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Adding People to the Sea: Conceptualizing Social Sustainability in Maritime Spatial Planning

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1 Introduction

Over the last 30 years, the Brundtland's conception of sustainable development (SD) has gained a firm place on global policy agendas. Here SD seeks to achieve multidimensional goals by linking ecological, social and economic well-being. These three pillars are seen as compatible and mutually supportive rather than completely separated. Furthermore, SD has been the 'go to' concept to address multidimensional problems in an iterated and holistic way in natural resource planning and management. However, during this time, academic and political attention has largely centred on environmental and economic sustainability, thereby leaving social sustainability relatively under-theorized and under-elaborated in policy practice (Boström 2012; Murphy 2012). This is exemplified in the case of marine spatial planning (MSP). In this chapter, we aim to contribute to filling this gap by exploration of what the social pillar of SD in MSP could or should mean and suggestions on how it could be furthered in practice. This is not to say that economic and environmental sustainability are not vitally important, but with the intention to broaden out the sustainability ambition in MSP.

MSP aims to achieve SD by balancing a range of economic, social and environmental goals in decision-making over use of marine space. The EU Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU) can be seen as a recent

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attempt to legislate to achieve this ambition across European seas by harmonizing environmental protection with economic development opportunities. MSP is a worldwide marine governance phenomenon with marine plans in place or under development in Australia, Canada, China, Ecuador, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Philippines, Seychelles, USA and Vietnam, among others (UNESCO [n.d.](#)).

MSP policymaking, at least in Europe, commonly explicitly incorporates environmental (protection) and economic (Blue Growth) components and goals, but very rarely, if at all, are social aspects elaborated or addressed.¹ As others have pointed out (cf. Boström [2012](#)), this oversight is not atypical in natural resource management, where it is commonly (and we argue wrongly) assumed that social benefits will flow through (or trickle down) by realizing a ‘balance’ between economic growth and environmental protection without paying explicit attention to the social pillar of SD (e.g. Gilek et al. [forthcoming](#)). Arguably social concerns (democratic decision-making, welfare of different groups, etc.) is captured partially within both concepts in different ways—in economics because of its concern for society-wide material development² (with the built-in assumptions that this benefits everyone) and in environmental protection because ensuring the continuance of (environmental) conditions (as the underpinning resource base for economic ambitions) remains sustainable (enough) so as not to (overly) disrupt market potentiality/capital accumulation. In addition to undermining the orthodox view of SD which posits that the ecological must be somehow interwoven with the economic and the social, the MSP approach, characterized above, accentuates a rather inconclusive understanding of the relationship between the multiple dimensions of SD and is evasive in regard to social sustainability.

Concerns about disharmony between different dimensions of sustainability also extend to acknowledging ‘conflict urgencies’ between social justice and environmentalism (i.e., what should get priority in orchestrating planning ‘balance’), which has often been a point of debate in the broader SD discourse between intra- and intergenerational equity (cf. Dobson [2003](#); Campbell [2013](#)). In addition, assumptions of harmony between different goals of

¹There are exceptions of course. For example, in the draft Welsh National MSP there is a section devoted to ‘Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society’, where normative ambitions concerning the role of MSP in providing societal benefits are described. Still these ambitions are not embedded in the role of Blue Growth; rather the references to economic uses/interests are dominated by sectoral planning.

²As pointed out by Campbell ([2016](#)), it is well worth noting that there is ‘no singular, homogenous “economic” interest’ (p. 389). Referring to economic priorities purely as Blue Growth or even ‘sustainable growth’ (with environmental protection in mind) as an MSP goal fails to consider other economic-related factors, such as uneven distribution of wealth and access to resources.

sustainability have been implicated in creating a 'post-political' MSP (Flannery et al. 2018; Flannery et al. 2016; Tafon 2017; Tafon et al. 2018; Jones et al. 2016; Ritchie 2014; Kidd and Ellis 2012). Post-political processes are those run by government, with *a priori* or fixed goals (sometimes not explicitly stated), that give the illusion of creating authentic spaces of public engagement, while limiting possibilities for meaningful debate and consequential action. This critique reflects growing concerns (most vocally among critical planning and social science scholars) that the stated ambitions of MSP are not being realized in practice. Among serious criticisms pointed at MSP are that it is largely devoid of social context (Flannery et al. 2018), eschews meaningful inclusion of dissenting stakeholders (Ritchie 2014), draws on limited (mostly) technical knowledge input (Ritchie and Ellis 2010; Kidd and Ellis 2012), does little to address uneven power relations among stakeholders (Ritchie and Ellis 2010; Kidd and Ellis 2012; Tafon 2017), is mostly concerned to give effect to a state agenda that privileges elite or powerful groups (Jones et al. 2016; Tafon et al. 2018), and lacks meaningful consideration of the distribution of the cost and benefits of marine use (Jentoft 2017; Flannery et al. 2016). This omission of the social pillar across a range of issue areas has come under increasing scrutiny recently as commentators from different fields have urged for public governance to pay more attention (and give increasing priority) to redressing growing forms of inequality, rather than solely focusing on economic growth as the *de facto* socio-economic goal and measure of progress.³

