

# I WAS ON A CROAKER CHASE

## Chronicle of a confrontation: the origins and the trace

**The beginning (Background):** While living in an ecuadorian coastal community of the Gulf of Guayaquil (Ecuador), called Puerto Roma, on May 1st, 2023 I went with fishermen on a croaker chase. This may have seen as the beginning of the story but is was only the trace...

**The Intrigue (Research Questions):** Why are we following other fishermen? Where do they come from? Why do they come here to take the croakers?

**The people involved (Stakeholders):** We went in a motorboat and followed fishers (men and women) who came from the South, specifically from Puerto Bolívar and Puná. These fishermen have a trajectory in fishing. They put a tube in the water and are able to listen to the croakers and catch them. Fishermen from Puerto Roma did not know this, they were not aware of the quantity of croakers in their area.

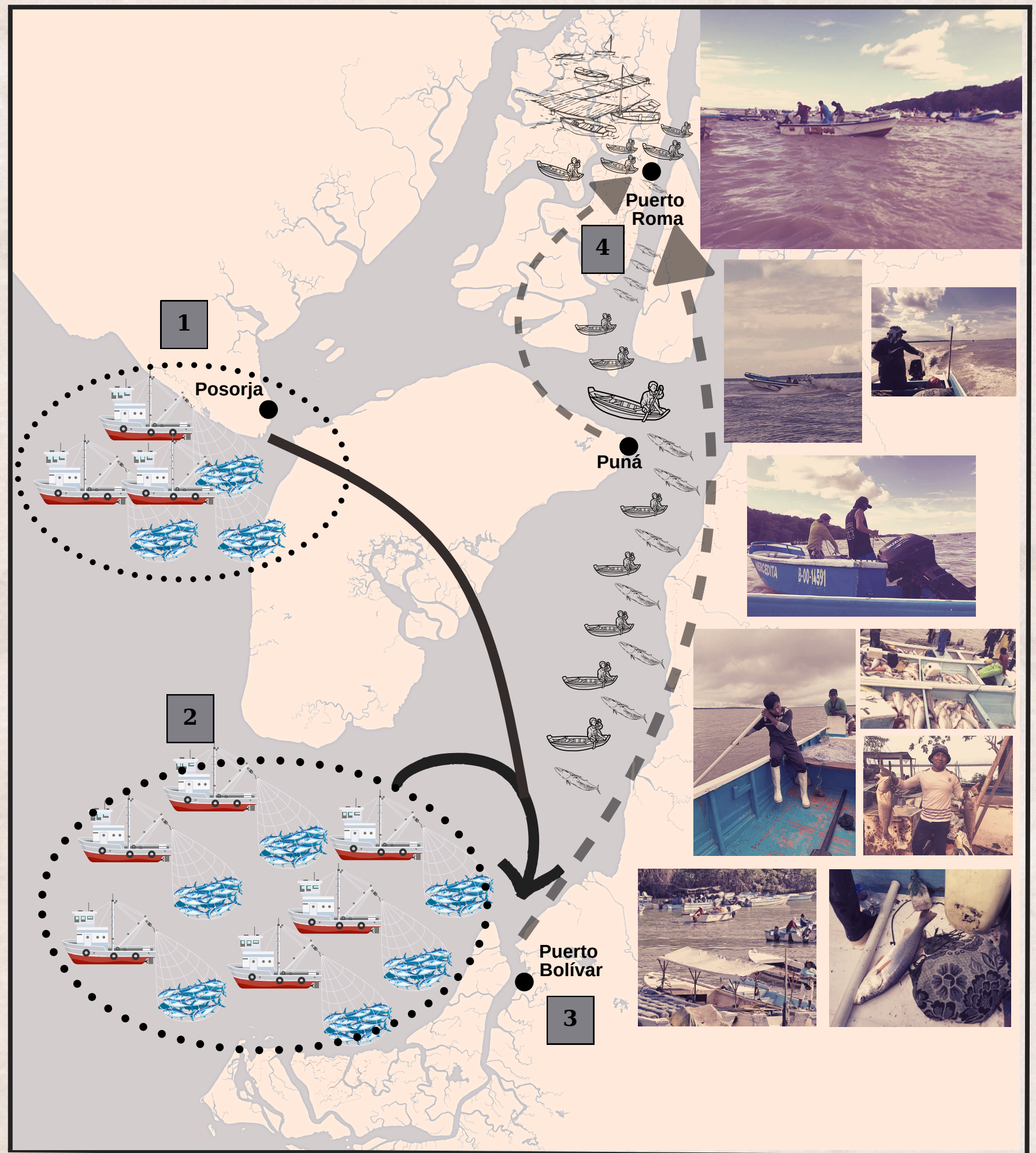
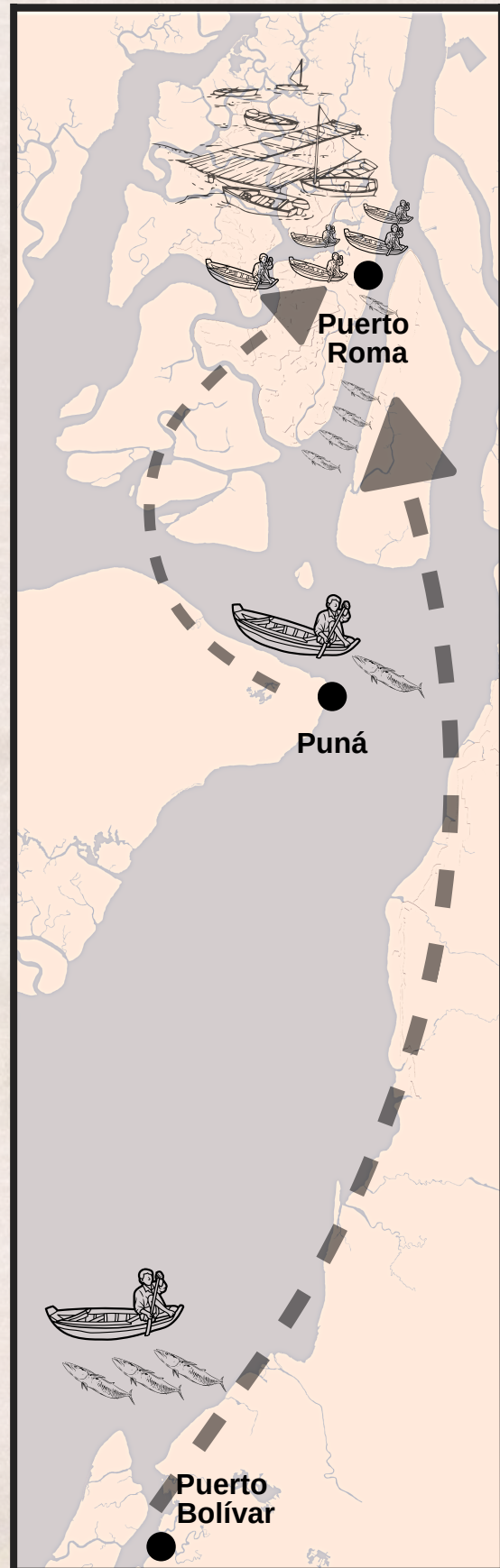
**The chase and the confrontations (Results):** Around 100 boats of small-scale fishers followed the ones who knew where to catch the croakers. When they listened to the croakers they cast the fishing nets, and the others followed. Everyone cast the nets!. After a few minutes, the nets were removed and the confrontation started because each one wanted to take more croakers to sell them in the market. I saw people using knives to cut the nets and take the fish. They say sometimes there are gunshots in the air only to dispel the euforia.



