

Coastal Livelihoods and Sea Sustainability in the Blue Economy: An Introductory Reflection

*Paula Uimonen**

Abstract

This special issue focuses on how the Blue Economy development model impacts on coastal livelihoods and sea sustainability in Tanzania. The Blue Economy discourse tends to be framed in optimistic rhetoric of new opportunities for development, promising a triple-win scenario of economic growth, improved livelihood and marine protection. But socioeconomic realities on the ground offer a more nuanced appraisal of the challenges and opportunities involved. This multidisciplinary special issue interrogates critical aspects of development in the Blue Economy, focusing on both social and environmental sustainability. The articles draw on recently concluded empirical research on how coastal communities relate to the ocean, as part of the research project *Swahili Ocean Worlds. Fishing Communities and Sea Sustainability in Tanzania* (2022–2024). The studies presented here cover a variety of topics explored by the research team: coastal livelihoods, women's narratives and inclusion, aquaculture and entrepreneurship, changing fishing practices and cultural expressions of music. When analysing their findings, the authors draw on their knowledge in the disciplines of anthropology, creative arts, development studies, geography and sociology, thus contributing to the oceanic turn in social sciences.

Keywords: *collaborative and decolonial research design, theorizing with the sea, multidisciplinary research, stakeholder workshops, Swahili ocean worlds*

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1. Introduction and Summary of Key Findings

Focusing on relationships between people and the ocean in coastal communities, this special issue investigates how the *Blue Economy* impacts on *local livelihoods* and *sea sustainability*. Tailored for small island developing states and least developed coastal countries, the Blue Economy (BE) model articulates the *potential* of sustainable use of marine resources (World Bank, 2017). In global development, the Blue Economy concept emerged out of the Rio +20 conference in 2012, and the launch of the Blue Growth Initiative by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2013. The Blue Economy is receiving more scholarly attention globally (for a recent overview, see Heidkamp et al., 2022), as well as in Africa and the Indian Ocean region (see Crewe & Attri, 2018; Sparks,

* Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University: paula.uimonen@socant.su.se. ORCID: 0000-0002-4228-3403.

2021). So far, the Blue Economy in Tanzania has mainly been researched from a management or policy perspective, focusing on economic development (Mwaijande, 2021; Ulega et al., 2022; Zakayo & Mbilinyi, 2023). More recently, researchers have started to pay more attention to local communities and social development (e.g., Maskaeva et al., 2024, Mtui, 2024). While building on such work, this special issue aims to offer a more holistic perspective, focusing on both *social* and *environmental* sustainability in coastal communities.

In Tanzania, the Blue Economy paradigm is becoming more prominent (GoT, 2024). A Blue Economy policy was launched in Zanzibar in 2020, and in mainland Tanzania in 2024. These policies have been facilitated by international organizations such as FAO and the World Bank. They have also been inspired by the *Africa Blue Economy Strategy* adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2019. The *Tanzania Development Vision 2050* acclaims how Tanzania reached a lower-middle-income status in 2020, although the benefits of economic growth are far from equal or widespread among the population (GoT, 2025: 7). Focused on *inclusive growth*, this new vision identifies the *blue economy* as one of nine transformative sectors to realize its goals (GoT, 2025: 62).¹

As elaborated in this special issue, the BE model is not always aligned with *local livelihoods*, and risks magnifying existing inequalities (Mwaipopo & Ndaluka, 2023). In political rhetoric, the BE is often touted as the engine of economic development through sustainable use of marine resources. For instance, in official policy it is conceptualized as:

Uchumi wa Buluu ni dhana ambayo inachagiza ukuaji wa uchumi kupitia matumizi endelevu ya rasilimali za maji kwa kuzingatia uhifadhi wa mazingira na ushirikishwaji wa jamii. (The Blue Economy is a concept that can stimulate economic growth through a sustainable use of marine resources, based on environmental conservation and community involvement) (GoT, 2024: viii).

But oftentimes, the immediate focus is on economic development, and in actual practice short-term gains tend to outweigh longer-term considerations and sustainability.

Indeed, from a social development perspective, the BE does not necessarily deliver what local communities need. Like so many other development paradigms, it constitutes a top-down model, recasting capitalist modernity in terms of blue potentials. Similar to other expert systems of knowledge, proponents of the BE model tend to ignore and override local knowledge, even though the introduction of such an “alien knowledge system” may have “destructive consequences” (Standing, 2023: 114). This is not a new problem in Tanzania, where marine conservation efforts have clashed with coastal communities for decades (Walley, 2002; Mwaipopo et al., 2010, 2011; Ishengoma, 2023).