While MSP is often boosted as a promising means of pluralistic marine governance able to mediate tensions between competing values and interests to reach a 'common public interest' on how we are to use the sea, this recent burst of critical evaluation of MSP practice indicates that it is far from living up to these expectations. While the critical literature mentioned above provides us with insights into the shortfalls of MSP, little effort has been invested in how to meaningfully elaborate and incorporate social sustainable dimensions into MSP. Integral to understanding what social sustainability could/should mean in MSP are questions over: what should the goals of MSP be, who should decide over access to marine resources, how should these decisions be made and who should benefit from them. This underlines a need to reconsider MSP in terms of social sustainability constitutively (what is the purpose

³ See Milanovic (2013) and Piketty (2014) on general problems of growing inequality (between and within countries); Muraca (2012) on degrowth and Tafon (2017) and Flannery et al. (2016) for accounts of problems of exclusive pursuit of economic growth in MSP.

of MSP), procedurally (how should it be done) and substantively (what should be distributive outcomes of MSP). These insights suggest that recasting MSP to take greater account of social sustainability would necessitate greater social inclusion, redressing power inequalities and making trade-offs with substantive consideration to the equity of outcomes. This reflects a need to develop joined-up thinking on sustainability to consider the possibilities of addressing environmental concerns, while centring prospects for justice and equity through economic development (Agyeman et al. 2003).

The chapter is structured in the following way. First, we identify and discuss different features of social sustainability in MSP. Then we synthesize the social sustainability features discussed in the previous section into a conceptual approach that we propose to examine social sustainability in MSP. The chapter finishes by conjecturing on how the framework could be utilized to further lift the importance of engaging in social sustainability in MSP.

2 Developing Social Sustainability in MSP

What could social sustainability look like in MSP? First, we must acknowledge that in conceptualizing social sustainability, normative, analytical and political aspects will be inevitably difficult to differentiate. Whereas the normative strives to set standards on how society ought to develop or be considered in public governance initiatives like MSP (expressed e.g. in policy or political programmes such as SD goals), the analytical looks at how social sustainability values, such as participation, equity, social cohesion and so on, are adopted and given effect. Within a sustainability approach, the social ambitions of sustainability are indelibly intertwined with the fate of ecological and economic dimensions in the sense that economic and ecological dimensions can influence the ability to achieve social sustainability and vice versa. Nevertheless, all three dimensions should not be merely seen as the means to achieve another but as legitimate in themselves.

The broad question confronted here is how to examine and understand social values in MSP, and how these, in turn, relate to the marine environment, marine uses and activities, and marine planning both as an institution and practice. This means that first we must try to delineate what values and associated concepts should be included in the social sustainability pillar of MSP. This should respond to what the critics of MSP see as current shortfalls but also the need for a conceptual approach that encompasses both procedural and substantive aspects and what might be practically achievable in different MSP practices across different contexts.

2.1 Deepening Democratic Decision-Making in MSP

First, there have been numerous scholarly interventions arguing for the deepening of democracy in MSP decision-making processes (cf. Jentoft 2017; Ritchie and Ellis 2010; Jones et al. 2016; Tafon 2017). These writings variously call for a wholesale reconstitution of MSP and/or reform to create more socially cooperative approaches to MSP. There are two key themes to these calls: (1) more voices need to be included and (2) these voices need to be heard in a way that makes a meaningful difference to MSP outcomes (i.e., equity).

Jones et al. (2016) drawing on a diverse range of MSP cases in Europe found that MSP practice exhibits an exclusive approach to participation and when a wider range of stakeholders were included, commonly their involvement was not meaningful. ‘Meaningful’ implies here, the inclusion of actors, so that they have a capacity to shape and influence marine planning decisions that they have an interest in (material and non-material) and that affect them. This critique, similarly to debates over SD more generally, laments what some see as the unquestioned underlying, but overwhelming purpose of MSP—to deliver Blue Growth (or economic growth through sea use). This driver is seen as steering the dominant strategic sectoral stakeholder engagement approach that Jones et al. (2016) and others see as (a problem) characterizing MSP practice. Presenting almost fully formed plans as one-way flow of information—or consultation—is also seen as a lower order and perhaps even undermining form of participation that can work to undermine the legitimacy of public governance initiatives like MSP by exacerbating power differences and elitism. As Metzger et al. (2017) and others have noted, who frames what a stakeholder is in planning or ‘stakeholderiness’ (conferring in MSP ‘the property of being considered legitimately concerned’, p. 2) will affect how and what stakeholders are represented and included. If the preponderance of MSP’s strategic focus is on Blue Growth and/or environmental protection, there is little likelihood that social sustainability (and associated ‘stakes’) will be seen as a legitimate concern without some form of explicit representation and/or constitutive reform of MSP.

