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FISHING FOR SURVIVAL IN THE ‘BLUE ECONOMY’

FOUND POEMS FROM THE IRISH ISLANDS



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October 2020

This is a pre-print of a research poetry collection under review in ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies. A link to the open-access, final authenticated version will be available online at <https://www.belongingtothesea.com/publications/>

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Abstract

Almost three thousand islanders live on eighteen islands off the west coast of Ireland. These islands are not connected to the mainland by a land causeway. While many of these islands are dependent on a small-scale fishing industry for survival, their fishing communities face challenges in navigating complex fisheries governance systems at local, regional, national and EU scales. Between 2018 and 2020, I engaged with Irish island fishing communities, the fishing industry and the policy environment in interrogating the challenges faced by island fishing communities and their initiatives to manage island fisheries on a collective, seasonal basis. These initiatives - a fish producer organisation specific to the islands fleet and legislation to provide island small-scale fishers with ringfenced access to valuable quota-controlled species in island waters – have failed to materialise. This collection of found poems is intended to provide a snapshot of the complexity of the issues at play during the research period. They highlight the multiple storylines that jostle for space and visibility in the fisheries governance context. The mosaic of voices demonstrate that contestation and contradictions exist and play out not just between islanders and non-islanders, but between islanders themselves, often with no resolution.