¹ The nine sectors are listed as follows: agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, construction and real estate, mining, blue economy, sports and creative industries, financial services, consumer services.

As shown here, local communities have not been sufficiently included in the development or implementation of the BE policy. Policy makers and other technocratic experts seem to have paid more attention to global discourses than to local realities, thus crafting development initiatives that are not well grounded in community needs and priorities. As elaborated in the article by Ndesanjo in this issue: “BE policies risk reinforcing inequalities and marginalising small-scale fishers and women, rather than improving coastal welfare.” The inclusion of women in particular has often been overlooked, despite their critical role in coastal development, as discussed in the articles by Ndaluka and Mwaipopo, and Khatib. Indeed, as noted by Ndaluka and Mwaipopo, “... even though women spoke appreciatively of the BE, they pondered whether their capacities were adequately appreciated by these policies.” Also, Khatib elaborates on the rather superficial and even misguided forms of inclusion of women in BE initiatives, from inappropriate equipment to inadequate training. The marginalization of women is also evident in other studies, which have found some negative outcomes in social indicators of the BE, especially in relation to gender inequality (Maskaeva et al., 2024). At the same time, private sector investment is encouraged, bringing in new actors whose aims and efforts are not necessarily well aligned with community development. Similar to the findings in Mtui (2024), BE investments tend to only bring limited benefit to local communities; whilst their livelihoods are infringed, or even displaced and dispossessed by such activities, resulting in growing inequalities.

When paying attention to social development, the authors in this issue also highlight the importance of cultural norms and values, as well as cultural heritage. For instance, by discussing social and cultural values in women’s narratives, Ndaluka and Mwaipopo underline the importance of cultural context for “BE’s ability to meaningfully sustain and uplift the economic situations of women and other local producers in a context of cultural and social sensitivities.” When interrogating the inclusion of women in the BE in Zanzibar, Khatib discusses changes in women’s roles over time, and the challenges they face in patriarchal structures. She notes: “In Zanzibar, patriarchal norms, reinforced by global economic trends, contribute to the reproduction of these inequalities, positioning women in specific, often disadvantaged, roles within the Blue Economy.” Turning to how fishers express their relationship with the ocean through music, Masimbi elaborates on the importance of safeguarding the cultural heritage of coastal communities, which has evolved over centuries of coexistence with the sea.

This special issue is also concerned with *sea sustainability*, which becomes particularly problematic in the context of the BE development paradigm. From a critical, post-development perspective, the BE model constitutes yet another anthropocentric and universalist form of developmentalism; one that perpetuates the rhetoric of green capitalism articulated in Rio+20 and Agenda 2030 (Kothari et al., 2019: xxvi). In global development, this blue model is integrated into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 14 on life under water. Scholars have recognised SDG 14 to be a critical step in the evolution of ocean

governance, yet they highlight the need to *redefine ocean narratives*, especially the relationship between people, resources and the ocean (Spalding & Ycaza, 2020). Addressing sustainability from a holistic perspective, we recognise the need to resolve tensions between socio-economic development, poverty alleviation and a sustainable use of the ocean, thus addressing SDG 14 (oceans) and SDG 13 (climate action); as well as SDG 1 (poverty reduction) and SDG 10 (reduced inequality). More importantly, we foreground local understandings of sea sustainability, thus privileging coastal people's perspectives.

When foregrounding the ocean, the interdependence of society and sea becomes palpable, along with the pressing need for environmental justice. *Ocean grabbing*, especially in the global South, is of growing concern for environmental justice movements, not least since it reduces the *blue commons* (Barbesgaard, 2018; Martinez-Alier, 2019; Thunberg 2022; Standing, 2023; Villamayor-Tomas & Muradian, 2023). Earlier studies have shown that environmental conservation efforts in Tanzania have reduced access to the ocean space for local fishers, while privileging business investments, thus resulting in problematic forms of ocean grabbing and elite capture (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Torell et al. 2017). With the BE, more ocean spaces are becoming enclosed for various forms of resource extraction, thus exasperating the problem of environmental injustice through blue injustice (Mtui, 2024).