When thinking of sectors in MSP (those seen to have a stake), it may be important to keep in mind that, as discussed here, they are made up of public, private and voluntary entities (Kidd and Shaw 2014). The extent of inclusion of these multiple spheres of society (i.e., where boundaries of a ‘sector’ are drawn for inclusion—government, civil society, business, general public, vulnerable social groups, unions) is important in thinking about democracy in marine governance and will affect other aspects of planning—such as what

stakeholders are included, when and where they are included, what influence they have and what type of knowledge is valued in decision-making. So as Kidd and Ellis (2012) point out in advocating a deliberative approach, realizing mutual benefits across spheres of interest will also likely require institutional steering where differences in power are managed⁴ and where antagonistic differences can be put on the table, weighted ‘equitably’ and addressed. In this way stakeholder engagement in MSP would work towards giving opportunities for different values, interests and types of knowledge to be expressed, exchanged and considered in a transparent way (McCann et al. 2014; Jentoft 2017).

The inherently political character of MSP raises thorny questions about how to develop proactive integrative planning processes to support this engagement of interested and affected stakeholders across multiple sectors, scales and administrative boundaries in MSP decision-making over time (Olsen et al. 2014). Of course in pluralistic governance approaches such as MSP (in ambition at least), weak or marginalized groups may not ‘automatically’ become represented, so this suggests that MSP needs to be cognizant of ways to give voice to these groups: particularly ways to redress the lack of social resources which undermine possibilities to realize what Pansardi (2016) calls substantive political equality (which arks back to the importance of considering inequalities in economic and symbolic power resources). Of course, this may be easier said than done, especially in settings characterized by asymmetrical power relations or where complex inter- and intra-sector dynamics are at play, such as in Poland, where there are several sub-sectors of fisheries with different histories and variable claims over resources (Saunders et al. 2016; Tafon *forthcoming*). Even if these difficulties could begin to be overcome (or more likely, put aside), the deliberative/agonism debate in planning theory tells us that there are unresolved questions of power, as well as ambiguity of the magnitude of (democratic or constitutive—how radical) shift desirable and/or possible (Bond 2011). Planners will also often cite resource and capacity limitations as constraints to conducting ‘more democratic engagement’ in MSP, but as has been noted, meaningful ‘participation may be time consuming, but may also reduce [both] transaction costs at some later stage in the process’ (Jentoft 2017, p. 34), and the intensity of conflict during the implementation stage of plans (Tafon et al. 2018). In this way, it may help to establish long-term buy-in and planning continuity, plus also of course, deliver on stated sustainability commitments.

⁴At least to the point where there are not dominant stakeholders.

Agonistic theorists would see this an insufficient response—as this perspective is not just concerned with extending democratic processes but opening them up to currently excluded or non-present discourses (e.g., the material and non-material distributional implications of MSP decision-making; more contestatory voices) (Tambakaki 2017). While there are more critical voices who advocate agnostic planning approaches (cf. Flannery et al. 2016; Tafon et al. 2018) in MSP, more common is a call for more ‘genuinely’ deliberative approaches to address competing marine use options, and choices among different knowledge claims and their relation to interests (Ritchie and Ellis 2010; Jones et al. 2016). This would involve knowledge exchange and joint formulation of goals and outcomes among a wide range of stakeholders. While calls for the democratic deliberative reform in MSP adopt a pluralist perception of power, they do not tend to naively assume that all stakeholders have equal power to assert their stake regardless of their resource levels. These calls do, however, tend to adopt a normative view of the value of including stakeholders in MSP—not just to achieve desired MSP decision-making ends, but as an end in itself. That is, in this conception, planning process and outcome are not dichotomous, as a search for the ends is always present within the planning process or means (Scholsberg 2004). This more sanguine critical perspective sees that democratic deliberative reform would be beneficial on a range of fronts related to social sustainability and quality of MSP decision-making. Even if social sustainability were to attain more legitimacy as a concern in MSP (i.e., to the extent that its specific interests could be represented by stakeholders), as the post-political (and Marxist political economy critique) of MSP tells us, there is still no certainty that deliberation *in practice* would substantively affect or generate equitable outcomes. What is in question here is whether *formal* political equality, in terms of entitlements and rights to participate, can sufficiently do away with the problem of elite capture in deliberation (which derives from differences in social resources of power) and ensure *substantive* political equality for marginalized stakeholders or their power resources to see their interests considered in decision-making processes (Pansardi 2016, p. 98).

