INTEGRATING MARINE CULTURE INTO MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING IN THE GULF OF GDAŃSK

1. Challenge/problem addressed

Marine spatial planning (MSP) is considered one of the most important tools to manage marine areas. It attempts to balance various uses and users on the sea. One of such uses (or sectors) is marine culture that encompasses both tangible elements and intangible values that people put on the sea. So far, mostly tangible elements (such as for example underwater wrecks, paleo-landscapes or specific marine-related architecture) have been included in MSP across the world. The scope and content of MSP, indeed, vary for different countries and plans, but marine culture is often overlooked, especially in its intangible dimension. The approach (or the method) presented below is one of the ways to include such immaterial values (i.e. feelings and emotions) into the planning process on the sea (and at the border between the land and the sea), and to select these areas that could be described as 'culturally significant' for the local communities of a given coastal area.

2. Main scale of governance involved: local / regional / national / international

The implementation of the above approach was performed at local to regional levels (i.e. the geographical area of Gulf of Gdańsk), but it can be up-scaled into national or even international levels.

3. Description of what and where was done

We have tested a framework that allows terrestrial and marine planners to adopt a wider approach to marine (and coastal) culture, i.e. to include both tangible and intangible values in the planning processes and to identify these areas that are most significant for the local communities. In order to achieve that goal, we have used the modified framework proposed by Gee at al. (2017)[1] and approached the wide range of stakeholders (through semi-structured interviews and interactive workshops) in order to identify places, features and events (and any other elements) that were considered 'culturally' important for coastal citizens in our case study (i.e. Gulf of Gdańsk). We have neither defined 'culture' nor provide detailed guidelines what should be considered as 'marine' or 'coastal'. Only elements with no links to the

---

[1] Gee, K., Kannen, A., Adlam, R., Brooks, C., Chapman, M., Cormier, R., Fischer, C., Fletcher, S., Gubbins, M., Shucksmith, R., Shellock, R. 2017: Identifying culturally significant areas for marine spatial planning. *Ocean & Coastal Management* 136: 139–147.

sea[2], or these with no spatial attribution were excluded from the further analysis. The identification of places, features and events was designed to understand:

- What was valued, e.g. a coastal town or part of it, a viewing point, or a specific event or object;
- Why it was valued, e.g. for its landscape, for relaxation or for specific atmosphere;
- Who it was important to, e.g. for an individual, a specific sector or a community at large;
- What was the relation with the sea and how it influenced land-sea interaction.

At the end of the process, all the identified objects and features were assigned the spatial attribution and they were placed on the map. That allows the identification of the areas (i.e. parts of the region) that represent the highest values for the coastal communities or the highest concentration of 'culturally significant' areas. Our results can be used by the planners as a guidance of 'what' (or what values) should be protected and where, and what could be the best tools (or limitation) to sustain these elements of reality that are most important for the local citizens.

We have tested this approach in the Gulf of Gdańsk area, which also included the Vistula Lagoon, and the adjacent land (coastal/marine municipalities and communes). However, it should be noted that that our case study did not have a clear geographical boundaries. Firstly, we have allowed for the self-identification of the municipalities and communes, i.e. no border of with the sea was required if a municipality or a commune defined itself as marine on its web-site or through a membership in a relevant marine organisation. Secondly, if an identified element was considered 'marine', but was outside the geographical boundaries of the Gulf of Gdańsk, it was still included in the final sample (and maps) in order to acknowledge the region's borders as perceived by the involved community members.

4. What sectors were involved?

Decision-makers, local authorities, planners, tourism sector, fishing sector, local and environmental non-governmental organizations, and representatives of the culture sector

5. Which target/interest groups / stakeholders were reached?

We have obtained a good representation of all the above sectors

6. What methods were applied?

- Semi-structured interviews

---

[2] We considered that a given element has no link to the sea, if a stakeholder, when asked, was not able to describe such a link.

- Interactive workshops (predominantly in the form of focus groups)

These are the standard social science research methods, which were complemented (when needed) with direct interactions with selected stakeholders, including phone calls and emails.

7. Lessons learned

The tested approach allows to identify the variety of cultural values (including feelings and emotions) towards marine and coastal ecosystems; these values can further be converted into maps that can be used when planning the marine space. Moreover, many of these values play an important role in creating and sustaining local/regional identity and the well-being of local communities. Therefore, they should be an important element of the decision-making processes.

Marine or coastal cultural values are the most intense at the border between the 'land' and 'the sea'. Land-sea interactions are especially important for governmental processes that include cultural values.

Using the wide approach to marine culture, i.e. not limiting it to (underwater) maritime heritage is possible and recommended. Therefore, MSP should also "plan emotions" that are related to actual places and/or events. Both historical and contemporary values should be recognized and included. Adopting a narrow approach will most likely lead to social exclusion and can possibly threaten the region's sustainable development and a sense of (local) identity.

Eliciting cultural value should not be limited to experts and professionals, but also include a society at large. This could be done by using a combination of qualitative (used in our approach) and quantitative methods.

Working with social and cultural values it difficult and time- and money-consuming. It requires at least some knowledge and experience in (qualitative) social science methods and openness for working with different type of information (especially when compared to the typical environmental and economic data). New tools and approaches should be introduced to MSP processes.

8. To which Multi-level Governance steps this valuable practice contributes?

1) Scoping and setting up governance structures
    a) **Governance scoping and stocktaking**
2) Stakeholder involvement
    a) **Stakeholder recognition and mapping**
    b) **Stakeholder discussions across levels**

3) Solutions and implementation

   a) **Looking for solutions**

9. Links to further information about the practice/case

https://land-sea.eu

Contact persons: Joanna Piwowarczyk (piwowarczyk@iopan.pl) and Tymon Zieliński (tymon@iopan.pl)