

Theme session L

Integration challenges in maritime spatial planning: approaches, science gaps, and communication demands

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Human activities in marine areas are increasing in number and intensity, with patterns of sea use changing as a result of political, economic, and societal developments. European seas can be seen as a hotspot of this development. The EU Blue Growth strategy assumes that Europe's Blue Economy represents 5.4 million jobs and a gross added value of just under €500 billion per year and that 75% of Europe's external trade and 37% of trade within the EU is seaborne. In these contexts policies like the Integrated Maritime Policy and policy implementation tools such as the EU framework directive for Maritime Spatial Planning (EU, 2014), reflect the need to extend planning activities and regulations to areas further offshore.

Marine areas therefore have become contested, but at the same time politically recognized areas, with emerging conflicts rooted not only in different interests, but also different perceptions, values, and attitudes of diverse actors. This implies to look at planning as a social process, which is informed by facts and rules, but also influenced by a wide range of interests, different problem frames, attitudes, and worldviews. The EU has defined Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) as a mechanism for planning and regulating all human uses of the sea, while protecting marine ecosystems. Therefore, while the MSP, in its main objectives, is oriented towards economic goals, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive can be seen as an additional tool which extends environmental policies further offshore. It has been widely recognized that MSP as a form of marine governance is delivered in partnership with a wide range of organizations from the public, private, and voluntary sectors and pro-active integrative planning processes are needed to prevent use conflicts, engage stakeholders and to build consensus.

Integration in MSP has a multidimensional character and includes challenges of horizontal integration across multiple sectors/policy, vertical integration through levels of government, and stakeholder and knowledge integration across diverse interests and epistemologies. These integration challenges encompass:

- Horizontal integration across policies and sectors (Environmental policies and Blue Growth; Public, private and voluntary sector activities; public policy sectors, e.g. maritime transport, fisheries, tourism)

- Multi-scale and transboundary (vertical) integration (Integration of MSP across national borders; Integrating MSP and terrestrial planning; Increasing policy coherence and "fit", as well as commitment to integration)
- Stakeholder integration (Stakeholder values, interests; Procedural aspects, e.g. access, legitimacy, power, timing, roles)
- Integration of knowledge (Different types of knowledge, e.g. scientific knowledge and local knowledge; Risk and uncertainty analysis, sustainability assessments; Sector specific knowledge and rules; Integration of decision support tools in practical MSP processes)

There is significant overlap between these four categories: For example, vertical and horizontal integration also imply stakeholder and knowledge integration; stakeholder integration also requires knowledge integration.

The session had two initial starting points: The first one was the question of how to approach these integration challenges, which has been particularly brought forward by the BONUS BALTSAPACE project, which also presented theoretical and conceptual considerations in the first presentation of the session. The second built on scientific needs to support MSP processes as identified in ICES working groups and workshops (in particular WGMPCZM 2011-2016, WKCES 2013, WKQAMSP 2012, WKRASM 2014 and WKPASM 2015). A significant main product from ICES (in particular WGMPCZM and WKQAMSP) on MSP has been the Cooperative Research Report No. 327 "Marine Spatial Planning Quality Management System" from 2015, which provides a structured system of how to set up MSP processes linked with quality assurance criteria for the process as well as MSP outputs.

Against this background the major aim of this session has been to highlight current research on how to address the above mentioned integration challenges in relation to management needs and to stimulate cross-fertilization among disciplines, in particular social and natural sciences. A total of 23 papers were presented covering European and North American planning initiatives. These were commented from a management practitioner's perspective by a commentator, assigned beforehand by the session conveners, which stimulated discussions among participants of the session. Overall, on Tuesday, 20 September (17:00-18:00) more than 50, on Wednesday, 21 September (8:30-13:00) 60-70 people attended the session with a very low level of fluctuation.

The papers and the resulting discussions highlighted several areas for further consideration.

- There was a broad range of integration perspectives across the papers presented. Some of the papers discussed the integration of data for a specific activity or ecosystem component while other presentations were focused on the policy and stakeholder integration. There is clearly a need to characterize the integration needs for planning in order to provide the relevant information to stakeholders.
- Discussions brought to light that managers and planners have the perception that social sciences and anthropology can only bring qualitative knowledge to the planning in comparison to natural sciences and economics. This should not however

diminish the use of such knowledge in planning processes given that “all knowledge counts” in policy and negotiations. Loss of trust and increased litigation are most often the result of information and knowledge being dismissed without transparent or reasonable explanations. Furthermore, most relevant for any type of scientific information (independent whether from natural or social science or available in quantitative and qualitative format) is to be presented in a way which addresses most directly the criteria used by planners for decision making and enables them to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of any decision in MSP.

- Discussions also brought to light the need for planning processes to provide a forum or safe place for discussions and exchange to provide a learning environment for those involved, putting aside their representation. The process itself has more to do with generating an understanding of the views and perceptions of those involved than simply producing a map. This implies that acceptance or resistance to planning decisions depends not only on individual interests, but also recognition of affected actors in a planning process, the transparency of this process and transparency of the arguments (including weighting between advantages and disadvantages) that finally lead to a decision.