# Book Review: *Maritime Spaces and Society.*

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Agnieszka Kołodziej-Durnaś, Frank Sowa, and Marie C. Grasmeier (Eds.). 2022. *Maritime Spaces and Society.* Boston, MA, USA: Brill. $168.00 (hardback).

Along what dimensions might the emerging intellectual field surrounding the relations between society and the sea concern itself? The sea is important, with roughly 40 million people employed in the maritime sector (p. 3). In a relatively recent article on the topic, John Hannigan wrote pointedly that "maritime sociological investigation, while empirically rich, has tended to be largely atheoretical, lacking a shared vision or common paradigm and disconnected from wider sociological discussions" (p. 14). This is the core issue of the 2022 release of Maritime Spaces and Society, edited by social scientists Agnieszka Kołodziej-Durnaś, Frank Sowa, and Marie C. Grasmeier.

Part one, "Conceptualising Maritime Sociologies" is largely concerned with defining what maritime sociology is, was, and might be. Prudently, the authors elaborate a plural definition of the field. The initial two chapters are an excellent primer for those new to the discipline, especially adequate for advanced undergraduates with training in sociological theory or early career graduate students. To this end, we might ask: what is maritime sociological theory? As the authors describe, since the work of Polish sociologist Ludwik Janiszewski, there have been numerous discussions about this. Much time is spent by different authors interpreting Janiszewski's theory of marinization – a socio-historical conceptualization of the processes of societal development in relation to the sea, including emergent maritime professions, familial culture, and state formation (p. 14; 52). Relatedly, across parts one and two, the reader learns about the national contexts in which maritime sociology emerged (e.g., Poland).

Presumably, most readers of will have no primary basis upon which to evaluate the Polish influence. For this reason, translations of Janiszewski's oeuvre seem in order for a wider group of scholars. This could be especially timely given the proliferation of research on marine-related social issues (Longo and Clark 2016). However, the astute reader will note the allusions to the importance of Polish state formation and how it was linked to gaining access to the Baltic Sea (e.g., chapter six). There are also historical questions regarding the tensions with Russia/USSR. Specific chapters also spend considerable time discussing the Germanic influence in Poland (Part two, "Port Cities"), including topics surrounding the Hanseatic League (chapter four). One cannot help but notice certain patterns of interest – identity, the state, and culture. Of course, a thorough analysis would examine the whole historical arc of sociology in Poland. Still, the question emerges: what are we to make of this seemingly eclectic mix of influences for maritime sociology? For instance, it is striking that it is at the beginning of the 1960s that Janiszewski's books appear, leaving as yet unexplored research areas for an intrepid scholar in the sociology of science to understand the political-epistemological connections occurring with specifically Polish maritime sociology; can marinization offer a new angle on the political sociology of state formation, or urbanization? Such possibilities might engender very interesting articulations of new knowledge for maritime sociology and the discipline at large.

Part three, "Sea and Culture," dives into wide-ranging implications and meanings of maritime culture (p. 131), including a discussion of global containerization, industrial production, and local-global relations. One of the strong critiques forwarded here is that containerization that might be applied to other technological/scalar fixes (O'Neill, 2020; 2022; 2023; Abolhassani, 2023), while an innovation, it has been revealed as a symptom of the cultural hegemony of capitalism that has not allowed for the same level of socially progressive innovation in the conditions of labor (Lozano et al., 2022). This is also the section of the book where the authors move from the less properly theoretical territory into more empirically specific case studies, such as the culture and structure of sea museums, sea-related monuments, and anti-monuments. As such, these will hopefully open up new possibilities for research for sociologists.

Part four is entitled "Water as Home and Road," and part five is called "Ecology, Economy, and Society." These sections can be taken together in as far as across them the reader is treated to the strongest combination of theoretically informed empirical studies. Chapters 10 to 14 function as a discussion of the future possibilities of the field, which consist of analyses of class, race, gender, coloniality, and the implications of ecological thinking on economic considerations, and vice versa. Methodologically, what is striking is the prominence of ethnographic work. This is important for the future of maritime sociology in terms of theoretical developments. It is from grounded, empirical realities that scholars can develop a structural sociology that understands the broader social forces, connections, and imaginaries that can elaborate a more holistic understanding of the possibilities for social change and equity, from the coasts to the high seas (Crosman et al., 2022).

In closing his 2017 article, John Hannigan remarked: "it is not my intention here to set out a full-scale theoretical elaboration of a new sociological paradigm on oceans complete with precise concepts, although I hope…this article might inspire such a labor" (11). The arduous task of crafting rigorous marine sociology has begun to occur and has been extended to Maritime Spaces and Society. Furthermore, there are new questions unanswered by the text that will be important in years to come: what of the role of the state and private sector in ocean data science initiatives and digitalization of ocean labor data (Drakopulos, Havice, and Campbell, 2022)? What are we to make of the mechanisms involved in private foundations seeking to (at least outwardly) foment justice on the high seas? How can an analysis of the informality and various governance failures at sea be incorporated into maritime sociology? What are we to make of all the interest amongst conservation scientists, non-governmental organizations, and the financial sector in fisheries? Much work remains for sociologists in this sub-field, and Maritime Spaces and Society marks out exciting new territories of investigation.

## References

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