



# Who cares? European attitudes towards marine and coastal environments



Tavis Potts<sup>a,\*</sup>, Cristina Pita<sup>b</sup>, Tim O'Higgins<sup>c</sup>, Laurence Mee<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Geosciences, University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom

<sup>b</sup> Centre for Environmental and Marine Studies (CESAM) & Department of Environment and Planning, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

<sup>c</sup> MaREI, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

<sup>d</sup> Scottish Association for Marine Science

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 10 June 2016

Received in revised form  
10 June 2016

Accepted 12 June 2016

### Keywords:

Marine values

Ecosystem approach

Public perceptions

European marine environment

## ABSTRACT

Understanding how the public perceives the marine environment is a central component of the ecosystem approach. Despite the importance of exploring the links between society and the sea, it is still a relatively unexplored dimension of marine science. This paper presents the results of a novel European survey that explores the values, concerns and aspirations of individuals regarding the marine environment in seven countries across four regional seas. It provides an innovative contribution to the literature by refining our knowledge of how public perceptions on the oceans vary significantly by country, region and by demographic variables such as age and gender. Four issues emerge as important from this survey: (1) Concern about the oceans is variable but generally below other environmental concerns in different countries; (2) Ecosystem services, in particular regulatory, cultural and provisioning services that have broader societal relevance are recognised as important by the public; (3) There is a schism between scientific and public perspectives on the key pressures that affect marine systems; and (4) demographic factors such as age or generation can influence perceptions on marine issues more than the proximity of a community to the coastal environment. Public viewpoints on the oceans will play an important, if yet undetermined, role in supporting reforms such as marine planning, the large scale deployment of marine renewables and marine protected areas that have significant social and economic consequences.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The scientific understanding of community values concerning marine environments is in a stage of relative infancy despite major policy initiatives at the European scale. Ocean policy and legal instruments such as the Integrated Maritime Policy, Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD; 2008/56/EC), Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD; Directive 2014/89/EU) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP; Regulation (EU) No. 1380/2013) require detailed understanding of the complex interactions within society as a means of ensuring effective policy delivery. While the positions and interests of organised stakeholder groups are captured through formal policy consultations and direct engagement in the process, the opinion of the individual citizens rarely enters the process of policy formation. Yet, crucially, it is the collective choices made by individuals about the resources they use, the places they visit and the orientation of environmental behaviours that guides the interactions with and pressures on marine

environments [1,2]. While communication and knowledge exchange efforts are occurring for issues such as climate change, similar efforts have been limited for engagement in marine issues. Recent studies [3–5] have highlighted the importance of improving the understanding of perceptions on the marine environment and incorporating these into policy processes. Jefferson et al. [3] explores the relationship between individual views, experiences and marine perceptions in the UK with findings that illuminate the strong connections between communities and coastal environments and the heterogeneous nature of marine values. Gelcich et al. [4] delivered a ten country European study that examined levels of concern and awareness of marine impacts. The study highlights that levels of concerns correlate with levels of 'informedness'. Pollution and overfishing were considered the highest priorities for policy development and are considered as impacts with direct, immediate and visual consequences for society [4]. A study by Ahtainen et al. [5] undertook a regional assessment of the Baltic Sea focusing on issues of recreation and public awareness across the Baltic States. Finnish, Russian and Swedish residents were the most concerned about the state of the Baltic

\* Corresponding author.

and the study highlighted the importance of cultural and recreational values in this region [5]. These studies on marine values are paving the way for both individual and local analysis and broader comparative approaches that are longitudinal in nature and inform both national and international policy development.

Public perspectives on marine environments will play an important (if yet undetermined) role in supporting or disrupting policy reforms that have considerable social and economic consequences such as marine planning, large scale deployment of marine renewable energy and marine protected areas. Implementation of the MSFD with its focus on an Ecosystem Approach (EA) to management poses its own unique set of challenges [6–8] in addition to those posed by recent reforms such as the MSPD [9]. The EA is intended to be an inclusive process incorporating multiple sets of values. Within Europe individual

nations have their own particular languages, cultures, histories, institutional structures and economic objectives as well as attitudes and perspectives toward the marine environment which all have a bearing on marine management at a regional, national and international scale [10,11]. Despite a common obligation to implement EU and other policies, there are likely to be numerous conflicting objectives both within and between nations [12]. Institutional infrastructures and the process employed to manage societal differences will differ across European contexts [12].

The objective of this research is to identify broad European patterns in societal perspectives on the marine environment across a range of European countries. The paper presents a multinational survey of seven European countries (UK, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Italy). This may aid in the delivery of a variety of policy initiatives and legal requirements and critically



**Fig. 1.** Survey study site: United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Poland and Italy.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7488818>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7488818>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)