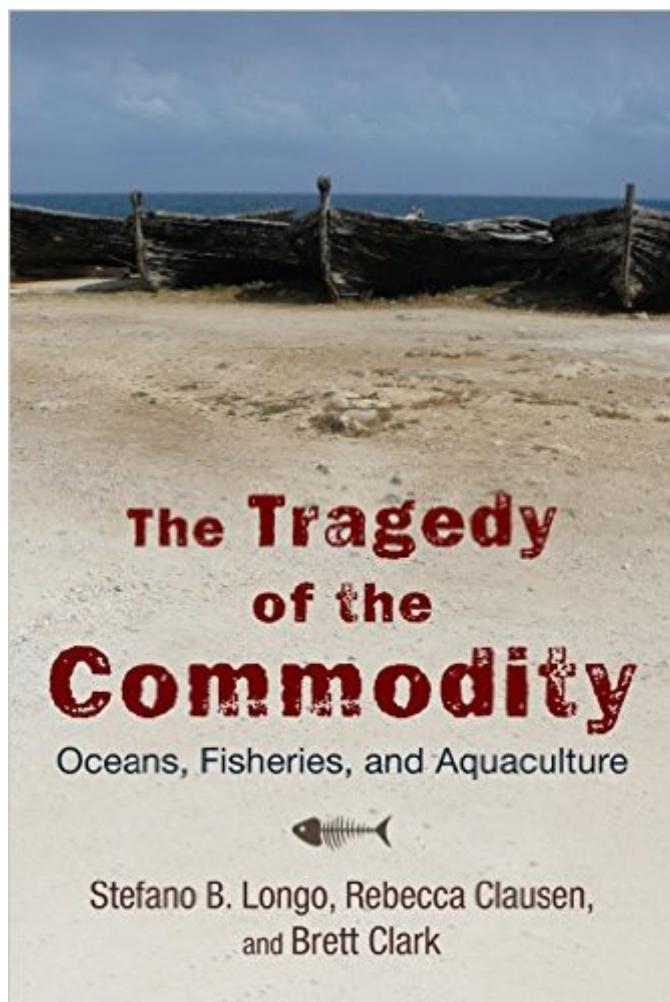


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The Tragedy Of The Commodity: Oceans, Fisheries, And Aquaculture (Nature, Society, And Culture)



Synopsis

Although humans have long depended on oceans and aquatic ecosystems for sustenance and trade, only recently has human influence on these resources dramatically increased, transforming and undermining oceanic environments throughout the world. Marine ecosystems are in a crisis that is global in scope, rapid in pace, and colossal in scale. In *The Tragedy of the Commodity*, sociologists Stefano B. Longo, Rebecca Clausen, and Brett Clark explore the role human influence plays in this crisis, highlighting the social and economic forces that are at the heart of this looming ecological problem. In a critique of the classic theory "the tragedy of the commons" by ecologist Garrett Hardin, the authors move beyond simplistic explanations "such as unrestrained self-interest or population growth" to argue that it is the commodification of aquatic resources that leads to the depletion of fisheries and the development of environmentally suspect means of aquaculture. To illustrate this argument, the book features two fascinating case studies "the thousand-year history of the bluefin tuna fishery in the Mediterranean and the massive Pacific salmon fishery. Longo, Clausen, and Clark describe how new fishing technologies, transformations in ships and storage capacities, and the expansion of seafood markets combined to alter radically and permanently these crucial ecosystems. In doing so, the authors underscore how the particular organization of social production contributes to ecological degradation and an increase in the pressures placed upon the ocean. The authors highlight the historical, political, economic, and cultural forces that shape how we interact with the larger biophysical world. A path-breaking analysis of overfishing, *The Tragedy of the Commodity* yields insight into issues such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Tragedy of the Commodity is a multi-faceted marvel. The authors combine a carefully considered study of fisheries in decline with sophisticated social theory to produce a book that is at once timely and urgent, accessible and scholarly. Social scientists will value their wide-ranging approach, but, really, anyone who wants to understand our relationship with the planet should read this book. At the core of the book is a pair of detailed case studies: of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean and wild salmon in the Pacific Northwest. The authors take the long historical view of each fishery, showing how fish from these common pool resources were sustainably harvested for centuries -- often in ways that were inextricably bound up with local cultures and traditional forms of labor. It was not until bluefin tuna and wild salmon were subject to full-blown commodification and industrial production for a global market -- that is, subsumed within the logic of capital -- that these fisheries were seriously threatened. The authors address recent attempts to manage the fisheries, whether by market-based protocols or for-profit technological engineering, such as tuna ranches and genetically modified salmon (âœfarcesâ • that follow the original âœtragediesâ • which befell these fisheries). They conclude that these measures are palliative at best, and, in the long run, will only deepen the ecological and social contradictions that are depleting these common resources, fish by fish, while contributing to our looming, worldwide ecological catastrophe. The case studies are rich in historical detail and provide keen insight into how capitalist production can wreak havoc on the environment, even as it seeks to manage its impact.

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