

Integration in Baltic Sea MSP: What role does it really play?

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This paper makes a case for more closely examining the role of integration in marine spatial planning (MSP). Integration is universally espoused as a means to address a variety of MSP challenges such as inter-sectoral conflicts or cross-border interaction, but its role, value and implementation in MSP has not been examined in any empirical detail. Although increased integration may well have positive effects on MSP processes and outcomes, in some instances the contrary might also be the case. With these thoughts in mind, this paper argues that we need to analyse integration as a multidimensional concept in MSP processes and outcomes. Based on understandings of integration derived from MSP experiences and concepts in the broader social science literature, we develop an analytical framework to examine MSP practice in the Baltic Sea. Despite common requirements under the European Union MSP Directive and policies, national jurisdictions are likely to adopt MSP differently, which has implications for the role integration is likely to play in national and transnational MSP practice. Drawing on empirical data derived from national MSP studies and stakeholder dialogue forums the analytical framework is applied to examine how particular integration challenges are manifested in both national and transnational marine space across the Baltic Sea Region. Our preliminary findings suggest that a more calibrated approach to the role and function of integration in examining particular MSP institutional contexts, may provide opportunities for more precise and effective MSP policy evaluations and interventions.

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