

## **Editorial: The Pacific Science Association and Human Dimensions Research in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Author(s): Nancy Davis Lewis

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**Editorial:**  
**The Pacific Science Association and Human Dimensions Research  
in the Asia-Pacific Region<sup>1</sup>**

*Nancy Davis Lewis<sup>2</sup>*

THE PACIFIC SCIENCE Association (PSA) was established as an interdisciplinary scientific organization almost 100 years ago, unique at that time both in terms of its interdisciplinary nature and its broad geographic scope. The Association brings together the scientific communities, interests, and research of the nations and states on the rim of the Pacific Ocean, importantly including the islands spanning its breadth. PSA remains distinctive and forward-looking in an increasingly globalized world. *Pacific Science* became the official publication of the PSA in 2001.

The island and coastal peoples of the Asia-Pacific region are intimately connected to the Pacific Ocean in terms of their spiritual and cultural heritage, their resource base, and the navigable space that connects them. This special issue of *Pacific Science*, “Human Dimensions of Small-Scale and Traditional Fisheries in the Asia-Pacific Region,” is a welcome contribution to the journal.

Human Dimensions of Global Change research evolved in the early 1990s to address the complex relationship between individuals, communities and societies, and natural and human-modified ecosystems. It is a multidisciplinary endeavor that attempts to unravel

the complexity of these relationships and also bridge the science and policy gap in an era of rapid environmental change. This change prominently includes a warming climate, a fact that has critical implications in Asia and the Pacific, from the small island states to Asia’s coastal megacities. As a short historical aside, at the 10th Pacific Science Congress in Honolulu in 1961, Raymond Fosberg organized a symposium and published a subsequent volume titled *Man’s Place in the Island Ecosystem* (Fosberg 1963). This work made an important early contribution to human ecology and ways of thinking about human-island environment interactions that was an important cornerstone for the development of Human Dimensions of Global Change research and analysis 30 years later.

In bringing together contributions from social and environmental scientists active across the Asia-Pacific region, the guest editors have sought to advance the field of human dimensions research and outline the challenges and opportunities facing small-scale and traditional fishers in the contemporary era. They have accomplished both. Although human dimensions of these fisheries are still not well understood, topics such as food security, increasing human pressure on marine resources, and regional and global economic challenges are garnering increasing attention among the region’s scholars and policy makers. As the editors note, such issues are not trivial. Although small-scale fisheries are responsible for a relatively small annual percentage of commercially transacted catch in the Asia-Pacific region, such fisheries collectively generate vast quantities of seafood, millions of jobs, and critically important cultural opportunities. Of particular note from a sociodemographic perspective, the editors point out that women compose an important but underrepresented component of small-scale fisheries, accounting for about half

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<sup>1</sup> This editorial is part of a special issue of the journal *Pacific Science* (Vol. 67, no. 3) on the Human Dimensions of Small-Scale and Traditional Fisheries in the Asia-Pacific Region, guest editors John N. (Jack) Kittinger and Edward W. Glazier. Manuscript accepted 4 December 2012.

<sup>2</sup> President, Pacific Science Association; and Director, Research Program, The East-West Center, 1601 East-West Road, Honolulu, Hawai’i 96848 (e-mail: LewisN@EastWestCenter.org).

of the total fishery workforce in developing countries (Kittinger 2013 [this issue]). The articles and reviews provided in this issue concentrate on the Pacific islands, but many of the issues and challenges described here are quite similar to those being encountered by small-scale fishing fleets and traditional fishers across the larger Asia-Pacific region and, indeed, across all the world's oceans.

Space considerations preclude a full review of the PSA's many contributions to research on marine and coastal issues, including the changing status of coral reef ecosystems. But such issues have been a prominent focus of the Association's activities for many decades. A quick review of *Pacific Science*, the first issue of which appeared in 1947 (and included a report on the 1946 tsunami in Hawai'i), reflects an ongoing focus on marine ecosystems and associated species, as well as systematics, terrestrial flora and fauna, biodiversity, and invasive species.

PSA is looking forward, post-Rio + 20, and aligning its planning with the new international initiative, Future Earth. The vision of Future Earth is "one in which the scientific community provides knowledge through open and collaborative processes for society to define pathways towards sustainability and respond effectively to the risks and opportunities of global environmental change" ([www.icsu.org/future-earth](http://www.icsu.org/future-earth)).

Human dimensions research has much to contribute in this regard, and I anticipate that PSA and the journal will also facilitate these efforts.

As the President of the PSA, a member of the editorial board of *Pacific Science*, and a social scientist whose research has largely focused on marine and island issues, I welcome this special issue. The guest editors, Jack Kittinger and Ed Glazier, have assembled three excellent review articles that address traditional marine resource knowledge, marine conservation programs in Oceania, and subsistence fishing in the western Pacific, along with a range of research articles that explore human knowledge, use, and management of marine ecosystems in coastal settings across the region. I look forward to more contributions exploring human dimensions of regional change in future issues of the journal.

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