**When did I learn this?** My fieldwork was between April and June, 2023.

**The location (Study site):** The site where the chase occurs is Puerto Roma. In the middle of the Internal Estuary of the Gulf of Guayaquil.

**The means to understand the story (Methods):** 2 month ethnography in Puerto Roma. 30 in-depth interviews in Puerto Roma, 2 focus groups in Puerto Bolívar, surveys, and workshops.

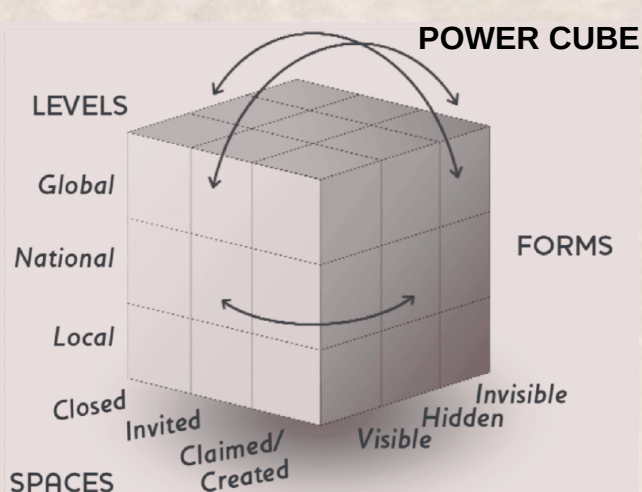


## Discussion and theories to explain the dynamics of the Gulf of Guayaquil

The beginning of this chronicle was about confrontations in Puerto Roma, because of the presence of a float of other artisanal fishers who started coming to the area 3 years ago. Fishers from Puerto Roma know that the town that initiated these chases is Puerto Bolívar, followed by Puná, but they did not know why they started coming. I went to Puerto Bolívar and found out that the industrial fishery is catching the fish in Puerto Bolívar's area, with trawler vessels that affect the resources. Scarcity is a real consequence.

In 2020 the Ecuadorian Government was discussing to give permits for the industry to fish in the artisanal fishery area. The small scale fishers got together, protested, demanded their rights and won the 8 nautical miles for them. However, in real life things are different. The industry is protected by criminal bands and keep fishing illegally. Also, alliances between the industry and government officials do occur, through corruption. The consequence is a bunch of trawler vessels taking the resources.

The case gives the opportunity to study the levels, forms and spaces of power developed by Gaventa (2006). As part of the analysis of power relations, this case shows instruments that are part of the dynamics in the Gulf of Guayaquil (such as bribery, payments from the industry to the criminal bands -to whom they pay with fish and money- trawler vessels, knives and guns) make it a case to apply Foucault's *dispositif*. And the fact that high levels of government deliberately do not care about law enforcement, relates to an "absent state" as developed by Daron Acemoglu y James A. Robinson (2019).

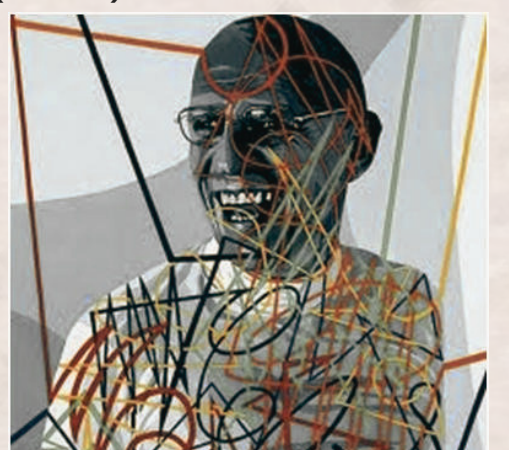


Rodriguez de Francisco, J. C., & Boelens, R., 2014.  
Gaventa, 2006.



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