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Letter to the Editor: Combining approaches to address scale challenges

[Editor's note: The following is Peter Jones' response to two articles in the June-July 2014 edition of MEAM: "Mismatches between the scale of ecosystems and the scale of management" and "Tundi's Take: Are we too preoccupied with scale?". Jones is author of *Governing Marine Protected Areas: resilience through diversity*, published by Routledge (2014), in which he addresses the scale-challenge question across 20 case studies.]

Dear MEAM:

The challenges of scale mismatches are discussed by some in terms of 'scale challenges', which they argue can be negotiated amongst actors at different spatial scales and at different institutional levels through horizontal and vertical linkages (see this 2006 paper by Cash et al. — www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss2/art8). Their emphasis is very much on bottom-up approaches through place-based self-governance, involving facilitated negotiations as a basis for reciprocated cooperation amongst people in different places (i.e., MPAs).

This way of thinking about how to address scale mismatches is currently *de rigueur*, including in MPA circles. I am not entirely convinced, particularly given the tendency for many wider-scale human and ecological inter-connections in our seas. Can the challenges, competitions and, let's face it, conflicts raised by these human and ecological inter-connections between MPAs really be addressed by negotiations and cooperation, with no policy/legal coordination mechanisms?

In my studies on MPA governance, I consider the answer to this question to be 'no'. I focus instead on what I term a co-evolutionary hierarchical governance approach, which involves the "coming together of top-down and bottom-up approaches" (as Tundi puts it in her as ever insightful 'take' on scale mismatches), in order to provide for the governance of individual MPAs to address the human and ecological inter-connections between networks of MPAs. This does not mean:

- An entirely bottom-up approach, with faith placed in negotiations through horizontal and vertical linkages to address scale-challenges, with all the associated problems of minority capture, parochialism and short-termism;
- Nor an entirely top-down approach, with faith in the wider-scale remit of higher level policies and agencies, with all the associated problems of fortress conservation and imposition.

Instead, it means combining top-down and bottom-up approaches, along with economic, awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing approaches, so that the weaknesses of one approach are addressed by strengths of the others, in order to achieve the strategic, wider-scale, longer-term objectives of each MPA and the network within which each forms a component.

This is a way of "letting a thousand flowers bloom into the garden we want and need" (as Tundi eloquently puts it) through training, preening and tending them so that the flowers (also known as MPAs in the context of EBM) do so in concert and harmony. This 'gardening in the shadow of hierarchy' approach could represent a way forward from the top-down/bottom-up/scale mismatches dilemmas that these perspectives are discussing.

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