Dryzek and Pickering (2017) describes the foundations of deliberative democracy as legitimacy, representation, communication, pluralism and consensus. While the argued benefits—learning through knowledge/interest exchange, generation of trust, jointly developed objectives and so on—of deliberative democratic practice are many and hard to disregard, adopting deliberative planning in MSP presents many challenges. These include problems involving stakeholderhood (or recognition of who is to be represented), how participatory processes are designed, the inevitable unevenness of power relations in

interaction and the assumed neutral stance of the planner (Forester 2006). These challenges also relate to the multidimensional character of MSP, in cases where there may be little scope or will for delegation of influence because a decision has already been made (Reed et al. 2017).

Often MSP is strategic in orientation and is being undertaken at national or regional level rather than local scale, so in addition to the problems of centralized decision-making, the seemingly lack of ‘tangible effects of planning consequences’ may make it more difficult to motivate widespread involvement. As inferred above, this is because there is commonly an explicit or implicit commitment to a pre-existing outcome (at least in broad terms) (Jones et al. 2016). This may be so in some cases of MSP, but Tafon et al. (2018) in a recent study involving MSP and wind farms in Estonia found that the degree and quality of involvement is also likely to depend on how controversial the issue of concern is (or the tangibility of the stake) at a local or broader scale, how formal guidelines are interpreted over who can be a stakeholder and more generally how planners design and conduct engagement processes. Enacting deliberation does not, as Forester (2006) points out, mean gullibly accepting at face value claims of preferences and interests but subjecting them to examination and scrutiny in exchange (negotiation) with others. Such interaction, Forester (2009) argues, poses opportunities to shift conflicts (a preoccupation of MSP) by moving beyond confrontation and stalemate, in visualizing and putting on the table the specific needs of the stakeholders. Deliberation processes search for consensus—to underpin and legitimate planning decisions.⁵ Critics of deliberation see consensus as a cover for power and as we have noted in MSP, there is most commonly a high degree of what we can call power stratification among actors (Tafon forthcoming). Putting aside the likely significant problems of negating backstage lobbying (shadow planning) used by actors to further vested interests, how to effectively acknowledge and set aside stakes in formalized deliberative planning has proved difficult. We must also keep in mind the messiness of planning practice, including the complexity of mediating negotiations involving actors with divergent values, traditions, epistemologies and ontologies. More so, in identifying and analysing constraints to, and/or possibilities for human well-being, attention should encompass areas of visible

⁵ Several examples of deliberative practices are described by Dryzek and Niemeyer (2012) in *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance*. Erik Ohlin Wright (2010, 2013), within his more radical ‘Envisioning Utopias’ framework, presents numerous examples of deliberative democracy (what Fung and Wright (2003) refer as ‘Empowered Participatory Governance’) through his myriad publications and a comprehensive personal website (<https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/>).

conflict (i.e. actual deliberation processes) and include seemingly ‘non-conflict’ situations in which hidden exclusions may have grave consequences for the substantive outcomes of the decision-making process.

2.2 Meaningful Inclusion of Socio-cultural Values and Benefits

Another strand of discernible inquiry emerging in the MSP literature, related to social sustainability, is how to include socio-cultural values and benefits in MSP. Much of the work in MSP (and on natural resource more generally) on socio-cultural aspects has been in the cultural ecosystem services research vein, deriving and spawning from approaches and issues mapped out in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) (Guerry et al. 2012; Ansong et al. 2017; Blake et al. 2017). These writings tend to conceive cultural values and related benefits as non-material values (delivering intangible benefits) placed on marine environments that tend to generate a sense of place and identity (perhaps realized as interests) (Gee et al. 2017). It is argued in this literature that MSP has largely overlooked culturally linked intangible values, which is problematic because they contribute to human well-being and are thought to have a strong bearing on how we conceptualize sustainability (Soini and Birkeland 2014). Most work undertaken either presents cultural service typologies and/or propose ways to better incorporate cultural values in MSP (adopting MEA typologies⁶), so as to take them into account in MSP decision-making (Gee et al. 2017). Excising such cultural values and benefits for consideration in MSP is problematic because they are never stand-alone but depend on practices and cultural frameworks to be reproduced, recognized and valued. As Kenter et al. (2011) comment, the range of benefits produced by cultural ecosystem services (as they are defined) are elusive to capture, particularly in natural resource management and planning approaches, such as MSP dominated by quantitative approaches as they are. Others such as Flannery et al. (2016), in an MSP context, discuss the undesirability of incorporating the social/cultural knowledge of fishers into what they characterize as ‘formalized rational planning processes’. The argument here is that it is neither viable nor desirable to classify discrete cultural values through a spatialized zoning process, as MSP attempts to do. Furthermore, that such an approach

