies trying to survive, and in many cases still thriving, on our planet's oceans.

Above all , it is plain to see that the concept of a Blue Commons, first articulated at the Slow Fish 2019, remains the centerpiece of Slow Fish's message. It is a conceptual response to what has been termed "ocean grabbing" or the privatization of oceanic resources. Continuing the discussion from that event, this year's attendees attempted to refine the claim. But more importantly, they spent a great deal of time searching for methods to transform the value of the Blue Commons as an idea into an actionable agent for change. The following pages present a summary of the progress made during our network's time together.

Battles at Sea

The Blue Commons began as the antipode of the Blue Economy. As its name suggests, the Blue Economy is situated fundamentally within the discourse of economic progress. Focused on the development of global ocean resources extraction, it is based on models of growth and accumulation. Despite promises of sustainability, it must therefore, at all costs, prioritize the maximization of profits. Considering the mathematical principle that only one variable can ever be maximized at a time, the Blue Economy, by definition, backgrounds issues such as social justice, interconnected-ecologies, and indiginous rights, among many other characteristics inherent to ocean living. Taken as a whole, the blue economy represents neo-liberal commoditization economically and colonialistic monoculturalism politically. The delegates from Peru and Ecuador shared memories of perhaps the most visceral and heart-breaking examples of actions taken by the Blue Economy that we heard at this year's event.

On Saturday, two speakers shared the floor in the Food and Health Arena for an event entitled "The health of ecosystems: a common good to preserve." First, Hilda Fany León Aguayo described her experience as a shellfish harvester and advocate for the local community of women fighting to maintain their complex relationships in the mangroves of Peru. Their antagonist is the large-scale shrimp industry that has occupied the mangroves along the Pacific shoreline. Despite the status of 'superproducers' of atmospheric oxygen, carbon sinks, and natural defense against damaging storms, the mangroves are being systematically eliminated from the community shorelines in favor of shrimp farming. Simultaneously, as mangroves are being torn from the ecosystem, patrimonial homelands are being taken from the indigenous population that, until recently, lived there.

"My mother and uncles were born on an island in the forest. We have these places in our blood," said Ms. León Aguayo.

Her words couldn't be more valuable for understanding Slow Fish's fight. The Blue Economy needs a dichotomy that separates humans from nature. It operates from a position of difference. Industrialists would have us believe that humans are the beneficiaries of natural resources. By subjugating nature, it places humans into a position of dominion

over it. Ms. León Aguayo's words, on the other hand, invert such a power structure. Rather than separation from nature, she integrates it completely into herself, her family, her memories, her cultural identity, and, finally, humanity's shared existence as a whole. Her claim radically contradicts the idea that nature can be divided from humans, for how could we live without our own blood? And it puts into sharp focus the interconnectedness of the system. In her metaphor, human health, represented by her blood, depends on the health of the more-than-human members of the oceanic community, just as the ecology of the ocean depends upon the well-being of the humans who live beside it.

Líder Góngora Farias, activist and executive director of Corporación Coordinadora Nacional para la Defensa del Ecosistema Manglar in Ecuador (C-CONDEM) , followed Ms. León Aguayo with a fiery speech that recalled the horrific manifestations of the blue economy's logic. Enclosure at sea is often dealt with in terms of government abstraction; however, in the mangrove forest near Farias' home enclosure takes the form of a highly militarized industry. His experience involves security guards armed with rifles, electric fences, barbed-wire, and trained attack dogs.

"We would be killed if we entered these mangroves," said Góngora Farias. "We need social and economic resuscitation."

Mr. Farias went on to make a compelling call to rebellion. Perhaps channeling the South African delegates who were intent to join the panel but at the eleventh hour were unable to attend, he echoed a recent term coined by African small-scale fishers. They have renamed the Blue Economy, calling it the 'Blue Fear.' In his closing remarks he called on all stakeholders to overcome the blue fear and not give in to it. His speech drew loud applause and an emotional response from all who attended.

Ways of Knowing the Blue Fear

Many of the other presentations outlined the various modes of enclosure they were witnessing in their own areas of the world's oceans. On Thursday, a panel discussion took place in Berta Caceres Arena entitled, "Business Won't Save the Sea." It featured Canadian delegate, John Crofts; Ecuadorian delegate, Marianeli Torres Benavides; and Colombian moderator, Ana Isabel Márquez Pérez.

