



## **SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT**

### **Two- and three-year projects and postdoctoral projects**

Regnr Östersjöstiftelsen: Grant number 46/18

Project manager: Fred Saunders

Project title: Taking Social Sustainability to the Sea: Strengthening the Social Pillar in Marine Spatial Planning (2019-2021 (funding active until 2022))

#### **1. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them**

1.1 Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) does not currently systematically include social justice in practice, nor was there, prior to our work, a systematic way of analyzing, evaluating or practically including social justice in marine planning. The neglect of social sustainability/justice concerns in marine planning is largely because MSP is driven by States who prioritize strategic imperatives (associated with progressing the national good) such as offshore wind energy and defense concerns, among others.

1.2 While there are case-dependent variances, MSP institutional arrangements tend to (through formal institutional means that inform practices) prioritize large sectoral actors ahead of less organized and weaker (in governance terms) stakeholders, such as coastal actors (tourism interests, municipalities, small-scale fishers, residents, recreational users etc.). As above, this has tended to result in the exclusion or at least marginalization of socio-cultural and placed based coastal interests and values in MSP.

1.3. The development of a conceptual framework to capture social justice concerns in relation to MSP, along with its application to diverse and empirically rich Baltic Sea case studies has highlighted the inadequacies and challenges evident in existing MSP practices, but also point to ways forward on how social justice could be better integrated into MSP research and practice.

This research has garnered considerable interest from several Baltic states (incl. MSP planners in Sweden, Estonia and Poland), HELCOM (Baltic Sea – HELCOM VASAB Marine Spatial Planning Working Group) and EU fora (EUSBSR) on how to practically include social justice in MSP planning and plans.

#### **2. The project's contribution to the international research frontline**

There are three key contributions to the international research frontline.

2.1 The first is a conceptual or theoretical contribution. Taking Social Sustainability to the Sea (TSS to the Sea) developed a conceptual framework that supports (scholarly) analysis and (practitioner-orientated evaluation of MSP processes, plans and practices. This work involved adapting and elaborating Nancy Fraser's social justice framework in relation to MSP by integrating three dimensions: Recognition (Who counts?), Representation (Who



gets heard?) and Distribution (Who gets what?). This is reflected in the article, *Theorizing Social Sustainability and Justice in Marine Spatial Planning: Democracy, Diversity, and Equity* (Saunders et al. 2020). While we acknowledge that these three social justice dimensions clearly overlap and are interdependent in practice, the conceptual thinking underpinning each of them is distinctive and when taken together they contribute towards conceiving social sustainability as a pillar of sustainability. This conceptual approach was developed to support a social justice analysis/evaluation of MSP across a wide range of claims, demands, and concerns that are likely to be encountered within and across different national MSP policy settings. This theoretical work and the TSS to the Sea framework has subsequently become influential in MSP and social science scholarship and has been widely cited.

2.2 The second contribution is the application of a comprehensive social justice conceptual framework to analyze MSP empirical cases. This work showed how the conceptual framework described above can be applied to different MSP cases to elicit critical analytical insights into social justice problems and gaps and to some extent, how they could be addressed - although it's important to note that this work is ongoing. The empirical work also illustrated the way that the three social justice dimensions in the TSS to the Sea conceptual framework are expressed, experienced and interrelate in MSP practice. That is, the uneven formal recognition given to MSP affected actors flows on to have implications for representation and distribution (and vice versa). The different case-studies, Latvia, Poland and Germany exhibited both similar and different social justice problems/challenges. For example, in Poland, the recognition of small-scale fishers was the focus point – albeit not exclusively (see Tafon et al. (2023)). In Latvia, the representation of coastal communities was centered in the analysis (Tafon et al., forthcoming). In Germany, which just experienced a second round of MSPlanning, the focus was on distributional justice (or more precisely stakeholder and planner perceptions on distribution of harms and benefits of MSP (manuscript under development) While these three cases focused on different dimensions of justice – mainly because of the prominence of these concerns within each casestudy milieu and our research decision to illustrate these – it did not do so exclusively, i.e., the various articles highlight how the dimensions of justice interacted, thereby giving insights in each casestudy setting of the root causes of injustices and/or their flow on effects) (Stalmokaite at al. forthcoming)

2.3 As alluded to above, this project has stimulated an active discussion among MSP academics and practitioners on how to more deeply integrate social justice dimensions into different MSP contexts. To this end, researchers affiliated with this project, have begun a series of dialogues with MSP practitioners to foster mutual understanding of how to examine current marine planning practices to actively explore how social justice can be embedded – as a core sustainability goal - in different MSP contexts. To further enable this, we added another conceptual dimension to our work – capabilities (see Tafon et al. (2023); Tafon et al. (forthcoming)). Adding a capability's approach in relation to the dimensions of social justice enables a contextual analysis of the relative deprivation or enhanced state of group capabilities in relation to the marine environment and how these values, interests, relationships and experiences (that influence capabilities) are given expression in MSP (either negated or enhanced).