The studies presented here show how the BE model can restrict local access to ocean space, while the commercialization of blue commons can lead to elite capture. Aquaculture is a case in point, as discussed in Uimonen's article on sea cucumber farming, which rarely delivers its promises of wealth to coastal communities. In Tanzania, coastal aquaculture revolves around seaweed and sea cucumber farming. In both cases, ocean spaces are enclosed, thus restricting common access. Seaweed farming tends to be undertaken by local communities, especially women; while sea cucumber farming is increasingly involving outside investors. The ability to earn supplementary income from seaweed farming is appreciated by coastal women, as shown in the articles by Khatib, and Ndaluka and Mwaipopo. But women also struggle with conflicts over ocean space: from hotels banning the drying of seaweed on the beach, as discussed by Khatib; to fishers destroying seaweed infrastructure, as documented by Ndaluka and Mwaipopo. Nowadays there is also a growing tendency for outside actors to get involved in the value-added production and sales of various seaweed products, such as body oils, flour, or soaps. In both forms of aquaculture, there is thus a growing risk of both ocean grabbing and elite capture.

However, it is not only access to ocean space that is lost, marine life forms are also negatively impacted. As discussed here, contrary to the rhetoric of caring for marine environments, artisanal aquaculture can have harmful effects on ocean creatures (Uimonen, 2025). Fishing can also cause environmental degradation. As discussed by Ndaluka, population growth and technological developments have

led to overfishing, with several species becoming depleted. At the same time, more young people turn to fishing as a source of income, not least to catch *dagaa* (anchovies), which has become a popular source of cash and alternative source of seafood, as explored in Trägårdh's article on *dagaa* fishing in Zanzibar. Since *dagaa* is also exported, there is a real risk of overexploitation, the ecological impact of which is made worse by this small fish constituting food for larger fish. While *dagaa* fishing and processing can benefit local livelihoods, even offering valuable income to coastal women as discussed by Ndaluka and Mwaipopo, the need to protect the ocean and its various creatures needs to be given more attention.

As shown here, in many cases, people who live with the ocean are fully aware of environmental problems; but caught in destructive spirals of poverty, they lack alternatives. Coastal people tend to have an intimate knowledge of the ocean environment, and they are also attentive to ecological changes. As discussed in this special issue, the ocean is a significant aspect of coastal culture, as expressed in songs performed while fishing, in rhythm with the ocean. But these cultural articulations are also changing as a result of technological changes. Overfishing is a recognised problem, but ecological concerns are sometimes neglected when peoples' livelihoods are at stake (Silas et al., 2020). Environmental change is making the situation even more precarious.

Climate change is having a detrimental impact on coastal communities: from rising water temperatures, to extreme weather conditions (Yanda et al., 2019). It is well known that the ocean is central for all life on our planet, yet much less is known about how climate change will affect oceans; and by extension, life on land. This special issue shows some of the effects of climate change on coastal livelihoods, not least in aquaculture. For example, seaweed farming is already becoming affected, as rising temperatures are increasing the risk of diseases in the plants. Some efforts are being made to explore seaweed farming in deeper waters, as discussed by Khatib, but these initiatives raise new challenges: from the need for swimming skills, to added costs of transportation. Extreme weather events are also wreaking havoc with coastal communities and ocean environments, as discussed by Uimonen. For instance, in May 2024, coastal areas in Tanzania were hit by the cyclone Hidaya, with devastating effects: from destroyed infrastructures on land, to decimated life forms in the ocean.

2. Background: Research on Swahili Ocean Worlds

This special issue presents the findings from the recently completed research project *Swahili Ocean Worlds: Fishing Communities and Sea Sustainability in Tanzania* (2022–2024). It was carried out by a multidisciplinary team of researchers from Stockholm University (SU), the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), and the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA). The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council/Development Research, Grant Number 2021–03661. It received ethical clearance from the Swedish Ethical Review Board; and research permits from the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), and the Zanzibar Research Committee.

As a concept, *Swahili ocean worlds* captures how people relate to the ocean on the Swahili coast. It denotes interactions and interdependencies with the ocean, and the meanings people attribute to these oceanic relations. Swahili ocean worlds are multi-layered, multidimensional and multispecies biosocial constellations. Formed over centuries of transoceanic transition and intercultural interaction, these hybrid socioecological worlds are in a constant flux, signifying the ongoing worlding of a world in a constant motion. Worlds are in motion, just like the ocean itself. In Swahili ocean worlds, spatiotemporal fluctuations are directed by the oceanic environment: seasonally ordered by monsoons, daily mediated by waves and water levels, and culturally structured around the Islamic lunar calendar. The ocean has a strong bearing on the fluidity of social relations as well, from the intimacy of interethnic marriages to the expansive distribution of friends and relatives. Spatiotemporal relations with the ocean draw on a deep history, spanning several millennia (Sheriff, 2010; Wynne-Jones & LaVioletta, 2018). Monsoon trade winds mediated precolonial interactions between African, Asian and Arab worlds. During the colonial era, European powers came to dominate maritime trade. In postcolonial times, the Swahili coast has become more firmly integrated into the waves of global capitalism: from international tourism, to transnational seafood trade.