⁶According to Small et al. (2017), the MEA was central in advancing the cultural ecosystem service concept, by purporting to show how ecosystem degradation jeopardized human well-being and by developing a nomenclature that categorized and described the ‘diverse services’ that ecosystems provide to people.

would contradict indigenous epistemology, which, it is argued, sees the 'marine estate' as a 'contiguous area of land and sea (an unarticulated whole), that defines their cultural identity, and of which they are part' (Flannery et al. 2016, p. 130). What is more, it is suggested that the representation of socio-cultural values in predominantly spatial and economic terms misses not only the infinite spatialities and the intrinsic affective character of these values, as well as their incommensurability with material (economic) benefits, but may also contribute to the further marginalization of stakeholders who hold these values (Tafon 2017). The concerns reflected in Flannery et al.'s (2016) critique can be seen as a response to an observable tendency in MSP to privilege quantitative data (seen as objective knowledge of an external reality), without critically considering its limitations or biases (Saunders et al. 2017). This includes the natural sciences and some forms of socio-economic knowledge, which share a similar epistemology and are presented in a similar format—making them more amenable to policy decision-making and perhaps also to spatialized planning. Subjective knowledge such as that underpinning the construction and valuation of cultural ecosystem services are likely to be derived from (acknowledged) feelings and/or experiences through either individual or collective processes. This knowledge and related values is less amenable to quantification and inevitably considered suspect (i.e., irretrievably imbued with what are unrevealed interests) in governance process such as MSP.

A Foucauldian perspective sees that knowledge is power and power is knowledge (i.e., the two concepts are not only inseparable, but parasitical on each other), thereby questioning the objectivity of knowledge regardless of how it is produced (i.e., by scientific methods or not), what form it is in (quantitative, qualitative etc.) or whom it appears to serve (Clegg et al. 2014). The corollary of this view is that actors who have claims to truth through the legitimacy of their knowledge can exercise power in circumstances where these truth claims apply; likewise actors with more power resources can easily impose the 'objectivity' and thus, legitimacy of their knowledge (Foucault 1980). In MSP settings in our case, where quantitative, expert knowledge commonly prevails, incorporating socio-cultural values and interests into MSP would not necessarily mean privileging the associated knowledge or falling into endless relativism, but it would mean that a wider gamut of values associated with human well-being and social groups' welfare (both material and non-material) could be subject to the planning process. So, the key aim of MSP 'would not be to admit and consider 'unequivocal knowledge', but to generate dialogue and exchange in decision-making that leads to more equitable outcomes (Kidd and Ellis 2012: 50). Here, 'socio-cultural' would go beyond

listing a menu of values but also distinguish between notions of history, attachment, social justice, productive practices, voice and how these social phenomena dialectically interact with non-human nature in marine space and in turn affect human, community and societal well-being. Additionally, such an approach would distinguish between objects of value, held values and the valuing process. This would require broadening the scope of what is valued in MSP, how it is valued as well as what is considered 'valid knowledge'.

The concerns in the literature mostly seek to answer how to effectively give expression (and consideration) to these mostly identity and place-based values in MSP. Problems that have been confronted in MSP in including cultural values and benefits have to do with the ambiguously broad range of elements captured by the category (ranging from education benefits, seascape aesthetics to spiritual benefits), some of which would seem to contradict the non-material (interpreted as non-economic) category that all socio-cultural benefits tend to be lumped into. How to give spatial expression, and relatedly value, to these widely differentiated experiences of human-nature interaction has proved difficult and to some degree contentious and are confronted with a myriad of conceptual and methodological problems, that is, the values are abstract, intangible and difficult to quantify (Blake et al. 2017). While commentators such as Small et al. (2017) propose that changing the referent from cultural ecosystem services to the more descriptive, 'non-material ecosystem services' would provide a more accurate label about what is meant, it does not resolve the deeper critiques and problems that have plagued the cultural ecosystems services approach. Key sticking points are: how to denote value in those society-nature experiences (captured in the concept of socio-cultural values) in a nuanced and sensitive way that can meaningfully reflect their broad contribution (benefits) to the amorphous notion of human well-being (in ways that are seen to be legitimate by those who hold such values), and who are/should be the beneficiaries of such benefits?