Mr. Crofts, a fishmonger, questioned the current methodology of businesses promoting seaweed harvesting as a means to "save the Earth." Proponents claim it will be a carbon sink, filter the oceans of toxic chemicals and provide oceanic oxygen. Blue Fear tells us that if we don't rapidly accelerate growth in the kelp sector, we may not be able to feed the world and save it from climate disaster in the coming decades.

"The thing is, we just don't know enough," Mr. Crofts said.

Why should we rush into this sector, he argued, when there is still not enough science to support the claims? As an example, he considered the question of whether kelp could be a carbon sink. This may be true, he conceded, but only under certain conditions. However if it is cut, eaten or turned into other products, then carbon and other greenhouse gasses the kelp originally locked-in return to the atmospheric system.

Likewise he questioned the reasoning behind the construction of extensive walls of kelp, in some cases over twenty kilometers in length, currently being fixed along the pacific coast of Canada. Their placement disrupts indigenous fishing grounds and important wild salmon runs. Rhetorically, Mr. Crofts asked, why there? One network member, Barbara Geertsema of the Netherlands, pointedly suggested in the Q and A that this seemed like another way for big business to divide the sea and mark its territory.

Next, Ms. Torres Benavides, activist and coordinator at C-CONDEM in Ecuador, elaborated upon the enclosure of mangroves in her country. Primarily, she spoke of the system of bribery in Ecuador that reinforces financial technologies of control. These can take place at the local and at the highest levels of regulation. Impoverished and malnourished

by the shrimp industry that has colonized its waterfronts, the local population now has even less bargaining power as a result. Concerned with what would be left behind after the industry moved on, she called for governments, NGOs and the industry itself to re-forest the mangroves.

“We are facing fragmentation, disintegration and injustice. These must be regenerated through valorizing local, indigenous products and a co-management system between all parties,” said Ms. Torres Benavides.

Her appeal for co-management reminds us of the original etymology of the word commons: ‘co-’ (together) and ‘munis’ (duty). First, the commons is constructed together. It is shared and interconnected at multiple levels and through multiple actors, including both human and non-human elements. Non-human elements include the fisheries and the ecology, but also data and even gods. We must remember that all of these elements, even the ‘objectivity’ of data or the invisible energy of indigenous cosmologies, can be mobilized for social decision-making, power exchanges, and economic development. They can either help to construct or dispossess the commons.

And second, as a result of such interdependence, we have shared responsibilities. These obligations do not find their power out of legal jurisdiction or property claims, but exist at any time we care for and access the commons. They are a series of arising choices and actions collectively moved upon, but also individually acted out. These responsibilities likewise affect all of the human and non-humans involved and therefore shape and define those elements, support their growth or lead to their demise. In this sense, the Blue Commons is best considered a practice rather than a place. The verb forms, ‘to blue common’ or ‘blue commoning’, may be more accurate ways of describing the ongoing participation of every member of the more-than-human cooperative entangled in its formation.

On Monday, the conversation again returned to the question of shared governance. In a group presentation, several members of the Canadian contingency spoke in Activist Square on the topic of “Ocean Grabbing.” Among them was Tasha Sutcliffe, an expert in fisheries, community economic development and business systems and member of the

Slow Fish international advisory board. She echoed Ms. Torres Benavides' recognition of unfair lobbying.

"There is a corporate take over. Investors are invited to the government decision-making table," She said.

Ms. Sutcliffe shared the stage with Jim McIsaac, a commercial fisherman for over 20 years and executive director of the T. Buck Suzuki Foundation. He looked at Blue Fear through the lens of fishing rights and licensing. After briefly describing fisher knowledge, gear and legal access as the foundation of participation in fishing, he turned to the last one as being a critical barrier for many fishermen-to-be.

"How do we get young people into the fisheries?" he asked.

As legal access and fishing rights become another commodity subject to scarcity, capital becomes a limiting factor for entry into a life of fishing. The license costs are too great for many to afford, Jim told members of the audience. In many cases, the industry investors end up the solitary owners of all the fishing rights within a region, relegating individual fishers into the position of wage-earners unable to lay claim to their own catch.

Likewise, distributors play a powerful part in generating other forms of blue fear. The delegates from Norway discussed this issue in the first food talk given in Berta Cáceres Arena on Thursday. Thor Øivind Jensen, associate professor in the Department of Administration and Organization Theory at the University of Bergen, presented the "The Mackerel Paradox." In his talk, he exposed the challenges of marketing small, whole 'pir' mackerel to local Norwegian consumers. Pir mackerel is high in nutrients and rich in proteins, fatty acids and minerals that are precious for human health; however, it's a temperamental fish.