### **3. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe**

The empirical focus of the study was on three countries in the Baltic Sea Region, namely Poland, Germany and Latvia. This included (from the vantage point of our social justice framing) an examination in each country of the institutional arrangements that MSP is embedded within, scrutiny of the actual planning practice conducted as part of the formation of national marine spatial plans, examination of the MSP national plans and formulation of pathways toward more just and equitable MSP. Given that this is the first time that a national MSP has been developed in Latvia and Poland and the second time in Germany, these studies in many ways have generated novel insights into MSP practices, which will be important to consider in subsequent rounds of MSP planning. These include:

- Conceptual/theoretical insights on how to examine MSP practices in terms of social justice.
- Methodological insights on how to combine an analysis of the way that formal national (and subnational) institutional frameworks that MSP is embedded in link to planning practices associated with developing national MSP plans (and influence the substantive content of the plans themselves).
- Empirical insights on how different countries adopt different institutional arrangements and practices in implanting MSP (despite a common EU Directive) and how these have implications for social justice
- Emerging practical insights on how to integrate social justice into MSP processes and plans.

### **4. New research questions that the project has led to**

- 4.1 How to more closely align academic critique on the social justice of MSP with a reform of MSP practice?
- 4.2 How to include less organized MSP coastal (place-based) interests productively and effectively in national MSP plans?
- 4.3 How can marine conflicts and disagreements be transformed to promote environmental, economic and social sustainability?
- 4.4 How can social justice aspirations/goals be integrated with environmental/economic sustainability goals in MSP practices?
- 4.5 What methods and indicators are available and/or necessary to evaluate social justice objectives in MSP?
- 4.6 What approaches, instruments and methods would help planners to include social justice dimensions?
- 4.7 How can justice be extended (possibility through conceptualizing the capabilities framework) to non-human nature?

### **5. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community**

#### *Conferences and Workshops*

- (1) Constructing a Social Sustainability Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning from the Academic and Institutional Literature. Spatial Strategies at the



Land-Sea Interface: Rethinking Maritime Spatial Planning 11-13th September 2019, University of Hamburg, Institute for Geography.

- (2) Conference presentation: 'Social justice in marine spatial planning: Actor's experiences from the Baltic Sea, MUD 2022, Breda University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands, 2-3 June 2022, online participation. Presenter: Ignė Stalmokaitė
- (3) Conference Presentation: Conflict at sea: Pathways to an Ocean Sustainability PACT. MARE 2021 People and the Sea: Limits to Blue Growth? Online 28th of June to 2nd of July, 2021. Presenter: Fred Saunders
- (4) A workshop 'Sustainable oceans by governance and planning – dream or reality?' as part of the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual EUSBSR Forum in 29 September, 2022 in Lappeenranta, Finland. Contact person: Liene Gaujeniete, spatial planning expert, VASAB Secretariat, EUSBSR PA Spatial Planning Coordinator. Offsite presentation. Presenter: Kira Gee (onsite presentation).
- (5) HELCOM VASAB Marine Spatial Planning Working Group's first informal consultation session, 5-7 October 2022, a physical meeting in Hamburg, Germany. Presenter: Kira Gee (onsite presentation).

*Refereed Articles (Publications (published and in progress))*

- Saunders, F., Gilek, M., Ikauniece, A., Tafon, R. V., Gee, K. & Zaucha, J. 2020. Theorizing Social Sustainability and Justice in Marine Spatial Planning: Democracy, Diversity, and Equity. *Sustainability* 12(6).  
<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/6/2560>
- Kidd, S., Calado, H., Gee, K., Gilek, M. & Saunders, F. 2020. Marine Spatial Planning and sustainability: Examining the roles of integration - Scale, policies, stakeholders and knowledge. *Ocean and Coastal Management* 191.
- Gilek, M., Armoskaite, A., Gee, K., Saunders, F., Tafon, R. & Zaucha, J. 2021. In search of social sustainability in marine spatial planning: A review of scientific literature published 2005–2020. *Ocean and Coastal Management* 208.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569121001034>
- Tafon, R. V., Glavovic, B., Saunders, F. & Gilek, M. 2022. Oceans of Conflict: Pathways to an Ocean Sustainability PACT. *Planning practice + research* 37(2): 213-230. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02697459.2021.1918880>
- Tafon, R., Saunders, F., Zaucha, J., Matczak, M., Stalmokaite, I., Gilek, M. & Turski, J. (2023) Blue justice through and beyond equity and participation: a critical reading of capability-based recognitional justice in Poland's marine spatial planning. *Environmental Science and Policy*.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09640568.2023.2183823>
- Stalmokaite, I., Tafon, R., Armoskaite, A., Ikauniece, A., Saunders, F., Gilek, M., & K. Gee. (in review) Social justice in marine spatial planning: Stakeholder perspectives and experiences in the Baltic Sea Region. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*.



Tafon, R., Armoskaite, A., Ikauniece, A., Saunders, F., Gilek, M., & K. Gee (submitted to *Ocean and Coastal Management*) Enabling factors and impediments to coastally just and equitable marine spatial planning in Latvia: Stakeholder experiences and perspectives on participation.

*Book Chapters*

Saunders, F., Gilek, M. and R. Tafon. 2019 Adding people to the sea: conceptualizing social sustainability in MSP. In (Jacek Zaucha and Kira Gee eds.) (pp.201-217) *Marine spatial planning – past, present, future*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-98696-8\\_8](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-98696-8_8)

Gilek, M. Saunders, F. and Stalmokaitė, I. 2019. Analysing Ecosystem Approach and Sustainable Development in Baltic Sea Marine Spatial Planning - The Social Pillar, a Slow Train Coming. In (David Langlet and Rosemary Rayfuse Eds.) *The Ecosystem Approach in Ocean Planning and Governance Perspectives from Europe and Beyond*. Publications on Ocean Development, Volume: 87. Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden, The Netherlands.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctvrk2v2.13>