

Beyond rules and regulations: understanding the cultural and social significance of beach seine fishery on Lake Tanganyika, Tanzania

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Abstract

In an effort to restore fisheries health, the Tanzanian Government implemented policies that make the use of beach seines illegal. However, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful and there is a lack of understanding about the various factors that have led to this ineffective outcome. In this study, we use qualitative data to explore the social and cultural meanings that fishing community members attach to the fishery, with an emphasis on beach seines. Findings from this study demonstrate that the meanings held by fishermen about beach seine fishery and the associated social capital networks have been influential in shaping resistance to the existing rules and regulations. We conclude that fisheries policy and managers need to go beyond measures of ecological sustainability and economic indicators to also consider the social and cultural meanings and structures that people hold around their fishing gears and practices. These must then be represented and acknowledged in the policy process, engaging local communities in the creation of future policy and management actions that give voice to the local fishing communities.