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Exploring the winners and losers of marine environmental governance

Wesley Flannery and Geraint Ellis

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) has rapidly become the most commonly endorsed management regime for sustainable development in the marine environment. MSP is advocated as a means of managing human uses of the sea in a sustainable manner, in the face of ever-increasing demands on marine resources. While MSP is quickly becoming the dominant marine management paradigm, there has been comparatively little assessment of the potential negative impacts and possible distributive impacts that may arise from its adoption. This should be a key challenge for both academic and practitioner communities and therefore offers a fruitful topic for *Interface*.

In the contributions that follow, we hear from a range of voices and perspectives on these important themes. The lead paper (Ellis and Flannery) argues for a broader, more critical, understanding of the social and distributive impacts of MSP, advocating a radical turn in MSP away from a rationalism of science and neoliberal logic towards more equity-based, democratic decision-making and a fairer distribution of our ocean wealth.

Then, eight responses follow, from academics, planners, policymakers and industry representatives around the world. The first two come from academics, Nursey-Bray and van Tatenhove, who each broadly endorse the core arguments of the lead paper and advocate for a radical MSP. Nursey-Bray suggests this requires rethinking MSP as a process of cultural co-existence rather than as a tool for managing multiple uses. Van Tatenhove argues that this would involve highlighting the power dynamics involved, the interplay of structure and agency in MSP processes and how this affects the quality of planning.

The next three responses offer insights from marine planners and managers. Kelly, reflecting on her experience as a marine planner in the Shetland Islands, argues that while a call for a radical MSP is well-timed, it is overly pessimistic of current practice because negative impacts can be overcome by ensuring broad stakeholder consultation and adopting flexible planning processes. Coffen-Smout (Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada but writing here in a personal capacity) argues that a radical approach is politically unfeasible as it requires an overhaul of marine resource management regimes. Instead, he suggests that advancing more effective MSP is best achieved within current frameworks and uses ocean governance in Canada to illustrate. Rhona Fairgrieve (Marine Scotland but offering some personal reflections), argues that while MSP may be imperfect, it is the best

possible solution for addressing the complex governance of marine space. She suggests that we need to give MSP a chance and work with MSP practitioners to secure sustainable development.

The final three responses relate the issues discussed in the lead paper with specific industries. Knol and Jentoft discuss the need to consider the possible negative effects of new industries on fisheries-dependent communities. Then Bacon, a recreational angling boat operator, decries the rise of MSP-type processes and argues that scientists and academics use spatial management processes, such as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), to develop income streams for their research, ignoring the negative impacts these instruments have on existing users. Finally, O'Hagan, reflects on the utility of MSP to marine renewable energy (MRE) outlining a hope that MSP will become more flexible than current licencing systems to facilitate more MRE projects.

All responses tend to agree that we need a more holistic understanding of the distributional impacts of MSP, but differ on the nature of the challenge this creates. We hope that even if other academics, policy makers or practitioners disagree with our diagnosis, this *Interface* will stimulate a broader discussion and even some recognition that radicalism has a role everywhere, even at sea.