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New uses versus traditional uses in MSP: Who wins?

Wind energy. Land reclamation for port expansion. Sand and gravel mining. Communications and power cables. Shipping. Aquaculture. Coastal tourism. Demands for ocean space are growing rapidly due to new and expanding uses. And “blue economy”/“blue growth”/“ocean economy” initiatives that aim to harness the potential of oceans, seas, and coasts for jobs, value, and sustainability are accelerating these demands. (Read about [European Commission](#) and [Small Island Developing State](#) “blue growth” initiatives.)

Recent articles in MEAM have featured ocean planners [citing MSP as a critical tool for planning for these new and expanding uses before they arise, rather than being reactionary](#). Another expert [expressed concern that MSP in combination with “blue growth” is catalyzing new uses at the expense of traditional uses and the environment](#)

Obviously, ideal ocean planning processes would be able to allocate resources in ways that allow all ocean uses - both new and existing - to be accommodated and grow. However, it is unavoidable that at times some uses will grow at the expense of others (see [“Fishing on a Square Inch”](#), a cri de coeur from the Dutch industrial fishing fleet. More on this example [here](#).)

So how are ocean planning processes prioritizing between new and existing uses? We asked a range of marine governance experts for their thoughts on how these decisions are being made, or should be made, in their region or worldwide. The responses provide a variety of perspectives — from praise for an MSP process that effectively incorporates indigenous concepts of well-being and stewardship, to cautious optimism for MSP as a vehicle for rational planning for the marine environment (in contrast to ad hoc development).

Let us know what you think and share your experiences in the Comments section below.

If not blue, then what color will the economy be?

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Many people fear that high-level government promotion of an “Ocean Economy” or “Blue Economy” will simply accelerate harm to the marine environment and local communities. I agree that this is a risk. However, as I discuss below, that argument is missing a key point.

Development of ocean space, particularly the nearshore, is nothing new. Indeed, the sort of development that many fear will come as a result of the “Blue Economy” is already at hand and occurring on a grand scale. Ocean spaces pretty much everywhere are becoming increasingly crowded, coastal communities are being disrupted, and coastal and marine environments damaged. The Blue Economy concept, and the high-level government attention it garners, offers an opportunity to break with this shameful tradition. When looking at the costs and benefits of a Blue Economy, the alternative must be borne in mind: should governments simply let things progress as they had done in the past? Shouldn't we at least try to better coordinate maritime development and protection in a planning process, no matter what it is called? Admittedly, some efforts will be more successful than others, but the poor examples should not discourage others from trying to do a better job than their neighbors and predecessors.

In last month's MEAM, Tundi Agardy described the attractive and romantic notion of villagers gathering clams at low tide and spontaneously breaking out into song... into eternity (see [“Dispatches from the Field: When MSP enable Blue Growth, who benefits?”](#)). But the reality is rather different. There are fewer and fewer clams, fewer villagers content to dig them up for a living, and sadly, fewer things to sing about in general. Yes, the Blue Economy concept could be window dressing for more of the same. But it need not be. Prioritizing between new and existing uses has no universal how-to manual. National solutions will have to be tailored to the region and its societal expectations. However, with a planning process that is inclusive and transparent (rather than the status quo semi-opaque, sometimes shady, handing out of permits), there is a greater chance that fair and equitable solutions can be found. It is not guaranteed, of course, but that should not stop governments from trying.

Existing users often lack awareness of their role as stakeholders and their power to protect the ocean

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Existing uses, including consumptive uses – such as fisheries – and non-consumptive uses – such as tourism and leisure – provide financial and/or spiritual sustenance for a wide range of individuals and communities. But even when the promotion of existing uses is among the stated objectives of MSP, governments often promote new uses rather than protect existing ones.

The reason for this is quite straightforward. Big companies promoting new uses can easily offer prospects of large investments, job creation, generalized environmental improvements, and economic revenue (if and how these prospects materialize is a different issue). The math on the other side of the scale, for existing uses, is trickier – especially when we're talking about non-extractive uses which are harder to put numbers on. When we don't pay for something, e.g., the enjoyment provided by the scenic beauty of a pristine seascape, we often don't realize its full value, until it's lost. Also, the complex web of existing users – whether consumptive or non-consumptive – are often not aware of the fact that they are stakeholders and have an important role to play in ocean planning processes.

