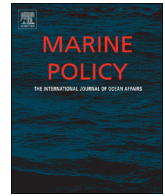




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Navigating a just and inclusive path towards sustainable oceans

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ABSTRACT

The ocean is the next frontier for many conservation and development activities. Growth in marine protected areas, fisheries management, the blue economy, and marine spatial planning initiatives are occurring both within and beyond national jurisdictions. This mounting activity has coincided with increasing concerns about sustainability and international attention to ocean governance. Yet, despite growing concerns about exclusionary decision-making processes and social injustices, there remains inadequate attention to issues of social justice and inclusion in ocean science, management, governance and funding. In a rapidly changing and progressively busier ocean, we need to learn from past mistakes and identify ways to navigate a just and inclusive path towards sustainability. Proactive attention to inclusive decision-making and social justice is needed across key ocean policy realms including marine conservation, fisheries management, marine spatial planning, the blue economy, climate adaptation and global ocean governance for both ethical and instrumental reasons. This discussion paper aims to stimulate greater engagement with these critical topics. It is a call to action for ocean-focused researchers, policy-makers, managers, practitioners, and funders.

1. Governance of the frontier ocean

The ocean is often viewed as the next frontier for many conservation and development activities. Evidence of increasing activity is apparent, for example, in a) the rapid proliferation of and international agreements to increase marine protected areas (MPAs) globally [1], b) expanding global fisheries combined with complexity in fisheries management [2–4], c) the current and forecasted growth of the “Blue Economy” which aims to capitalize on living and non-living marine resources [5–7], and d) an upsurge in marine spatial planning (MSP) processes [8,9]. These activities are ramping up not just within national jurisdictions - i.e., the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of countries as established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) - but also in international waters [3,10,11].

Intensifying activity in the oceans has coincided with growing attention globally to the sustainable management and governance of the oceans [12]. For example, the international community agreed to protect 10% of the oceans in MPAs under the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010. In 2012, the United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) identified the oceans as one of seven priority areas for sustainable development and called for immediate action on depleting fish stocks, destruction of habitats, alien invasive species, conserving marine biodiversity, ocean acidification

and climate change [13]. Then, in 2015, the United Nations adopted a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 14 – Life Below Water) that specifically focuses on the oceans. Global ocean governance discussions have also increasingly focused on international waters. For example, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in 2017 (i.e., 69/292) to develop an instrument to protect marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).

The number of global ocean-focused conferences is also rapidly increasing – as is the timbre of urgency to manage and govern the oceans sustainably. In 2017 alone, the United Nations hosted the 1st The Ocean Conference (New York, June 2017), the Economist hosted the 4th World Ocean Summit (Bali, Feb. 2017), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) hosted the 4th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (Chile, Sept. 2017), the European Union hosted the 4th annual global Our Oceans Conference (Malta, Oct. 2017) and the World Ocean Council hosted the Sustainable Ocean Summit (Halifax, Dec 2017). While historically the focus of these conferences has been on marine conservation, there is increasing emphasis on the growth, and sustainable development, of the blue economy. This was a central focus of the 5th World Ocean Summit, hosted by The Economist and the Mexican Government, in Mexico in March 2018 [14]. The marine science community is also rising to meet the challenges posed by a busy and changing ocean – with global research networks (such as

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Future Earth and the Earth Systems Governance project) hosting or launching ocean-focused research clusters (See [15–18]) and the recent announcement by UNESCO that 2021–2030 will be the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development [19,20].

Yet, across the ocean governance, management, science and funding community, greater attention must be paid to issues related to social justice and inclusion in the pursuit of sustainable oceans. In particular, these considerations need to be better taken into account across key ocean policy domains including marine conservation, fisheries management, marine spatial planning, the blue economy, climate adaptation and global ocean governance. The aim of this discussion paper is to stimulate further engagement with these critical topics. To that end, this paper is laid out as follows. First, it briefly introduces the types of injustices and exclusions that can occur in the oceans. Next, it clarifies the ethical and instrumental rationales for a greater focus on inclusive governance processes and socially just outcomes. The following section emphasizes the role of the applied social sciences in developing robust and evidence-based solutions. In conclusion, the paper urges the ocean science, governance, management, practitioner and funding communities to further engage through applied social science research efforts, during national and global policy discussions and through supporting practical actions to proactively address issues related to exclusion and injustice in ocean policies, programs and management.

