

Webster, D. G. 2015. *Beyond the Tragedy in Global Fisheries*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Reviewed by Áslaug Ásgeirsdóttir

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There is a lot to like about D. G. Webster's sweeping study of global fisheries governance, in which she undertakes the formidable task of developing a unifying theory to explain the variation in effectiveness of global fisheries governance over time and across the world. At its core, the book challenges the idea that the tragedy of the commons is solely to blame for the global depletion of fish stocks. Instead, Webster argues, we need to look at the prevalence of responsive governance, which addresses environmental problems post hoc, instead of proactively. By relying on responsive governance, resource users find themselves on a perpetual management treadmill that vacillates from effective to ineffective and back again. Her analysis relies on the concepts of "profit disconnect" and "power disconnect," and how they impact what she calls the action cycle/structural context (AC/SC). The profit disconnect leads fishers to expand fishing areas, innovate better fishing technology, and attempt to open new markets. The power disconnect then leads fishers and governments—where they are involved—to devise institutions that exclude competitors and award fishers various governmental supports to finance new technology, set minimum prices, and provide favorable financing. These responses have more recently been dampened by increased demand for conservation and the growth of environmental groups.

Webster uses a historiographical approach to apply the AC/SC framework, and the wealth of evidence is impressive, in both its scope and depth. This is laudable, because people who study fisheries governance tend to focus on specific areas and specific time periods, with little attention to the global forces that drive some of the universal management challenges faced by fisheries. The book ranges from analyzing the importance of herring to the Hanseatic League in the late 1400s to the challenges faced by the global tuna fisheries in the 20th century. Countries covered include New Zealand, Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Peru, and Japan, to name only a few.

The book is a contribution to the study of fisheries governance in two ways. First is the obvious contribution of using a framework that is generalizable across time and space to explain variation in fisheries management. As such, the book is a great introduction to the framework and how to apply it. The second contribution is perhaps unintended, but welcome nonetheless. There is a tendency among scholars interested in fisheries management to study the subject as an insulated economic activity, beholden to its own rules and ways. While it is not the goal of the book to dispel that myth, Webster's book clearly contributes to the political economy literature in showing how fisheries have evolved over time, including technological changes that have helped fleets travel farther and farther seeking fewer fish. The book thus provides a great deal

of information on the industrialization of the fishing fleet as a part of a larger domestic and global economy.

Beyond the Tragedy in Global Fisheries is not above criticism. Two stand out. First, it is not always clear how the key concepts of the profit disconnect and power disconnect are measured. With the power disconnect, it is unclear who represents the fisheries, as there is a great deal of variation in who speaks for the fisheries in seeking policy favors; it can be owners, or fishers through labor unions, or both. Who represents the industry, and how, influences the ability to obtain political favors. These aspects are also influenced by the institutional context, such as whether or not the polity is democratic or autocratic. In the book, organization is assumed, rather than demonstrated, and seems to rest primarily on wealth. This ignoring of power and influence is understandable, though, given the scope of the book. It would have been unrealistic to expect Webster to carefully illustrate how fishers overcame collective action problems at various points in time across the world as they responded to bioeconomic signals. One hopes that, in the future, scholars will try to apply the AC/SC context in more focused settings to see under which political conditions it does or does not apply.

It is also unfortunate that the graphical elements (flow charts and tables) in the book are not terribly helpful. Graphics and tables should enhance the text. For example, the analysis could have been strengthened if the case studies included a timeline that identified times of widening profit and power disconnects and then identified the corresponding policy reaction. Future applications of this framework that provide these specifics would be helpful.

Webster's book is a valuable contribution to the study of global fisheries. It gives people interested in common pool resource management a theoretical framework they can use in further studies, while also grounding the analysis in rich empirical data across time and space.

Mirumachi, Naho. 2015. *Transboundary Water Politics in the Developing World*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Reviewed by Anne J. Kantel
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In her new book *Transboundary Water Politics in the Developing World*, Naho Mirumachi presents a compelling constructivist framework for the study of international transboundary river basins. Going beyond the often-asked question of when and why riparian states cooperate (or do not), she argues for an analytical approach to riparian interaction as an evolving process characterized by the coexistence of conflict and cooperation. Such an approach, she claims, helps shed light on the complex realities of water resource management by taking a closer look at socio-political processes—that is, the politics—that surround the use and allocation of water in international river basins.