"Pir must be fresh," said Dr. Jensen, "So it's easier for large-scale vessels that spend longer periods out at sea to throw it out for feed."

The pir mackerel is there, and there is a tradition in Norway of eating it. The problem, they claim, is distribution. Grocery stores are no longer willing to put it on the shelves because it's so perishable. Instead they favor farmed salmon. Since they don't want to

take a risk, the fishing industry looks for alternative avenues of distribution. Today, the majority of mackerel being caught in the North Sea is being sold as an export commodity, the professor declared. As a result, the small-scale fisheries likewise have nowhere to sell their 'pir'.

Ironically, the methods of capture the small-scale fishers are using is very efficient and low-impact, but through the process of feed production, it loses any of the positive impact it may have produced. Frode Stronen, fisherman, environmentalist, and coordinator of the Fiskfrafjorden cooperative, picked up where his colleague left off.

"The general rule of thumb is that everytime you go up a trophic level, you lose 90% of the nutritional value," he said. "In other words, it takes about ten kilograms of mackerel feed to produce one kilo of farmed salmon."

Caroline Bennett, founder of the restaurant Moshi Moshi and distributor Sole of Discretion, elaborated upon the injustices of turning fish into feed in the forum "Is All Salmon Created Equally?" on Sunday. Recalling her time training as a chef in Japan, she reminded the audience that sushi has historically been a celebration food, not an everyday snack. With growing, world-wide demand, sushi needed a fish product to fill the gap of disappearing species like bluefin tuna and turbot. The development of farmed fish beginning in the 1980s turned salmon into an industrial grade ingredient for sushi production around the world. However, the exponential growth of aquaculture meant equal intensification of input growth.

"The use of fishmeal in farmed salmon is morally bankrupt," Said Ms. Bennett. "As the developed countries steal forage fish, such as sardinella from Mauritania or Anchoveta from Peru to feed farmed salmon, they rob the local people of, often, their only source of animal protein."

Such a colonialistic approach leads us to question the morality that guides our eating choices. Andrea Pezzana, Director of the Complex Structure of Clinical Nutrition, Asl City of Turin and scientific referent for the food and health theme of Slow Food, put these choices under a microscope. He expanded upon the challenges of the distribution of salmon as also being a challenge to distributing quality nutrients. Farmed salmon do inde-

ed provide more calories per kilo, Mr. Pezzana explained, but these calories are a result of higher levels of inflammatory omega-6 fatty acids and the consumption of low quality feeds. Wild caught salmon, on the other hand, eat krill and shellfish that are leaner, but they are also higher in vitamin B and much healthier omega-3s, among other nutrients. Mr. Pezzana highlighted in very scientific terms the interconnectedness of fisheries health, human health, social justice, and ecological justice.

Another panelist, Johnny Fishmonger was unfortunately unable to attend. However a video displayed the goals of his organization, the Coastal Rovers. They seek reciprocity and empowerment for the indigenous more-than-human communities of the western USA. Feedlot salmon farms, factory trawlers, salmon-killing dams, industrial mining on Salmon Rivers, and indiscriminate logging of salmon rain forests stress simultaneously the human and salmon populations.

Returning to Ms. Bennet, we were reminded that the art of making sushi prior to the development of refrigeration and aquaculture was to choose and cut fish that wouldn't make the customer sick. We may conclude, based on the statements made during the panel session, that there is in fact something off about today's sushi. As for Ms. Bennett, the solution is to encourage her customers to eat healthier wild caught salmon which she sources from communities in Alaska, including chum salmon from the indigenous Inupiat Nation.

The prioritization of scalability was also delineated in the forum "A platform to discover the footprint of our food." Clement Oliviera put into context distribution inefficiencies facing small-scale fishers in Catalonia, Spain. There, as in Norway, distribution is authorized by either private or government-run sorting stations. As is the case with licensing costs, government levers of power have determined legal justifications for all fishers, regardless of size or location, to process their catches through such corridors of exchange. As a result, Mr. Oliviera must transport all of the fish and crustaceans that he captures in his local fishing grounds 35 kilometers to the nearest station. There he simply walks through with his boxes and pays the fee. Then all he can do is drive back to sell his fish to the restaurant that sits a few meters from his boat's slip at the dock.

