

Cat Harbor Fishery

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1 Part I: Static Analysis - Collective action

Cat Harbor is a former name of Lumsden North, a small settlement in the municipality of Lumsden located on the Straight Shore of Newfoundland in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The original CPR case was based on a sociological study of Lumsden conducted by James C. Faris in 1963, 3 years before the community was resettled and merged with the former Lumsden South. Cat Harbor's inshore fishing grounds constituted a crucial common pool resource relevant to the commons dilemma. The action situation involved 21 fishing crews consisting of 72 men engaged in fishery during the summer cod-trapping season and 38 fishermen exploiting the late summer/fall cod fishing grounds. The resource system included the marine ecosystem and food web, such cod and to a lesser degree, lobster, salmon, and seal. There was a lack of local government in Cat Harbor; traditional forms of resource exploitation and social structure are increasingly being undermined by exogenous factors.

1.1 The Commons Dilemma

- Potential over-appropriation or poor coordination of appropriation were not mentioned in the study. However, it identifies the lack of formal rules and local governance in Cat Harbor. Informal rules act to suppress the accumulation of power by individuals and enforce a view of any outsider as untrustworthy and dangerous.

1.2 Biophysical Context (IAD)

- **Natural infrastructure:**
 - Cat Harbor is a rural fishing community in the northeast of Newfoundland (island in Canada). Cat Harbor peninsula is a small headland reaching northeastward into the Atlantic Ocean. It is one mile long, under $\frac{1}{4}$ mile across, gradually widening to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile where it joins the mainland. Outer island is heavily forested; wood is the main source of building materials (bridges, piers that are often broken down by the ice) and fuel. It is a difficult and inaccessible spot. The first inhabitants of Cat Harbor are believed to be fugitives from justice, deserters, and pirates who chose to settle there to be left alone, and escape apprehension.
 - The sea is the primary physical determinant in the life of Cat Harbor residents. Men climb on top of their houses to observe the sea and weather, and study “the glass” (barometer) several times daily. Sea produce offers them living, and dominates much of their cognition as well as the attitude towards land; sea access is the most important consideration in the division and inheritance of it.

- **Hard human-made infrastructure:**

The gear and boats.

1.3 Attributes of the Community (IAD)

- **Social Infrastructure**

- The fishing grounds in Cat Harbor are topologically random. They include nobbs, shoals, and ledges of the sea bottom; fishing in CH requires a good knowledge of it. Spots of ground are found by a system of triangulation with shore marks. Knowledge of marks is a source of intellectual pride among the Cat Harbor residents. They consider themselves better fishermen than any of their neighbors (Department of Fishery records data shows that CH has landed more fish than any other community). Fishermen from Cat Harbor also do not go to other communities as sharemen (see Rules in Use – Position Rules) while there are sharemen from other communities who come to CH.
- There was a secondary school in the neighboring community Lumsden South that took senior students from the four surrounding communities. However, there was still a lack of knowledge of the outside world (that starts just off the peninsula) and high illiteracy that left fishermen in no position to figure out the disadvantages of the system.

- **Human Infrastructure** The total population in 1964 was 285; 149 males and 136 females. Men in Cat Harbors are primarily fishermen (not seamen or sailors), primarily catching cod, but also lobster, salmon, and seals. Others cut the wood getting paid based on the amount of wood they cut. Fishing in Cat Harbor can be very challenging and even dangerous. Ice destroys lobster pots, rips salmon nets, and destroys cod traps. Storms, winds, and fogs are not uncommon in Cat Harbor; fishermen attempt to come in in an undecked vessel during those times. Though Cat Harbor men still prefer the gamble of the fishery to other activities, e.g. cutting the wood. Cat Harbor men prefer the gamble of the fishery and regard paper and pulp companies as merciless exploiters.

1.4 Rules in Use (IAD)

1. Position Rules:

- There are community members and the strangers, people from the outside of the community. The community members own land with an access to water (with a few exceptions).
- Within the community, there are multiple kin categories, such as a crowd (a territorial concept; a group of people that occupy the same garden and may be linked in a common economic endeavor), a clan (a group of people based exclusively on last name), cunny kin (some of the in-laws), fork kin (step parents/children/siblings, half-siblings, adopted children/parents/siblings, illegitimacies).
- In terms of fishing, there are fishing crews and sharemen. Fishing crew usually consists of a man and his sons; people of Cat Harbor expect you to fish with

your own crowd, and with those who you live with, and are kin to. Sharemen are not a part of the crowd, they are the men who take no responsibility for the gear, boat, or expenses of a voyage, but who gets a fixed percentage of the total catch in exchange for their labor.

2. **Boundary Rules:**

- The only way to become a member of Cat Harbor community is to marry someone from there and move to Cat Harbor to live with them. It is not uncommon for the Cat Harbor men to bring wives from the outside. Though they are most likely to be considered strangers even after years of marriage; there is a “Once a stranger, always a stranger” philosophy persistent in Cat Harbor.
- Land not fenced is regarded as common, to be used by anyone; fenced is regarded as owned (no land, however, is deeded from the Crown or formally granted).
- Fencing is always perpendicular to the waterfront, so that there is access to water.
- If a man splits off from his brothers to form his own crew, he must build his own fishing premises accompanied by a segmentation in the garden.
- There is never more than 1 crew per garden regardless of the number of houses.
- To acquire his own piece of land, a man is expected to marry and have children, so that he can have his own fishing crew. Every fence in CH represents a natural segmentation of gardens as a result of a man leaving off from the crew, previously composed of his father and brothers, to fish with his sons.

3. **Choice Rules:**

- Every man in Cat Harbor is expected to marry and form his own fishing crew consisting of him and his children. If he doesn't have one, he can bring in a sharemen which reduces the profits
- As opposed to the summer fishery, fall fishery can be done with only one person which is usually the case whenever the crew is not formed yet.

4. **Aggregation Rules:**

- Cat Harbor residents initiated a drawing system for the assignment of cod-trap berths to reduce the competition (that forced fishermen to set traps very early in order to secure a berth). The drawing regulation has become a statute law incorporated under the Fishery Regulation of the Department of Fisheries of Canada. This system was absent in both neighboring communities, Lumsden South and Cape Freels, where fishermen compete for berths on the basis of first possession and have never agreed on drawing regulation.

5. **Payoffs Rules:** Not identified.

6. **Scope rules:** Not identified.

7. **Information Rules:** There were not explicit information rules mentioned in the study.

8. **Payoff Rules:**

- Fishing in CH requires a good knowledge of the fishing grounds and shore marks that are used to find the fishing spots. Only locals possess this knowledge; it is carefully guarded from strangers.

1.5 Summary

The Cat Harbor case study does not mention any problems related to the commons dilemma. Though it points out the lack of regulation and certain agreements between the agents that facilitate the usage of the common pool resource.

2 Part II. Dynamic Analysis - Robustness

Given the source document, there is insufficient data to make any assessment on the dynamics of this particular common-pool resource. The contributors thus far have been unable to locate any specific updates for this case study.

3 Contributors

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