

Fabinyi, M. and K. Barclay. *Asia-Pacific Fishing Livelihoods*. Palgrave Macmillan. Cham, Switzerland. 2022. (pp. 111) E-Book (open access URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79591-7>) (ISBN: 978-3-0307-9591-7). Hardcover (ISBN: 978-3-0307-9590-0) €59.94

### ***Asia-Pacific Fishing Livelihoods***

In *Asia-Pacific Fishing Livelihoods*, authors Michael Fabinyi and Kate Barclay put forward the argument that a ‘relational’ view of fishing livelihoods can contribute to more ecologically sustainable and socially equitable governance strategies. They argue the reason this is needed is because fisheries governance has historically been too narrowly viewed and understood, centring on the economic value of fisheries and/or the impact of fishing on marine stocks and ecosystems. Such a narrow perspective on fisheries governance has therefore affected how we understand what a fishing livelihood is (e.g. the act of catching, selling, and buying). Consequently, this viewpoint has created forms of governance which overlook other crucial dimensions of fishing livelihoods, such as historical processes, and the diversity of social practices and identities which are central to better understanding fishing livelihoods. In other words, it’s not only about the fish. It is, crucially, about the people doing the fishing and who are in turn shaped by broader processes of globalisation, social relations, political economy, and governance. The book provides a premise which nicely ties together fishing livelihoods and governance by pointing out how fishing livelihoods “are not simply an economic process” (4) but are fixed in and intersect with social relationships. In turn, these social structures are reflected in, and help explain, the diverse forms of fishing livelihoods which we see. It is on this last point that I think the book’s significance should be lauded insofar as it provides a pivotal contribution from the social sciences to the study of fishing and fishing livelihoods by bringing together various threads related to a more social conception of fishing livelihoods.

The book does this by building upon the work of other scholars such as Johnson et al. (2018) and Voyer (2018) (among many others) within the marine social science literature. Specifically, Michael and Kate zero in on the intersection between three areas: i) sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA); ii) the social wellbeing approach; and iii) political economy approach. The first chapter provides an introduction to fishing livelihoods and fisheries governance. The second chapter focuses on how fishing livelihoods are shaped by the wider processes of capitalist transformation by considering case studies of Philippines and Papua New Guinea. Chapter three looks at how fishing livelihoods relate to the social process of access and exclusion, focusing on status and gender. The fourth chapter shifts to discuss how different

models and practice of governance can shape livelihoods, using cases from Australia and Indonesia. The fifth (and last) chapter focuses on the intersection of fishing livelihoods and wellbeing and discusses how the approach taken in the book can be practically used to improve governance.

What makes this book noteworthy is that the authors draw upon their own collective research experience, covering Island Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea) and the Pacific (Australia, China, Japan, Solomon Islands). At the same time, this approach also narrows the book’s focus geographically. This lack of geographic breadth as well as the type of fishing covered (i.e. the book omits inland fisheries) is a shortcoming but also a fair compromise in the view of this reviewer. Nevertheless, its lack of breadth is more than made up for by its depth of focus via case studies which allow the reader to gain context while also cementing the authors’ arguments using empirical findings. In this regard, I think the book does a commendable job of marrying the analytical with the empirical, which is one of its major strengths.

On this last point, I really appreciate how the authors elevate the book’s relevance from the confines of being on a traditional academic’s shelf to a position where it would be equally at home on a fisheries policymaker’s or a civil society actor’s desk. They do this by acknowledging the fundamental assumptions about knowledge which divide social scientists within fisheries research and fisheries scientists and consequently hamper fisheries governance from including complex issues, and they propose the wellbeing approach as a means of better understanding the interrelated environmental, political, and economic dimensions of fisheries. Since wellbeing is a framework, it has been able to incorporate a diverse array of methods which span the qualitative-to-quantitative spectrum. As such, researchers from different disciplines can engage, and perhaps work together, on fisheries research. In addition, the concept brings together different stakeholders involved in fisheries governance. To bolster their claim, Michael and Kate present case studies focused on evaluating the effects of fisheries on the wellbeing of communities in Australia and Victoria and tuna-fishing communities in Indonesia and Solomon Islands. To reinforce the practical nature of the book, the authors provide a very useful table on page 101 which provides a framework to inform the assessment of fisheries governance via a community wellbeing lens.

The few criticisms which exist are relatively minor and do not take away from the overall strength of the book and

the authors' contributions. For example, while it would be reasonable to assume that a reader would be familiar with terminology related to fishing, there are instances where certain terms are left undefined (e.g. catch-per-unit effort, 5). In other cases, statements could benefit from further elaboration to drive a point home, such as when the authors state, "In many cases, the very viability of fishing livelihoods is under threat, following the trajectory of North American cod fisheries" (5), but the authors do not provide examples of cases which would have bolstered their claim. One aspect which would have strengthened the book's claim related to the utility of adopting a wellbeing approach to better understand and inform fisheries governance would be to have more intentionally included and incorporated quantitative social and economic data in the examples used, even if it meant drawing from research other than the authors' own. To the credit of the authors, they do acknowledge this in their case study in chapter 5 on tuna fisheries in Indonesia and Solomon Islands ("it would be useful to have quantitative social and economic data and analysis") and cite this as a focal point in their future research.

Overall, the book is well written and a pleasure to read. One of my personal favourite features is its length: at 111 pages, it is concise. As such, it would be a great choice for instructors in higher education to assign to undergraduate and/or graduate students or for those same students who are looking to get a primer on fishing livelihoods and governance in the Asia-Pacific for their own research, in addition to academics, researchers, and civil society groups which work with fishing communities across the Asia-Pacific region.

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	DOI: 10.4103/cs.cs_88_22