The ocean mediates the mobility of coastal people, while sustaining their livelihood. Fishers follow fish, from overnight fishing in the sea to prolonged fishing camps (*dago*) on coastlines; not to mention daytime catches by the seashore. Women process and sell fish, for local as well as export markets. They also collect various forms of seafood, in the mangroves or on the seafloor, for household consumption or cash earnings. A growing number of men and women engage in aquaculture, especially sea cucumber and seaweed farming, mostly for export. The ocean is also used for travel: to nearby villages and islands; or neighbouring countries such as Comoros, Kenya or Mozambique. These expansive oceanic relationships are integral to coastal life; and are expressions of material, social and spiritual relationality with the ocean.

In Swahili ocean worlds, the centrality of the ocean in everyday life underscores that we live on an ‘ocean planet’ (Helmreich, 2023: xix). People on the Swahili coast in Tanzania have a considerable knowledge of the ocean; including a wealth of marine oral traditions, as exemplified in recent research on marine cultural heritage (Mwasuni, 2023). This oceanic literacy can be compared with the sea ontology of coastal and archipelagic communities around the world (Ingersoll, 2019). As elaborated in an earlier publication by Uimonen and Masimbi (2021), the abstractions of Swahili ocean worlds are inspired by notions of relational ontologies in the *pluriverse*: a world of many worlds (Escobar, 2020) capturing the generative power of the ocean in the becoming of the world (Ingold, 2021). Foregrounding the sea as a theory machine (Helmreich, 2011), the concept Swahili ocean worlds recognises the ocean as a relational field (Krause & Strang, 2016); and as a central feature in the making and remaking of social worlds (Hastrup & Hastrup, 2015; Srinivas et al., 2020).

By foregrounding the ocean, *Swahili ocean worlds* shows some of the analytical benefits of thinking with the sea; encouraging social scientists to extend their gaze beyond concerns with social issues, to also incorporate marine environments: from ecosystems, to ocean creatures. The ambition is not to turn all social scientists into environmentalists, but rather to contribute to the oceanic turn in social sciences.



Photo 1: Foregrounding the sea in *Swahili ocean worlds*
(All photographs by the Author)

2.1 Collaborative and Decolonial Research Design

From the outset, this project was motivated by a decolonial research design (Mbembe, 2021). Theoretically, the idea was to bring forth how coastal communities live with the ocean, and the value of their local knowledge for sustainable coexistence, as denoted in the concept of Swahili ocean worlds. Methodologically, the ambition was to work closely with coastal communities and capture the complexity of their relationships with the ocean, through sensory and multimodal fieldwork methods. Although community members were not consulted for the initial research project application, their perspectives have been of privilege throughout the research process. The ambition was to bring together different disciplinary perspectives, as well as different stakeholders; while exploring suitable forms of engagement with a broader public. Over time, this decolonial ambition was strengthened through participation in a parallel project—'Decolonizing Research Methodologies' (2022–2024)—with collaborating universities from Burkina Faso, Mali, Sweden and Tanzania.

Working together as a multidisciplinary team has enabled this project to draw on different fields of expertise, while bringing together scholars from Mainland Tanzania, Zanzibar and Sweden. The project has benefitted from a range of academic disciplines: anthropology, gender studies, creative arts, development studies, geography, and sociology of religion. It has also drawn on different levels of expertise: from Master and PhD students, to junior and senior researchers. While most Tanzanian researchers have been based at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), the inclusion of scholars from the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) has been beneficial. It is common that Mainland scholars do research on Zanzibar, but the opposite is less common, not to mention collaboration between the two. Indeed, the administrative boundaries between Mainland Tanzania and the Zanzibar archipelago are evident in the need for separate research permits in the two places.

