

Book Reviews

Bown, Natalie, Tim Gray, and Selina M. Stead. 2013. *Contested Forms of Governance in Marine Protected Areas: A Study of Co-Management and Adaptive Co-Management*. London and New York: Routledge.

Reviewed by Betül Gokkir
Melikşah University, Turkey

Establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) as a tool of ecosystem-based management is an increasingly popular practice. Bown, Gray, and Stead offer an essential study of governance of MPAs that will be valuable for scholars and practitioners of marine and environmental policy. In most real-world instances, there is a tradeoff between progress in ecological, socio-economic, and governmental goals. Through an in-depth examination of the case of Cayos Cochinos Marine Protected Area (CCMPA) in Honduras, *Contested Forms of Governance in Marine Protected Areas* illustrates how different governance strategies can respond to the fundamental challenge of balancing priorities in protecting marine areas.

This book starts with an introduction of four types of MPA governance: conventional management, co-management, adaptive management, and adaptive co-management. Then, it focuses on the implementation of two specific management strategies in the CCMPA: co-management, from 2004 to 2009, and adaptive co-management, from 2008 to 2013. Three central chapters of the book elaborate on ecological, socio-economic, and governmental impacts of the two management strategies in the CCMPA. The last two chapters of the book are dedicated to evaluating the effectiveness of co-management and adaptive co-management in the CCMPA and to making recommendations for improving the quality of governance in the future.

In addition to putting the local, small-scale fishers in a disadvantaged position, implementation of the CCMPA in its early years did not prevent loss of biodiversity in the Cayos Cochinos. The co-management governance plan of 2004–2009 was a conservation-driven strategy that did not sufficiently consider the needs and involvement of local communities. As a result, increasing social unrest led to the development of an adaptive co-management model, with more emphasis on socio-economic and good governance measures, compared to the ecological focus of the co-management model. According to the authors' evaluation of both strategies, the first management plan proved more successful in some ecological aspects, whereas the second plan performed better in participatory decision-making, good governance, and maintaining the livelihood of small-scale fishers in the local community.

As the authors confirm, the term adaptive governance points to the need to quickly respond and adapt to lessons from ecological and social governance experiences. While also assigning room for policy issues such as collaborative management, this concept emphasizes adaptation to ecological developments because of scientific uncertainty and the complexity of ecological systems. Nevertheless, from the chapter on ecological impacts of co-management and adaptive co-management to the final section on recommendations for future improvements, discussion relies most heavily on participation and representation issues and socio-economic conditions of the local communities. The adaptive nature of the second management plan mostly applies as adaptation to co-management governance principles.

Even though the authors maintain that “the findings presented in this book are culturally and institutionally unique to the CCMPA” (p. 10), outputs of this study could more effectively serve the goal of enhancing the reader’s understanding of MPA governance and governance of common areas, and providing lessons for those interested in general public policy. First, despite one chapter comparing the impacts of different types of management systems and another one discussing future strategies, the authors introduce observations and recommendations specific to the CCMPA and are reticent to provide lessons and recommendations addressing MPA governance more broadly. They could usefully provide key observations to be taken into account in governance of MPAs in the same geographical region or other MPAs in areas with indigenous or traditional populations. Given the rise in MPAs around the world, other researchers would be interested in such conclusions.

Additionally, the CCMPA case can add to the existing research on governance of the commons, which can be considered as a continuation of the Ostrom School. As the title of the book suggests, Cayos Cochinos—a previously open access area—became a scene of contested forms of governance from 1993 to 2013. Implementation of different strategies in the same area, which allows for an experimental project setting, and a close examination of the environment–human interaction around a common resource for the local community, open excellent prospects to revisit studies about the commons. Finally, the CCMPA case offers favorable grounds to reassess arguments about public policy, particularly regarding the technical/scientific versus social aspects of policy implementation and measurement and assessment of effectiveness. Indeed, frequently in the second chapter on governance models and occasionally throughout the rest of the book, the authors demonstrate their knowledge of research and debates on these topics; moreover, they possess in-depth knowledge of the case thanks to extensive field research, interviews, and surveys. Given these strengths of the study, it is a missed opportunity not to indicate clearly and directly the insights and questions this book could bring to such major research fields.