At a large scale this scheme may, on some level, make sense. However, for the small-scale fisher the costs can become prohibitive. Likewise, the journey necessitates consumption

of fossil fuels which quickly negates the benefits of a low carbon fishery. As a result, many fishermen in Mr. Oliviera's community have opted out of the system, left a career they love, and in many cases departed from their hometowns to search for work elsewhere.

Based on the many examples presented this year, it is clear that the Blue Fear takes on many forms; however, through discussions, food talks and forums at Terra Madre 2022, it became equally clear that its end goal is homogenous throughout the world's blue commons. This goal seems to have three fundamental aspects, 1) it seeks the monoculturing of fishing practices even if such a monoculturing naturally leads to social injustice 2) it aims to consolidate power into the hands of fewer and fewer investors and stakeholders, even if such consolidation leads to the local more-than-human community's dissolution, and 3) it uses its power to manipulate and affect governmental and economic decision-making in order to justify and mobilize its plans. Through such designs, the generalized sense of fear fishermen have around the world has scaled-up right alongside the industry.

And yet, as asymmetrical as the size between small and large in the industry has gotten, the Slow Fish community continues to search for the regeneration of balance.

In Search of A Blue Confidence

So what does regeneration in the Blue Commons look like? If indeed commoning is an action, what such actions are being taken to protect our oceans? And if the Blue Commons is at odds with the Blue Economy, can we mobilize forces to contradict the Blue Fear?

On Saturday afternoon, under the hot Italian sun, a group of Slow Fish members performed an act of commoning at an undisclosed location in Parco Dora. Together, they collected grilling materials and fresh-caught fish, a few spices, and some beers. In other words, they were having a barbecue.

The spectacle of the smoke rising from the pit, attracted an audience of people, many of whom were not members of the Slow Fish network. But despite our limited resources, all were welcomed. Participants shared bites, drank oyster-infused beer from the Goede Vissers oyster stall, and debated cooking times and how to tend to the fire. Outside the confines of a seminar or forum, our chatting had the chance to weave between activities in the fisheries to personal lives and back again in quick succession. Ms. Geertsema, co-owner of the oyster stall, summed it all up in a way that made everyone smile and nod their heads in agreement.

“We really look forward to Terra Madre,” she said, “It gives us such a boost meeting with all of you. It gives us the energy to keep going for the next two years.”

The power of community was another central theme throughout our time at the biannual event. On opening day, Jannie Vestergaard, Denmark, coordinator of Slow Food Denmark and coordinator of the Terra Madre Nordic event, discussed “Seaweed Gardens.” Her project, something she calls a citizen movement, seeks to discover what we can learn from community gardens and how we can apply that knowledge to the water.

“We are farmers in wetsuits,” said Ms. Vestergaard. “We are trying to ask, ‘how can citizens work with what is growing under the water.’”

Through the organization Havhøst (Sea Harvest), she and community members have established communal spaces to grow and harvest mussels, oysters and sea kelp. The system is meant to be regenerative ecologically and socially. Ecologically, the produce has the potential to lock-in greenhouse gas emissions and serve as habitats for a range of in-land sea life. Socially, Ms. Verstergaard passionately made the claim that through youth education and public events, the sea gardens can become a force for change. They can affect habits of eating and ways of understanding food and place as key drivers of community engagement and decision-making. Now in ten municipalities around Denmark, the program plans to replicate its gardens throughout the Nordic region.

Replication as a method of sharing community knowledge was an important call to action for many presenters. Marta Cavallé, Mediterranean coordinator at the platform Low Impact of Fishers of Europe, detailed a replicable method of integration called 'communities of practice' in the forum "Communities of Best practice." Based on qualitative, multi-sited research conducted around the Mediterranean Sea, the project Foodnected is attempting to facilitate the emergence of short-chain food systems. Through the project's research with Mr. Oliveira; Marga Serra, cofradia of Ibiza; Manuela Trovato, facilitator and expert in regeneration and social innovation of Sicilia; and indigenous peoples in Turkey; data is currently being evaluated in order to systematize experiences and methods that can be shared with others attempting to make progress in their respective communities.

"Some fishers say that if they hadn't met a fisher further along, trying to solve the same problems, they wouldn't have found the courage to keep going," Ms. Cavallé said.

In positing the need and value of accessing the knowledge of innovators and inspiring success stories, Ms. Cavalle echoes the claim that Barbara made at the barbecue. In the face of blue fear, the media tells us that we are alone in our pursuits. It tends to amplify the significance of the victories of the blue economy even if casting those victories in a negative light. In fact, it is rare to find stories devoted to acts of commoning. Often, as a result, fishermen dispersed around the world feel increasingly alone, fighting against an ever-growing hegemony.