To decolonize knowledge production, the project has explored multimodal research methods through a creative use of digital media. Researchers have captured everyday life with the help of mobile photography and video. Engagements with interlocutors—exchanging texts, voices and images—were also mediated through WhatsApp. Through such multimodal approaches, the team was also able to pay attention to alternative means of knowledge production, thus translating the project’s decolonial ambitions into practice (Kaur & Klinkert, 2021; Westmoreland, 2022). The team has also produced documentary films with the help of professional filmmakers. Visual and audio-visual data have been shared through social media platforms, with dedicated channels on Instagram and YouTube.²

2.2 Multistakeholder Workshops

The project has also engaged with stakeholders through workshops, to identify and inspire more sustainable engagements with the sea. Forming part of our collaborative research design, the workshop format constituted a *site of transformation* where research can feed into practice (Elliott & Culhane, 2017). In these interactive spaces, members of fishing communities were seated at the same tables as government officials and highly educated experts (Photo 2). This spatial arrangement assured a more equal exchange among the participants, which in itself makes for a transformative site; thereby breaking through established social hierarchies for a more decolonial approach in social science research (Mkandawire, 2005). During the workshops, stakeholders provided valuable inputs; and preliminary research results were presented for open discussion, thus involving some community representatives throughout the research process. In the final workshop in August 2025, stakeholders were invited to provide inputs to the project’s policy brief.

² <https://www.instagram.com/swahilioceanworlds> and <https://www.youtube.com/@swahilioceanworlds7658>



Photo 2: Multistakeholder workshop in Zanzibar

3. Outline of Articles and Creative Collage

The articles in this special issue elaborate on the results of the various studies in the *Swahili Ocean Worlds* project. These studies have been carried out through fieldwork in different places in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, with the support of research assistants. The authors present their empirical material in detail, thus giving voice to the study participants. The analysis draws on their expertise in their respective fields, thus bringing forth theoretical elaborations from different disciplines. In each article, the authors also explain and reflect on the research methods used in their studies. Some also include recommendations.

In the first article, Ndesanjo interrogates the ‘Implications for Coastal Livelihoods of the Blue Economy Agenda in Tanzania’. Tanzania is positioning itself to harness the potential of the BE for socio-economic development. However, the extent to which marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities will be affected remains unclear. This article examines how the conservation and management of marine environments in Tanzania, within the context of the BE, align with the sustenance of coastal communities’ livelihoods. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with fishers and seaweed farmers in Bagamoyo District; as well as in Unguja and Pemba. The findings reveal that, unlike their counterparts in Zanzibar, fisheries stakeholders in Bagamoyo are less aware of the BE agenda; and feel less involved in its implementation. Additionally, the findings show that coastal communities are generally actively engaged in protecting marine environments. The study also highlights the increasing involvement of the private sector in BE sectors such as coastal tourism, fish-farming, mining, and fish processing. The article

contributes to a comparative analysis of the BE in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, thus offering a holistic appraisal of its impact on coastal livelihoods. It also makes substantial recommendations for policy, research, and action.

In the second article, Mwaipopo and Ndaluka elaborate on ‘Women’s Narratives on Livelihoods from the Ocean’. The article reflects on the meanings emanating from women’s narratives about their experiences of living with the sea to contribute to the debates on ‘localizing’ the BE. Employing a feminist political ecology analysis, it explores how women’s voices and interests are heard in the BE agenda, and the extent to which this agenda is sensitive to their circumstances. The study employed a qualitative approach to generate information from male and female members in villages in Bagamoyo, as well as in Unguja and Pemba. The findings suggest that despite wide knowledge on women’s engagement in ocean-based livelihood activities, BE priorities do not give due attention to their circumstances and realities as they engage with the sea. There are also issues about social inclusion and equity as articulated by BE provisions and decisions in the country. It is contended that power relations at different levels often influence decisions. Consequently, these decisions marginalize women from attaining meaningful benefit from marine resources. In addition to its gender analysis of everyday life in coastal communities, this article makes an in-depth contribution to broader debates on women, gender, and ocean-based livelihoods.