This tipping of the scale toward new uses should not come as a surprise, but should prompt some reflection. If, as the saying goes, “the squeaky wheel gets the grease”,

then perhaps existing ocean users should do more to balance things out. Why, then, doesn't this occur? Why don't these stakeholders engage? Although inaction may result from a variety of reasons, the problem stems, I believe, from a three-fold lack of awareness of:

1. The intrinsic/full value of the ocean as a source of physical, economic, and spiritual sustenance;
2. The system's frailty;
3. Our duty as citizens to protect our common asset - particularly the need for existing users to play their role, as new or prospective users do – to be vocal participants in these processes and exercise their power as legitimate stakeholders.

Arguably, a keen awareness of these aspects would prompt action. In our jobs as practitioners, researchers, and/or educators, we need to increase awareness of and literacy on these issues, particularly among graduate and undergraduate students and groups of existing ocean users such as surfers and beach goers. Such initiatives should contribute to bringing the legitimate interests of a wider array of stakeholders to the ocean planning processes and help balance the scales between promoting new uses and protecting existing ones – while preserving the fragile ecosystem upon which our well-being depends.

Space for Māori in planning for New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf

Editor's note: This response was co-authored by Nathan Kennedy and Shaun Awatere of the Mātauranga Māori Reference Group for the Seachange – Tai Timu Tai Pari process to develop a spatial plan for New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf/Tikapa Moana\Te Moananui a Toi. They can be contacted at contact@seachange.org.nz.

The Hauraki Gulf, known to Māori (New Zealand's indigenous people) as Tikapa Moana\Te Moananui a Toi, has endured decades of pressure from land-use management, extractive industries, and the country's largest metropolitan center (Auckland). These have severely diminished the ecological health of Tikapa Moana\Te Moananui a Toi. To help mitigate the decline in ecological health, a comprehensive spatial planning exercise has been carried out.

Over the last three years, Mana Whenua (Māori tribes holding customary authority for Tikapa Moana\Te Moananui a Toi) have worked collaboratively with local and central government agencies and community stakeholders in a spatial planning project called *Seachange – Tai Timu Tai Pari* ("the rising and falling tide"). While the plan will be non-statutory, it will be implemented through the statutory plans and policies of central and local government agencies with resource management responsibilities for Tikapa Moana\Te Moananui a Toi.

Māori also have resource management rights and responsibilities for Tikapa Moana\Te Moananui a Toi. Customary common law rights and responsibilities are enshrined in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi between Māori and the British Crown. Mana Whenua are currently negotiating with central government for the settlement of historical claims for natural resources, financial restitution for Treaty breaches, and co-governance/co-management of Tikapa Moana\Te Moananui a Toi.

Critically, community and government partners of Seachange have made space in the plan for Mana Whenua interests. An agreed principle is that the plan will uphold customary rights and Treaty settlements. Building on examples of plans that recognize indigenous rights and responsibilities such as the Haida Gwaii marine spatial plan of British Columbia, Māori and their collaborative partners are articulating concepts of marine management, restoration, and protection from an indigenous perspective. For example, the overarching goal of the plan is the restoration and maintenance of a Māori concept of well-being - mauri (life force or principle). Furthermore, kaitiakitanga – a Māori environmental management approach based on obligations of stewardship and care stemming from familial relationships between mankind and all elements of the natural world – is an overarching ethic of the plan.

Intended for completion in late 2016, Mana Whenua believe the plan will be ground-breaking, both for being driven by local communities, and substantially incorporating indigenous interests and values.

Spatially accommodating new uses in Indonesia using MSP

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The Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) is responsible for MSP at a national level as well as assisting provincial governments in MSP development. According to MMAF regulations, new ocean uses should be added to existing MSP by:

1. Revising the existing marine spatial plan before accommodating the new ocean use or uses. In revising the plan, the new use will be analyzed for strategic importance to the country and the National Development Plan. As part of this analysis, an MSP team will collect field data on coastal and ocean uses including the new proposed uses.
2. After data collection, locations proposed for the new use will be analyzed, and there will be public consultations where all stakeholders (government agencies, representatives of existing ocean uses, and other relevant actors) provide spatial and non-spatial input in term of risks and conflicts amongst existing actors.
3. Once the public consultation approves a plan, the MSP team will submit a final report to the national or local government MSP authority for input.

These processes will ensure all proposed new ocean uses can be better accommodated spatially.

However, it must be added that MSP in Indonesia needs to be accelerated. To date, only a few local governments have established MSP regulations. In September 2015, five of 34 provinces and eight regencies and four municipalities out of 511 total have established MSP by law. Furthermore, MMAF which is responsible for MSP nationally, has not established national MSP by 2016 as mandated.

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