



Deciphering contextual influences on local leadership in community-based fisheries management



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ABSTRACT

Community-based fisheries management (CBFM) strategies have been adopted in a variety of small-scale fisheries around the world. Within these management structures, leaders are increasingly regarded as essential for viable CBFM yet systematic analysis into the intricate mechanisms of leadership are limited. This paper aims to identify key knowledge gaps of leadership in CBFM by strategically reviewing research from fisheries and natural resource management, and from other sectors. The focus is on the interaction between leaders, their connections with and beyond their communities, and the context within which leaders function. Insights from over 30 case studies suggest previous work on leaders and leadership generally focused on relatively coarse-scale characteristics of leadership and the functions that leaders perform. Ecological and social context influence leaders' ability to help deliver successful CBFM. The personal and professional attributes of leaders themselves may be beneficial or inhibitory for CBFM depending on that context. It is therefore essential that future research builds on current insight in order to decipher the implications of contextual influences on local leadership and, by extension, the level of CBFM success.

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1. Introduction

Complex fisheries require management systems to be adaptive, flexible, and progressive [1,2]. Although some have argued that fisheries management is increasingly effective [3], the number of overfished populations and the deteriorating state of marine ecosystems [4–6] is indicative of fisheries management failures [7]. To deal with the short-comings of traditional, centralized and top-down approaches to fisheries management and the increase of adaptive capacity, many researchers and practitioners have over the past two decades advocated bottom-up, community-based fisheries management (CBFM) [8–14]. CBFM involves the participation of communities and resource users in decision making [10,12,15]. Such engagement is hypothesized to encourage compliance with regulations [16–19], foster a sense of community ownership over fisheries [16], reduce conflict over scarce resources [20], reduce transaction costs [21,22], and improve management through the integration of local, traditional and scientific knowledge [13,22,23].

The success of CBFM is dependent on the capacity and capabilities of a community [15,21] and its members. Pomeroy et al. [24]

identified three levels at which determinants of successful CBFM can be identified: first, determinants external to the community; second, determinants at the community level (e.g., defined boundaries, distinct membership, group homogeneity, participation, effective community organization, property rights, conflict resolution, and leadership [25]); and third, individual level determinants that affect incentive structure and individuals' capabilities to act collectively [15].

The role of leadership in management has been studied in varying levels of depth in natural resource management and other fields [26–34]. Leaders are key individuals who by their skills, experience and personal characteristics are justified in being a central and influential role in social processes [35]. Leadership has also been highlighted as an important expected success factor in fisheries management [16,30,36]. Leaders are increasingly being regarded as essential components of CBFM [16], however systematic analysis into the intricate mechanisms of leadership in relation to specific contextual conditions is limited.

Given the likely influence of leadership in determining success or failure of CBFM, it is important to increase our understanding of the role of these key individuals or groups. This paper identifies key leadership knowledge gaps relevant for CBFM by strategically reviewing leadership in fisheries, natural resources and other sectors. The emphasis is on the interaction between the characteristics of leaders, their connections with and beyond their communities, and the context within which leaders function (henceforth

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the “3Cs”). The objective is to build baseline knowledge regarding leaders and leadership that can be used to inform CBFM capacity-building investments and future research on determinants of successful CBFM. This work helps highlight the complexities and importance of contextual differences that affect CBFM success, the motivations and values that guide behavior, and the intricate relationships between leaders and their constituencies in a CBFM context.

2. Methods

This review used case studies that focused in part or fully on leaders and leadership roles in fisheries, natural resource management, and other sectors. Due to the intricacies of leadership and the complex social, political, economic, and legal landscapes in which they play a key role, a case study approach is appropriate for identifying important cross-cutting themes regarding leadership as a determinant of CBFM [37].

Case studies were chosen strategically on dimensions of similarity so that comparisons could be made, as well as diversity [38], to illustrate the wide array of contexts within which leaders situate. Case studies were identified through academic literature searches. Key words used in searches included ‘leader’, ‘leadership’, ‘champion’ and ‘entrepreneur’, depending on the field of study, context, and types of document being studied. Searches and case studies were chosen to ensure diversity between cases to maximize potential for learning. Case studies were categorized into three groups: fisheries; natural resources; and other sectors. They were organized around the “3Cs”: leaders' characteristics; leaders' connections; and the contexts within which leaders work.