The methodological (and more substantive) problems referred to above in most instances might be possible to be at least partially redressed by giving (more) equal consideration to monetary and non-monetary representations of value, as well as the development of approaches that allow for the recognition and elicitation of shared, plural and cultural value—some of which may 'never' be 'on the table' for negotiation. One approach that may have merit in a spatialized planning context, such as MSP (particularly in coastal contexts) is participatory mapping (using deliberative interaction) which would support spatial consideration of often specific and localized knowledge and values not suited to the more abstract monetary evaluation approaches (cf. Kenter 2016;

Blake et al. 2017). As an added value, such knowledge will ultimately increase our understanding of ecological processes, which is a significant problem in MSP.

2.3 Planning for Equity

The problems of integrating equity into MSP not only lie with methodology (how can we do it?) but also interpretations of what social justice is in deciding how benefits should be distributed. Equity here implies a need for fairness in the distribution of resources and the entitlement of everyone to an acceptable quality and standard of living (Beder 2001). According to Fainstein (2010) an equity perspective not only insists that stakeholders should be treated fairly in both MSP process and outcomes, but also that already socially and economically disadvantaged groups are not further disadvantaged. Most of the critique of MSP has been on calls to reform the role of social agency (participatory influence), whilst underplaying the importance of political economy (as a capacity to act). Arguably this emphasis may work to inflate claims for the possibilities of social action and change, so here we contribute to correcting this bias.

MSP has been accused of marginalizing weak and/or excluding stakeholders in decision-making processes (Flannery et al. 2018). This variously refers to low socio-economic groups, immigrants, traditional users or the less well educated, indigenous groups as well as to professional groups without a strong voice. A prominent example is small-scale artisanal fishers who have found it difficult in many MSP settings to represent their interests against other, more powerful groups (Jentoft 2017). So, while we focused on fairness of process in the Deeping Democratic Decision-making in MSP section above, this is insufficient, as the fairness of the distribution of resources or the relative deprivation compared with others must also be part of a social sustainability agenda (Halpern et al. 2013). Thinking about equity as outcomes in MSP helps us to put into focus how to interrogate the role of MSP in distributing benefits and costs across the differences axes of society. Views about what may constitute an equitable planning in MSP will differ. Equity acknowledges that individuals and social groups start from different places, histories, inheritances, positions of discrimination, marginalization, advantage and so on. So, equity in MSP could be seen as not doing more harm to already disadvantaged or vulnerable social groups and making decisions about the sea towards equality (acknowledging that people/groups flourish in different ways; relying on different values/benefits/conditions).

Critical planning theorists argue that, even if democratic deliberative planning recognizes the unequal power of different stakeholders to engage in planning, it is still unlikely to result in more equitable MSP outcomes.⁷ The kernel of argument is that the huge power disparity between stakeholders in terms of their economic resources, education, status and organizational skills is likely to undermine the possibility of reaching equitable outcomes through deliberative processes. In other words, more democratic planning is likely to fail to challenge embedded power imbalances and therefore sustain inequality. While we see this as a plausible position to hold, we do not see these two efforts at social sustainability reform to be mutually exclusive and therefore argue that efforts should be made for MSP to be both more democratic in process and equitable in distribution of outcomes. Of course, as argued earlier, it is important to adjust the political economy of participation, in terms of levelling stakeholders' power resources (economic and symbolic) to see their interests considered in participation.

While here we mostly refer to equity in terms of 'current' distributional concerns, we should also touch on intergenerational equity as a key SD principle. A key role of MSP is to provide a basis for marine use that takes account of current uses, while being future oriented. This ambition, to 'balance' between the consideration of current imperatives and desirable future states, is similar to the intergenerational aims and orientation of SD. In an ideal sense, MSP can be seen as both facilitating and giving certainty to desirable future marine activities, while ensuring that such activities do not impinge on achieving 'good environmental status' and/or undermine the conditions of social sustainability. In discussing MSP and sustainability, Qiu and Jones (2013) argue that the environment can be depicted either as a competing sectoral interest ('soft sustainability') or as a special concern with recognition of ecological limits that frame development possibilities ('hard sustainability'). This hard demarcation separating the two sides of the debate focuses on the degree of permissible substitutability between the economy and the environment or between 'natural capital' and 'manufactured capital', which has for a long time been a feature of the broader SD discussion. Where MSP lands in the 'hard/soft' debate in different settings is seen as a reflection of the relative importance accorded to different values and interests in marine planning. The hard sustainability approach then would, it is assumed, reflect a position that is concerned for future generations. That is, even though future generations may gain from maritime

⁷This point is reflected in Pansardi's concept of substantive political equality.