"You cannot face these problems alone," said Clement Oliveira, during the forum, "So first you must build a community."

Mr. Oliviera went on to talk about the organization he helped build to solve the problem of distribution he and other fishermen face in Catalonia. Empescat is a cooperative of fishermen who operate out of the same harbor as Oliveira. Together, pooling their resources, they have created a business platform necessary to allow for sorting to take place right at the point of landing. The coop acts as a sort of invisible middleman, purchasing the catch for the fishermen, by the fishermen. Relieved of the necessity to drive dozens of kilometers to another station, the small-scale fishers take possession of their own fish and deliver them to local restaurants directly. By relying on a more integrated system, Empascat clears the way for greater fiscal viability for the fishers and a lower carbon fishery, while simultaneously offering greater autonomy and integration to the community.

During a forum entitled “Marine Protected Areas: Biodiversity, Tourism, Beauty,” the panel introduced Fishing Labs, a new project in the Italian region of Puglia that integrates marine conservation with small-scale fishing. Artisanal fishermen from Puglia, a region in the South East of Italy, have been closely monitoring the successes of the Porto Cesareo and Torre Guaceto marine protected areas (MPA) for some time. Although these two areas are very different from each other, they are characterized by a collaborative governance model. From Porto Cesareo we listened to Luciana Muscogiuri, marine biologist, and Barbara Colleli, fisherwoman, who was unable to participate but recorded her testimony on video. From Torre Guaceto we listened to the experience of Cosimo De Biesi, fisherman and Alessandro Cicollela, president of the MPA. The four of them have explained the meticulous work that has been done over a decade where scientific knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge have been integrated resulting in a management plan that has not only benefited marine biodiversity, but has also improved the quality of life of local artisanal fishermen. In regenerating the health of the biological factors of the sea, the fishing communities find themselves in a stronger position at the market and tourists, key economic dynamos in the region, enjoy cleaner waters and tastier meals. This has raised the interest of other artisanal fishermen in this region (many present at the debate) who, observing the successes of this collaborative management, have asked to replicate this governance model in other areas of the coast even if these areas are not protected.

Sonia Strobel, leader and co-founder of Skipper Otto of Vancouver, Canada, layed out her company's model for a community supported fishery in a food talk entitled "Fisher Nets and Networks." Inspired by small-scale farmers, consumers can buy into an affiliation with the network of fisherfolk that work with Skipper Otto. Through this support, and by receiving payments in advance, decisions can be made regarding which fisheries to capture, where to distribute and how best to communicate information in the most transparent way possible.

"Now we are in the process of systematizing our methods," said Ms. Strobel. "It has taken us almost 15 years to get where we are, but now we're in a position to make it accessible to other communities." Ms. Strobel continued, "they don't have to reinvent the wheel."

Ms. Strobel's approach is highly interdisciplinary. It casts a wide net to gather an array of knowledge derived from fisheries, agriculture, economics, and politics. It then leverages that knowledge for the benefit of diverse networks of people, ecologies, non-human animals and material resources. In addition, rather than hoarding that data, she seeks to common it. The system for developing her style of a community supported fishery will be open source for new practitioners seeking to imitate the work of Skipper Otto.

In light of these presentations and the various ideas presented concerning trust, community and integrity, it may be time to coin a new term that defines our alternative to the blue fear. It is not fear that drives the Slow Fish network to continue its impassioned journey towards good, clean and fair food. Rather it is the courage we gain from our beliefs in the blue commons. Perhaps, what we need to start talking about is the Blue Confidence.

A strategy to build confidence

The culmination of our discourse came during the Slow Fish Strategic Meeting on Sunday. Led by Slow Fish director Paula Barbeito, the meeting offered a space for all interested stakeholders within the broader Slow Food International Network. Representing six of the seven continents and over 20 nations, the three-hour debate consolidated many of the themes leading up to it. It was therefore a crucible for synthesizing ideas and elaborating upon the most crucial issues facing Slow Fish this year.

Paula opened the debate with a summary of the challenges and strategies that were identified in the last meeting. Among the challenges she listed were industrialization, consumer education, and a lack of available resources. And the strategies included developing better understanding among stakeholders, building networks with small-scale fishers, connecting with consumers, celebrating successes and forming alliances.

