

Abstract:

To offer an increased understanding of the spatial patterns, temporal, social and physical predictors of the conversion and transformations of land use and land cover in Lake Victoria basin, an assessment of proximate and underlying forces is presented. This paper discusses key theoretical underpinnings for the manifold linkages existing between selected drivers and land use and cover change around the basin and their consequences on human wellbeing. Using a meta-analytical research design, the paper analyses ecosystems level cases of the causes of land use and cover change in the basin, in order to determine any spatio-temporal or institutional patterns and dynamics. A suite of recurrent core variables have been identified to influence land use and cover changes in the basin. The most prominent of these at the underlying category are climatic factors, economic factors, institutions, national and regional policies, population growth, and other remote influences. At the proximate level, these factors drive cropland expansion, overgrazing, infrastructure extension and rates of land degradation. These are supported by empirical evidence from the basin. This assessment is crucial for appropriate local and transboundary policy interventions, which have to be fine-tuned to the locale-specific dynamic patterns associated with the inherent land use and land cover changes.