development and by association economic progress, such gains might be outweighed by environmental deterioration (Beder 2001). This dichotomy highlights the ‘forgottenness’ of the social pillar—that it is not even on the agenda of what is important to ‘choose’ between. One could ask, taking inspiration from Raworth’s (2017) ‘doughnut economics’, where are ‘fairness limits relating to the current generation in this debate? Incorporating the social more explicitly in the hard/soft debate and in MSP more generally requires not only thinking about future environmental impacts but a repurposing of MSP to place greater emphasis on engaged governance and more active consideration of the distributional effects of planning processes and decisions, particularly towards vulnerable social groups. Without adequate attention to where the costs and benefits of sea use flow (now and in the future), for example, it is likely that unequal socio-spatial distribution of social and environmental costs (Temper et al. 2015), may work to further disadvantage already vulnerable groups.

A key question for social sustainability therefore is how the costs and benefits of MSP decisions are distributed within society and where (and how) different elements of quality of life are affected (e.g. work, recreational access, aesthetics, money etc.) (Flannery et al. 2016). This reflects a broader concept of equity in MSP concerned with taking greater account of both material and non-material values and benefits linked to well-being and quality of life, rather than the current utilitarian notions embedded in MSP as a driver of economic growth. Here a multilevel analytical framework is likely to be important as distribution effects of MSP can vary considerably between individuals within a community, between communities and between regions. That is, it would require that explicit attention be paid to distributional fairness in MSP, including development of (deliberative) techniques able to indicate the likely distributional impact on different social groups of different MSP scenarios. That is, we would need to identify pertinent social groupings relevant to the MSP situation and be able to determine whether ‘everybody’ is getting a fair share of whatever there is to get. Embracing equity in MSP therefore throws up myriad complexities, including the challenge of ‘visualising and mapping fairness’ with a particular eye on the already disadvantaged, rather than assuming distribution will flow evenly across society. For example, a recent study in Germany, while not focused on disadvantaged groups, showed that the economic and employment benefits of offshore wind farming are not concentrated on the coast (as might be assumed) but distributed throughout the country (Weig 2017).

Another possible response to the equity problems in MSP, albeit one that would not deal with the manifest structural inequalities (as they variably exist

in different settings), would be to engage ‘MSP equity planners’⁸ with the specific mandate to advocate equitable outcomes (or social sustainability) (Fainstein 2010; Davidoff 1982; Tafon *forthcoming*). An equitable planning capacity would bring an equity lens to bear on all MSP processes, outcomes (including implementation). Otherwise, it is likely that the politically backed strategic imperatives of Blue Growth and the hard science-backed environmental imperatives are still likely to hold sway despite any claims of a rational planning capacity (or the role of a neutral planner) to objectively balance competing arguments in support of objectives across the triad of sustainability dimensions.

2.4 Social Cohesion

MSP has been much concerned with achieving planning coherence between different MSP administrative areas (cross-boundary/border integration) but far less with social cohesion within MSP jurisdictions. Indeed, what contribution MSP can make to social cohesion is a vexing but nevertheless important question if we are to further thinking on social sustainability in MSP. In an overarching sense, social cohesion concerns the processes (i.e., shared views, values, norms perceptions and behaviours) underpinning social relations (individuals, social groups, communities etc.) (Prell et al. 2009). It should be observed that ‘too tight a lock in’ when striving for broader social cohesion as a nation building project could result in dire conservatism. To avoid this, we argue that social cohesion at a policy operational level must embrace diversity and equity; otherwise there is a risk that such a programme could manifest as a hegemonic programme of assimilation towards dominant interests and cultural identities, rather than fostering the contribution of social innovation, including citizens’ practices that incorporate counter-hegemonic values and ideals.

Social cohesion as a sustainability concern is interested in improving the structure and quality of societal relations. More particularly, it is concerned to accommodate diversity while promoting equality. Conceptually it connects to the diversity alluded to in the socio-cultural dimension and is concerned with how

⁸ Derived from Davidoff’s (1965) idea of the advocate planner, where the notion of a neutral planner (in urban planning settings) was not seen as a feasible. In advocacy planning, planners explicitly advocate particular issues (Davidoff placed particular focus on the poor and disadvantaged groups in articulating this position). In refining his view, Davidoff (1982) later saw the key role of the planner to plan and organize for social equity.

