

Marc Williams & Duncan McDuie-Ra (2018). *Combatting climate change in the Pacific: The role of regional organizations*. Springer International. 136pp. ISBN: 978-3-3196-9647-8. US\$44.99

This book is a comprehensive introduction to the regional politics of climate change in the Pacific region. Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) are highly vulnerable to climate change. As a result, climate change has featured prominently in regional politics, finance and development agendas. As the co-authors Williams and McDuie-Ra point out, the issue has attracted significant scholarly attention, but studies on the Pacific tend to neglect the role of transnational and regional processes. The book aims to fill this gap, by exploring the construction and governance of climate change in the context of regional and global climate politics.

The book draws on literature, analysis of documents from governments and regional organisations, and interviews with a range of stakeholders in the Pacific. The authors take a constructivist approach as they are concerned with how climate change is conceptualised and, in turn, how these narratives have influenced policymaking. As such, the book has two objectives: firstly, it examines how climate change is constructed as an environmental problem and a security threat respectively. Secondly, it maps out the regional political and financial architecture for environmental cooperation in the Pacific.

The book contains six chapters and is generally well-structured. *Chapter 1* introduces the reader to regional climate change politics in the Pacific and lays out the objectives of the book. *Chapter 2* explains the history of intergovernmental cooperation in the Pacific, including how a sense of shared regional identity, known as the ‘Pacific Way’, is reflected in regional organisations. The latter is particularly reflected in decision-making structures that reinforce distinctiveness and emphasize consensus and compromise. The text goes on to describe the framework of regional organisations concerned with climate change, painting a picture of a region with a high level of solidarity emanating from a shared position of vulnerability. However, the authors also draw attention to PICTs’ reliance on foreign multilateral donors for finance and expertise, highlighting a dual vulnerability: both to the impacts of climate change and an acute dependence on donors to address them.

Chapter 3 and *4* analyse how climate change is constructed in the Pacific. In *Chapter 3*, the authors trace the emergence of climate change narratives to understand the hegemony it has achieved in political and economic arenas. The ‘canary in the coalmine’ narrative, often invoked by PICTs on the international stage, has a dual purpose: to attract resources to combat climate change and to build solidarity among PICTs and other small island states. Importantly, the authors highlight voices that challenge and deconstruct these dominant narratives, emphasizing the need to focus on solutions instead of surrendering to the idea of a doomed region. Moreover, the authors argue that climate change has come to dominate politics, finance and development agendas at the expense of other development priorities and environmental issues. The importance of addressing this policy deflection has only been confirmed since the publication of the book, as the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the interlinkages of social, environmental and economic vulnerabilities in small island states. *Chapter 4* argues that understandings of climate change in the Pacific are shaped by a narrative of climate security. Two competing constructions of climate security emerge: one concerned with conflict and another with vulnerabilities. The authors favour the latter as it has several advantages. Due to the small size of PICTs, assessments of climate change impacts often focus on the national level. However, constructing climate security in terms of vulnerabilities invites analysis of the sub-national

dimensions while also challenging the construction of PICTs as a homogenous group. Secondly, it shifts the policy focus from an emphasis on how much funding is spent on adaptation measures to one that assesses the impacts of these measures. This is an important aspect given the current gap between international climate finance mobilisation and needs. While climate finance providers must mobilise more funding, effectiveness will also play an important role in bridging the gap. Thirdly, a concern with vulnerabilities allows us to consider how climate change-induced insecurity is linked to other environmental and development issues. Thus, it addresses the issue raised in the previous chapter by encouraging a rethinking of the development agenda in PICTs towards more transformative and sustainable change.

Due to their small economies, PICTs are highly reliant on external financial assistance to address the impacts of climate change. *Chapter 5* outlines climate finance governance in the region. It describes the global architecture of climate finance, including its sources, delivery mechanisms and institutional framework. Following this, it narrows down to describe the climate finance landscape in the Pacific, including main donors and priorities of PICTs. Finally, the chapter explores the implications of an emerging climate finance regime in the region, including a discussion of PICTs' challenges in accessing international climate finance. The authors show that PICTs have been proactive at the international level, demanding changes to current climate finance practices. They particularly describe how they have worked with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the G77 to achieve their demands. While it is important to consider, as the authors do, the crucial role of these international alliances for PICTs, a more critical reflection on their participation within these groups would strengthen the analysis. As the authors themselves acknowledge in the book, PICTs are not a homogenous group. Hence, their interests sometimes differ and clash at the international level. Similarly, their cooperation within AOSIS and G77 invariably requires PICTs to compromise to maintain their alliances.

Finally, *Chapter 6* provides an outlook on the future of climate politics in the Pacific. It reflects on the importance of the 2015 Paris Agreement for PICTs due, among other reasons, to its increased focus on adaptation and funding for 'Loss and Damage'. Yet, they also acknowledge that the Paris Agreement's significance for PICTs will depend on whether its goals are achieved. Since the publication of this book, Parties to the Paris Agreement have failed on their promise to mobilise US\$100 billion. Meanwhile, PICTs and AOSIS won a major victory when Parties to the UNFCCC agreed to establish a 'Loss and Damage' fund. The evolving effects of these events will be relevant to consider in future work on climate politics in the Pacific islands.

In conclusion, Williams and McDuie-Ra have delivered an engaging and well-structured contribution on the regional politics of climate change in the Pacific. In 136 pages, their book provides an accessible overview of key issues that are relevant for understanding how constructions of climate change and regional political processes interact and shape each other. The book will be a useful resource for academics and practitioners alike who are interested in climate change politics and discourse and the role of regional institutions, as they impact on small island states.

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