3. Results

Case studies used in this review were those that specifically attributed success or failure, in combination with other contextual conditions, to a local leader and their activities. After screening, cases were dropped that didn't provide relevant, or any additional information that was not provided by other cases. [Table 1](#) highlights key findings from 32 screened case studies; nine were from fisheries management, 11 from natural resource management, and 12 from other industries.

3.1. Characteristics of leaders

3.1.1. Insights from fisheries management

Fisheries management case studies describe several leadership functions: providing energy and consistency [14,39], ensuring stability and accountability in times of upheaval [40,41]; providing links to external agents [30]; and negotiating with stakeholders to promote the benefits of cooperating. A leader's understanding of their followers, their attitudes and behavioral tendencies are important [14]. Understanding of community processes is established through constant interaction with community members over long periods of time and results in heightened levels of trust [30].

Potential leaders in fisheries require motivation. Centrally placed individuals' without appropriate motivation, due to lack of incentives or knowledge, acted as barriers to less central but highly motivated individuals in Mombasa, Kenya [42]. A leader's capability was developed by training in conflict resolution mechanisms, and awareness building of local knowledge and community processes [39].

3.1.2. Insights from natural resource management

Personal attributes of an individual can justify leadership roles. Personal leadership skills may include: self-organizing and governing; conflict management competencies; technological expertise; general management experience [27]; creating a vision for change [43]; developing and utilizing social networks [27,43]; identifying policy opportunities [43,44]; securing funding [43]; and creatively linking solutions to problems [45]. Leaders should act on behalf of those they represent and consider the costs and benefits of their efforts, as well as balance personal and community interests [46].

3.1.3. Insights from other industries

Mobilizing community residents by encouraging collective action is an important leader role, as demonstrated in slum upgrading programs in Asia [47] and disaster rehabilitation in Japan [28]. Success in the promotion of automobile products was attributed to the continual effort of a product champion gathering support, advancing ideas, and adjusting sales pitches to suit target audiences [48].

An individual's motivation for becoming a leader may be politically oriented. By investing time and energy in community products, a leader can utilize the experience and exposure to kick start a career in politics [49]. Lack of motivation and negative perceptions about leadership can, however, deter potential individuals participating in leadership activities, as found in US community colleges [50]. Training is essential in enhancing individual capabilities and self-belief in those capabilities, and restoring faith in leadership practice [28,50].

3.2. Connections of leaders

3.2.1. Insights from fisheries management

In Swedish near-shore fisheries, a centralized, cross boundary network, that was tightly connected around one actor, encouraged adaptive management, rule compliance and shared management objectives [51]. Similarly in Kenya, the central role of a leader's extensive social network links to community and local authorities resulted in increased social influence [30]. However, a lack of connection to financial contacts, limited the leader's ability to integrate their community into market based activities [30].

3.2.2. Insights from natural resource management

Social networks can facilitate the exchange of information and help coordinate activities [43]. A leader of the Lower Helgea River (Sweden) management reorganization program gathered the support of individuals from influential organizations, including universities, the Swedish Wildlife Fund, hotels, the tourism board, the National Museum, and a national research council. As a result, he was able to address a range of issues with the pool of skills he had assembled [43].

Connectivity can, however be detrimental to community based-management due to a so-called dark side of social capital. For instance, leaders in Mali relied on their connections with state officials to solve community conflicts, which reduced their own problem solving credibility within their communities [46].

3.2.3. Insights from other industries

Centrality in a social network is considered to be positively correlated with an actor's performance capabilities [52]. Individual centrality was linked to positive perception of project learning and satisfaction [53]. As early as the 1900s, politicians were aware of the value of social networks. Joseph Chamberlain, politician at the turn of the century, used wide ranging and multi-faceted networks,

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