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Rising to the integration ambitions of Marine Spatial Planning: Reflections from the Irish Sea

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ABSTRACT

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is emerging as key tool in the delivery of more effective sea use management and the integration ambitions of MSP are central to its rise to prominence. This paper reviews three key strands of thinking (integrated coastal and ocean management; integrated water resource management; and terrestrial spatial planning) that are informing the development of MSP and sets out a framework encompassing different dimensions of integration that those engaged in MSP might find it helpful to consider. The paper then explores how this framework can inform MSP development and related activity by using it to structure reflections on experience in the Irish Sea. Here the paper draws upon the outputs of a project that was funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council concerning Transnational Partnership Working in Support of Marine Spatial Planning in the Irish Sea. The analysis highlights the integration strengths and weaknesses associated with the emerging MSP structures in the Irish Sea and areas where further attention may be beneficial. The paper concludes by reflecting upon the value of the integration framework proposed, how it could be developed, and on key issues that those engaged in MSP in other contexts might need to address in rising to the integration ambitions of MSP.

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1. Introduction

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is emerging as key tool in the delivery of more effective sea use management. Drawing upon experience on the land, it offers a place-based planning process that can enable 'integrated, forward looking and consistent decision making on the human use of the sea' [1, p. 816]. The integration ambitions of MSP are central to its rise to prominence. From a natural science perspective, MSP is seen as providing an approach that can help implement ecosystem-based marine resource management by considering and responding to our increasing understanding of the complex social–ecological inter-relationships that relate to the sea [2]. From a social science perspective, MSP is viewed as a framework that can help to address the problems associated with existing fragmented patterns of governance (such as overlapping and conflicting sectoral objectives and lack of connection between authorities with marine responsibilities) and facilitate the development of more integrated marine governance regimes [3]. Given this context it is not surprising that MSP is being promoted as a key delivery mechanism in relation to international efforts to encourage better stewardship of marine resources, most notably in relation to the

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) [4], but also for example at a European scale in relation to European Union's Integrated Maritime Policy [5]. As a consequence MSP is entering a phase of rapid development in nation states throughout the world with significant steps forward already evident in countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Germany, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States among others [6]. It therefore seems timely to reflect on the integration ambitions of MSP and capture some of the latest conceptual thinking in this regard, but also as Ehler [7] suggests, to move beyond theoretical insights and consider the challenges that the practical application of such ideas can pose and how these might be addressed.

This paper responds to this agenda. It starts with a discussion of the results of a review of recent literature on integration and MSP and three key strands of thinking that are feeding into this. These relate to: integrated coastal and ocean management; integrated water resource management; and terrestrial spatial planning. From this review a framework is set out encompassing different dimensions of integration that those engaged in MSP might find it helpful to consider. Having established this framework, the paper then explores how it can inform MSP development and related activity by using it to structure reflections on experience in the Irish Sea. Here the paper draws upon the outputs of a project that was funded by the UK's Economic and

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Social Research Council concerning Transnational Partnership Working in Support of Marine Spatial Planning in the Irish Sea. Through two stakeholder workshops, the project drew together a position statement on MSP developments in each of the 6 administrations with marine responsibilities in the Irish Sea and elicited stakeholder views on the possible future form of partnership activity in the region to complement this activity. The project was useful in highlighting the integration strengths and weaknesses associated with the emerging MSP structures, stakeholder ambitions and concerns related to integrated MSP for the Irish Sea, and their views on possible responses to some of the integration challenges raised. The paper concludes by reflecting upon the value of the integration framework proposed, how it might be developed, and on key issues that those engaged in MSP in other contexts may find it helpful to consider in rising to the integration ambitions of MSP.

2. Integration and Marine Spatial Planning

2.1. Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management and integration within MSP

It is illuminating to chart the discussion in academic literature related to integration and MSP and see how this has been informed by developments in other fields, as well as emerging MSP practice. The literature reveals the significance of the various United Nations' earth summits in disseminating emerging ecological understanding and championing more integrated ecosystem-based planning and management approaches to the sea. The 1992 Rio Earth Summit through Agenda 21 and the Convention on Biological Diversity, together with the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, have been particularly influential in promoting development of the theory and practice of Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management, also known as Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) [8] which has been closely connected to the growing interest in MSP [9,10]. It is 'integration' that marks ICM/ICZM out from traditional, sectorally orientated coastal and ocean management practices and, as a result, much emphasis has been placed upon defining the dimensions of integration that are important in this context. The work by Cicin-Sain and Knecht [11] is often quoted, and as Table 1 indicates they identify intersectoral integration (e.g. related to fisheries and tourism),

intergovernmental integration (local, provincial and national), spatial integration (across the land–sea divide), science–management integration (applying natural and social science understanding to decision making) and international integration (related to issues that cross national boundaries) as being key. Not unsurprisingly, the special significance of spatial integration across the land–sea divide is a recurring theme in the ICM/ICZM literature and similarly in that related to MSP [3,12,13]. In part this reflects the scope of natural processes and the tendency for coastal and marine ecosystems to exhibit more openness than their terrestrial counterparts to exchanges of materials, energy and organisms [14]. This means for example that land use and land management practices in upper catchments very distant from the sea can be significant drivers of change in marine environments, including those seemingly very remote (see Fig. 1 for illustration of the extent of catchments for European Seas). In part it also reflects increasing recognition of the extensive and growing socio-economic dependence of landward communities upon the marine environment for a wide range of ecosystem services. These include minerals and energy, food, waste disposal, leisure recreation, research and education and the import and export of goods and people [15,16]. Recognition of the need for integrated planning across the land–sea divide is clearly reflected in the European Marine Strategy Directive and European Union Integrated Maritime Policy developments [17]. However, at present data related to human use of the sea is still poorly developed in many areas and improved integration of social science as well as natural science understanding into MSP decision making is increasingly being called for [13,18,19,20]. This emphasises the continuing relevance of science–management integration identified by Cicin-Sain and Knecht. Some authors develop this line of thinking and suggest that lack of integration among different natural and social science disciplines themselves is a barrier to effective inclusion of scientific understanding in MSP activities [2,21]. While Smith et al. [15] extend the view to encompass different fields of professional practice including surveying, engineering, accountancy and law, all of which they suggest have valuable insights which can inform MSP activities as well as a role to play in their delivery. Smith et al. see this as one of a number of dimensions of technical integration that MSP requires. Others they identify relate to information management (e.g. joined up approaches to monitoring and information sharing), and information assessment (e.g. joined up approaches to Strategic Environmental Assessment, Risk Assessment and Socio-economic Impact Assessment).

Table 1
Identifying categories and dimensions of integration that may relate to Marine Spatial Planning.

Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management dimensions of integration [11]	Categories of integration in integrated water resource management [24]	Categories/dimensions of integration in terrestrial spatial planning [40]
Inter-sectoral integration	<i>The Human System</i> Cross-sectoral integration	<i>Sectoral Integration</i> Cross-sectoral integration Inter-agency integration <i>Territorial integration</i> Vertical integration
International integration Intergovernmental integration Spatial integration	Integration across management levels	Horizontal integration <i>Organisational integration</i> Strategic integration Operational integration Disciplinary/ stakeholder integration
Science management integration	Matching responsibilities with authority and capacities for action Involvement of all stakeholders <i>Natural system</i> integration of land and water management, integration of surface water and groundwater management; integration of quantity and quality considerations (including drinking water and waste water); integration of upstream and downstream water related interests; integration of freshwater and coastal zone management.	

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