2. Exclusions and injustices in ocean management and governance

As the aforementioned ocean-related activities and global policy discussions have mounted, so too has the evidence of past and ongoing exclusionary decision-making processes and social injustices in some initiatives and locations. For example, the establishment of MPAs has rapidly increased around the world to meet global targets, which has coincided with critical accounts and research documenting lack of inclusion, failure to consider local people's needs and livelihoods, dispossession of areas and resources, and even human rights issues in some initiatives [21–27]. Some authors and civil society organizations have gone so far as to question whether some MPAs are a form of “ocean grabbing” [26,28–31], a term that refers to “the dispossession or appropriation of use, control or access to ocean space or resources from prior resource users, rights holders or inhabitants...through inappropriate governance processes and might employ acts that undermine human security or livelihoods or produce impacts that impair social–ecological well-being” [30]. Fisheries allocation decisions and management practices have often been critiqued as well, for failing to take into account the rights, needs and livelihoods of small-scale fishers and coastal communities [32–35]. For example, the implementation of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) in Canadian and Icelandic fisheries has led to the consolidation of licenses, control by corporate interests and loss of jobs and economic benefits for coastal communities [36–39]. A critical missing element in many fisheries management decisions has been the lack of consideration of equity, or the distributional impacts of decisions, over both the short and long term [40,41]. This omission can produce unintended social consequences such as undermining the rights and access, historical tenure, traditional livelihoods and the food security needs of small-scale fishers and coastal communities [42–44]. By now, we are also well aware of the widespread “slavery scandals” that have infiltrated global seafood supply chains [45]. This repugnant problem, however, only represents a small part of the extensive labor and human rights issues (e.g., evictions, unsafe working conditions, child labor, etc.) in global fisheries [46,47].

The social challenges and implications of both marine spatial planning (MSP) and blue economy developments are only starting to become apparent. However, the topic of who is actually included in and who is benefiting from or bearing the burdens of these idealized MSP processes is under increasing scrutiny [48–50]. This is not surprising as a recent review of coastal and ocean planning processes showed that

less than 50% included social data and only 10.8% of social data were spatially characterized [51]. Similar questions are being asked about social inclusion and the impacts of the blue economy – including in aquaculture, exploration and mining, oil and gas extraction, energy development, bio-prospecting, marine tourism, and carbon markets [6,12,52]. Where the assumption of some proponents of the blue economy seems to be that development will lead to net social and economic good [53], past research has shown how the economic benefits of blue economic development may fail to accrue to local people, and those that do are often shared inequitably, and also that the social and environmental burdens (e.g., waste, water shortages, pollution) may be considerable for nearby communities [54–61]. One reason for the inequitable distribution of benefits and costs may be lack of genuine consultation or engagement in decisions [55,58]. Keen et al. [54], for example, illustrate that key components related to community engagement and gender equity were missing in blue economic development in the Pacific Islands. A number of authors have expressed concern about the progressive capitalization, privatization and enclosure of the ocean's resources and spaces that is occurring via the growth of the blue economy and MSP [37,50,52,62,63].

A further marine and coastal policy challenge where local people can be marginalized is in climate change adaptation. Climate change has numerous direct and indirect impacts on fishers and coastal communities – for example, through causing declines and shifting distributions in fisheries, rising sea levels, flooding, saltwater intrusion, erosion and increased storm events [64–67]. As a result, there has been significant attention to the adaptation of coastal cities, rural communities, indigenous communities, as well as small-scale fishers. Problematically, climate adaptation planning processes can exclude local perspectives from decision-making and produce adaptations that further marginalize certain racial, socio-economic, or already vulnerable groups [68–70]. Furthermore, when environmental management or marine conservation are employed as adaptations, this can place additional burdens onto coastal communities or groups that are already suffering the impacts of climate change and undermine local resilience [71].

The vast majority of the ocean-related social justice issues previously documented in the academic literature have been focused on local and national scale issues. However, as activities and pressure in the high seas mounts, multi-lateral and global issues related to equitable allocation in trans-boundary fisheries, justice in benefits from the harvest of living and non-living resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), and good governance (e.g., transparency, accountability, participation in decision-making) in global decision-making processes are also coming to the fore [10,11,72,73]. Thus, while thinking at this scale might be challenging, inclusive governance and social justice are also salient concerns in efforts to sustainably govern the global oceans.

The review and examples presented above are neither comprehensive nor representative. What these scenarios highlight, however, is the types of exclusions and injustices that have emerged in the past and that may continue to occur in future conservation, management and development activities in the oceans. These issues should be avoided for the reasons highlighted below.

3. The rationale for just and inclusive ocean governance

This paper identifies social justice and inclusion as key issues that need to be addressed in ocean science and governance globally. Yet some proponents of actions to promote sustainability in the oceans may wonder whether a greater focus on justice and inclusion is warranted. As discussed below, it is important for both ethical and instrumental reasons.

First, a renewed and invigorated focus on justice and inclusion in the oceans might be considered the right thing to do: local communities, traditional resource users, and indigenous people should be

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