

Justification theory to explore socio-cultural values related to fish and fisheries: Baltic salmon and herring cases

Suvi Ignatius and Päivi Haapasaari

The requirement of understanding social values related to fish resources and incorporating them in fisheries management is included in the ecosystem-based management of fisheries. We apply the justification theory of Boltanski and Thévenot to explore values associated with Baltic herring and salmon, based on literature review. The analysis indicates that economic and productive values underlie the use of Baltic herring fishery, that mostly focuses on feed production. Increasing the human consumption of herring is seen as desirable, but would require highlighting green values, like the eco-friendliness of herring as food. For herring fishery management, this would suggest broadening the focus to cover the use of catches in addition to managing the stocks. Values associated with Baltic salmon relate to species conservation, tradition, recreation, and social justice, and culminate in conflicting interests, and claims to allocate the resource justly. The study suggests turning attention from the opposing interests to the importance of the dominant values to all, to create a sense of community across stakeholder groups. For salmon management, this would mean expanding the focus from ways to manage the stocks to reasons for managing. We find the justification theory useful for analyzing fish-related values and the consequent human pressures to fisheries. The theory regards management as a tool for increasing common good instead of promoting aggregates of individual interests. It helps to identify not only differences but also commonalities between groups and interests, and to redirect a culture of disagreement towards compromises and an improved legitimacy and effectiveness of decisions.

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Contact author: Suvi Ignatius, University of Helsinki, Department of Environmental Sciences, Kotka Maritime Research Centre, Keskuskatu 10, 48100 Kotka, Finland, email: suvi.ignatius@helsinki.fi