The focus shifts to aquaculture in the third article, where Uimonen interrogates ‘Blue Entrepreneurship and Sea Cucumbers as Marine Gold’. As part of the BE development paradigm, sea cucumber farming is now encouraged by the government and international partners, to improve livelihoods while protecting the ocean. Sea cucumbers have featured in lucrative commercial relationships for decades, collected for export to China. But the demand has been so great that this ocean creature has become endangered. Aquaculture is now hyped as a sustainable solution to problems of overexploitation, enacted through bordered enclosures in the ocean, and an optimistic rhetoric of sea cucumbers as marine gold. As a marine export product, farmed sea cucumbers are embedded in blue entrepreneurship, a moral economy of neoliberal commodification. But while enacting blue capitalism, from the perspective of local livelihoods and marine environments, sea cucumber aquaculture may actually counteract social and environmental sustainability. Ocean grabbing and elite capture exasperate socioeconomic vulnerability in coastal communities; while sea cucumbers risk dying in captivity, unable to protect themselves from extreme weather and other climate changes. The ethnography builds on multi-sited fieldwork in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, using multimodal and sensory research methods. This article captures ongoing changes in Swahili ocean worlds, especially the complex entanglements with global capitalism, and the challenges of sustainability through aquaculture.

In the fourth article, Khatib zooms on ‘Women’s Inclusion in the Blue Economy in Zanzibar’. Zanzibar is a leading hub for BE in the Western Indian Ocean region. The

ocean-based economy contributes over 37% to Zanzibar's GDP; and about 17.5% of women are employed in fisheries and aquaculture (mostly seaweed). However, these ocean-based livelihoods are associated with climate sensitive activities and the effects of climate change. Based on ethnographic qualitative fieldwork in Unguja and Pemba islands, this study builds on interviews with fishermen, seaweed farmers, collectors of molluscs and prawns, and technical officers from the Ministry of Blue Economy of Zanzibar. The findings demonstrate that women's inclusiveness remains a challenge since most BE officials—and even local communities—do not know how to include women in various socioeconomic developments. Although most women are well informed of the initiatives that take place in their areas, they have limited participation in capacity building and empowerment efforts that can transform their livelihoods. These limitations are becoming an urgent matter due to population growth, diminishing marine resources, and increasing climate change impacts. By focusing on Zanzibar, this article contributes to an in-depth analysis of how the BE is enacted; especially its influence on women in a time of climate change.

Trägårdh presents his study 'Fishing Down the Food Chain for Dagaa' in the fifth article. He conducted this study of *dagaa* (anchovies) fishing in Zanzibar for his Master's thesis, with support from Sida's Minor Field Studies program (Trägårdh, 2023). His study was loosely connected to the *Swahili Ocean Worlds* project. This article explores fishing practices and fishermen's relation to the ocean in Zanzibar, in the context of global political economy. Based on two months of fieldwork in Unguja, it centres around catching small pelagic fish species, *dagaa*, which has become vital for food security among the local population. The article accounts for how *dagaa* fishing, in contrast to other fishing practices, constitutes a different relation to the ocean. The expanding *dagaa* industry stems from an overexploitation of bigger fish species. The article discusses how this exploitation, down to the food chain, is connected to the political economy in Zanzibar. It argues that capitalism, and an increasing need for money, constitute a metabolic rift that alienates *dagaa* fishermen. This alienated relationship between local fishermen and the ocean is discussed in the context of Zanzibar's multifaceted position in the global political economy: as a postcolonial state, a 'paradise island' for Western tourists, and a central actor in BE investment. In focusing on *dagaa*, this article captures important transformations in fishing practices and relations with the ocean.

In the sixth article, Masimbi explores 'Fishing Songs and Rhythms of the Ocean'. This article explores how fishers express their relationship with the ocean through songs performed during fishing. The article draws on a PhD fieldwork in Bagamoyo in August 2024, where the author collected a number of songs performed by fishermen in occupational contexts. The study was based on an ethnographic fieldwork, using methods of participant observation, interviews, and focus-group discussions, as well as filming and audio recording. During fieldwork in Bagamoyo, the author observed fishermen paddle to their fishing grounds, creating rhythms and sounds with their paddles, while singing along. The sounds of singing, paddling, and water splashing, as well as their body movements, created a beautiful display of their

relationship to each other, their work, and the ocean. Studies have shown that music can offer an understanding of the social lives within a community, and their interactions with the environment. This study builds on such research in ecomusicology, ethnomusicology, and related studies; while focusing on how fishers relate to the ocean environment. This article contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural heritage in Swahili ocean worlds, focusing on how fishers sing while fishing, thereby expressing and performing their relationships with the ocean.

This special issue also contains a creative collage of poems and song, to convey everyday life in Swahili ocean worlds in more artistic ways. Our interlocutors, researchers and collaborating artists share these materials here, with due permission. Through these artistic articulations of living with the ocean, we hope to give readers a better feel for the topics discussed here.

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