

Exploring the agentic power in fishery: reflections from fishing communities of Lake Tanganyika, Kigoma, Tanzania

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Abstract

One of the central concerns of fisheries management is to understand the dynamics in the human-environment interactions especially in the context of the observed declining fish resources. This paper examines how agentic power drives human-environment interactions. Drawing on interviews with fishers from Lake Tanganyika in Kigoma, Tanzania, the paper demonstrates how fishers negotiate their ways out of the structured rules and regulations to be able to access and benefit from the Lake's fish resources. Actors in the study areas maneuvered their way through the externally driven and established rules and regulations set to manage the fisheries. Thus, instead of actors being passive recipients of these external rules and regulations, they actively engage with them and challenge those that affect or contradict with community values and norms, which enable access to fish resources. It is therefore argued that actors are capable of negotiating their ways to access fish resources, even in the face of institutional structures that would otherwise impede these efforts. Their power to invent new possibilities to respond to problematic situations needs to be acknowledged by resource managers as they seek alternative approaches to future fishery management strategies.