As one available tool to engage with these challenges and strategies, she presented the ideas of a Slow Fish Atlas and a blue commons campaign. The Atlas was first mentioned in the 2016 strategic meeting. The blue commons concept was first introduced to the network in 2019. However, no conclusive action has been taken to move both projects forward. She tasked the group to consider what such a tool might look like and in what ways it may help support the network's goal of promoting the Blue Commons. With that, she opened the microphone to the floor. The majority of the remaining time saw the meeting attendees speak in rapid-fire succession with little time wasted.

Many tactics were suggested.

"We need to occupy #Blueeconomy to identify negative corporate and government behaviors."

"We must valorize and promote indigenous products."

"We have to find a way to demask the lies of the Blue economy as simple blue washing."

Little by little these individual tactics began to form clusters. Generally, they revolved around finding a means of exposing the truth about the Blue Economy in specific places and focused on individual products or projects. However, eventually the group began describing the blue commons not as specific people, places or things, but as the interconnected relationships between them. Rather than targeting their individual place in the blue commons, they began to talk about the threads of connection between the social acts that serve to construct the commons.

“How can we build more communication within the collective?”

“Let’s try to get to know each other better.”

“The challenge is to share small-scale fishing stories with the world and at the same time keep us connected.”

“We have to claim our collective ownership.”

“This is a ground-swell. This group has much wisdom and solutions already. How can we synthesize all of it?

This progression, from describing tactics of fighting the blue fear to deliberating upon collective modes of solidarity, led one attendee to proclaim, “We’re not fighting them, they’re fighting us.”

Confidence is derived from the prefix con- (together) and the latin verb fidere (relying upon integrity). Perhaps, the Blue Confidence we seek can only rely upon increasing the integration of the knowledge and wisdom that our network possesses. Based on our experience at Terra Madre 2022, this confidence can be founded upon three guiding actions: 1) it aims to diversify fishing practices, products, and distribution methods for the benefit of all members of the more-than-human communities that produce them, 2) it aims to decentralize power and access to the ocean’s commons for the sake of regenerating social and ecological justice, and 3) it works to share stories and practices of blue commoning with an ever-widening network of stakeholders to encourage all commoners, everywhere, to maintain their own practices of regeneration.

At the end of the meeting Jens Ambsdorf, executive director of the Lighthouse Foundation, called on all Slow Fish network members to share their beliefs in a bullet-point email to the director. Once collected, he suggested, we can organize an advisory board. The advisory board will then fulfill the role of aligning our actions with our beliefs. Ms. Barbeito championed his proposal and summarized the outcome of the meeting:

“The task is clear. As a group we are seeking a way to create internal connections that build solidarity and external communication that voices our success stories.”

If Slow Food is to move forward upon the idea of a Slow Fish Atlas and a campaign around the blue commons, it will be charged with this: a shared responsibility to concentrate our group’s riches of knowledge and mobilize resources for networking. If it can be devised in such a way to provide a space for network members to share best practices and to ask for help, it may succeed in adding a source of internal connection so needed. And if it can give voice to our collective blue confidence in the face of overwhelming fear, it may be able to communicate our victories externally. The work of the advisory board will be tasked with further consideration upon the matter.

One more act of Commoning

The Japanese delegation held a “Seaweed Summit” on Friday on the lawn next to the main pavilion in Parco D’ora. The space wasn’t in use at any other time during the week. Rather, most people simply walked by it on the way to some place they had discovered on the event map. So, dappled in the light that penetrated the autumn leaves of an imposing beech tree, the delegates unfolded a strip of fabric four meters long. Onto the sheet they began setting out dried seaweed of every imaginable variety: crisp aonori, the tannest mozuko, black hijiki, and many others. As they did so, the trees moved and passersby slowed down. Little by little, the small delegation from Japan found themselves surrounded by onlookers. Meanwhile, producers from Europe and elsewhere began adding irish moss and sea lettuce to the mix. All were invited and permitted to share in the temporary place they were constructing. Soon the entire piece of pure white fabric was covered edge to edge by something someone had collected from the world’s oceans.



We smelled and tasted the diversity of flavors. We felt the textures envelop our mouths. We exchanged names of the plants in each of our languages. We described ways of harvesting in the deep and in the shallows. And we moved around the fabric, from one side all the way to the other, in our own time.

Afterwards, each of us took the remainder of what we had brought. Together we folded the impossibly delicate cloth. And finally, we returned to our places scattered around every corner of Terra Madre.

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