

Marine spatial planning as a tool to enable adaptive governance: implications for practice and evaluation.

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ABSTRACT

Marine spatial planning (MSP) provides opportunities for positive change in the governance of marine activities, promoting balancing of multiple objectives, cross-sectoral collaboration and public negotiation regarding resource use. Challenges include understanding the relationship between MSP and existing multi-level governance practices, the changing roles of key actors and enabling appropriate participation to enable progression to more coherent and sustainable planning.

Adaptive management is a core principle of MSP and referred to in policy and guidance relating to MSP, meaning processes will be reviewed and refined over time. However, important aspects of governance are not easily evaluated but are relevant to the effectiveness of MSP. The adaptive governance literature provides a broader framing for MSP as a tool for evolving governance practice. This paper presents an analysis of the key features of adaptive governance and how these can inform MSP practice and evaluation, including:

- Greater collaboration between actors in governance, with multi-level arrangements, de-centralised decision / policy making and a greater involvement of civil society
- Extensive dialogue and deliberative platforms involving wide sets of stakeholders, to address complexity arising from diverse values, address conflict and consider local knowledge
- Social learning / co-operative knowledge creation where scientists, policymakers and stakeholders work together
- Future-orientated and focussing on developing a shared vision (with leadership) to guide progress of governance and deal with complexity

This analysis highlights the opportunities for improved governance in MSP and may inform the development of evaluation processes and adaptive management to ensure progress in addressing sustainability in marine resource use.

Key words: marine spatial planning; adaptive management; adaptive governance; dialogue; sustainability.

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