diverse social groups can interact to support the flourishing of new (equitable) social relations. Berger-Schmitt (2002) and Fainstein (2010) distinguish two core dimensions of social coherence: (1) an equality dimension involving reducing disparities and combating social exclusion; and (2) a social capital dimension aimed at strengthening social relations, interactions and ties. As Fainstein (2010) describes, (social) cohesion alludes to social bonds and trust. It implies inclusion, which infers that inequality is likely to further fragmentation and/or decrease trust in society. Social inclusion seeks to embrace differences between diverse social groups along a range of axes, such as place-based identities, ethnicity and gender among others. Inasmuch as it relates to participatory processes, it is also concerned with how such processes result in just outcomes for various social groups. In an MSP context, a concern for social cohesion would mean concern for how to foster collaborative planning, to ensure different social groups can exchange views with the possibility of engaging in social learning to aid mutual understanding and connections. In cases of intractable conflict, it might involve re-representing what problems are, so that the MSP process does not exacerbate existing schisms in society by exclusionary processes or by reinforcing existing privileges (intentionally or unintentionally). For example, in Poland, reframing 'the fisheries problem' in the Polish National MSP as protecting a fragile ecosystem (the Baltic Sea) where small-scale fisheries can flourish (and contribute to coast sustainability by reproducing cultural heritage and related knowledge and practices) may generate the conditions conducive to forming less agonistic relations in MSP in general and in relation to other MSP stakeholders, such as conservation NGOs (Saunders et al. 2016). Even if problem representations are not reconstituted in such a dramatic way as suggested in the Polish example, this point highlights the importance of meaningful recognition and inclusion of stakeholders in thinking about what the problem is that MSP is trying to solve.

3 A Proposal for a Social Sustainably Conceptual Framework

While the social sustainability features described in Table 8.1 clearly interrelate and overlap 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—covering both substantive and procedural aspects of MSP. The conceptual framework synthesizes the discussion of each social sustainability dimension discussed above and poses

Table 8.1 A conceptual approach to examine social sustainability in MSP

Social sustainability feature	Description	Related questions	Analytical insight
Deepening democracy in decision-making	Who or what is included and how they are included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the rationales for participation articulated? • What are the specific conditions and arrangements for participation (in relation to a specific MSP process or event)? • Who is included or excluded? • What issues are organized into, or out of, debate? • What emerges from the enactment of participatory practice? • How do informal and formal processes interact? • How broad are the participatory spaces? • What provisions are there for including capacities/knowledge from different parts of civil society? • Are there processes to weigh up different types of knowledge input in terms of credibility and salience? • Are the opportunities for ongoing exchange of views and experiences between experts and non-experts? • Has particular consideration been given on how to include different socio-cultural knowledge? • How are material and non-material benefits spatially valued and measured? • How broad is the range of socio-cultural values and benefits included? • How is socio-cultural (including experiential) knowledge weighted and evaluated in MSP? • How are social groups with particular socio-cultural relationships to place included, specified and considered in MSP decision-making? 	Whose interests (legitimately) matter in specific MSP contexts (inclusion/exclusion), including the range of actors' values, experience that is considered in MSP, including non-expert knowledge
Meaningful inclusion of socio-cultural values, knowledge and benefits	Consideration of diverse, usually placed-based values, knowledge and benefits (material and non-material)		Whether (and how) particular social groups, placed-based knowledge, values and benefits have been effectively considered and reflected in MSP outcomes?

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

Social sustainability feature	Description	Related questions	Analytical insight
Planning for equity	The distributional effects (now and in the future)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are vulnerable social groups (potentially) affected and dealt with, and were they empowered to participate? • Is there explicit/specific acknowledgement/consideration of distributional implications (who wins and who loses)? • How are the interests of future generations reflected/represented in MSP processes? • Is there commitment to protect future generations by consideration of the implications of current planning scenarios on future generations (socio-environmental scenario planning)? 	Indicates the extent that a diversity of social concerns are mapped and engaged within MSP, including how fairly they are considered in the planning processes.
Social cohesion	Creating opportunities that promote the harmonious societal coexistence or, at least, minimize potential for explicit and socially harmful conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been commitment and effort to deal with conflict/tension through transparent and deliberative means? • Has there been an exercise to map and make tangible connections between different social groups' values and interests in marine planning processes? • Does MSP explicitly consider involvement of and implications for different socio-cultural groups? • Have there been specific actions to redress or minimize negative social consequences of Blue Growth or environmental protection (win-win)? • Is there a commitment to minimize the potential of socially harmful tension/conflict in MSP decision-making? 	The extent to which consideration has been given to reducing existing fault lines of societies, fostering social ties and building of trust between different social groups.

questions that could begin to direct an empirical examination in specific MSP contexts. This chapter does not present the only possible interpretation of social sustainability as it relates to MSP (e.g., it does not explicitly address social inclusion, social capital, environmental justice, health, education, empowerment, well-being). For instance more radical conceptions of social sustainability in MSP deriving theoretical inspiration from, for instance, Marxist political economy (radical material redistribution) or post-structuralist theory (radical democratic transformation), among others. The framework (as presented here or in an adapted form) could be used as a platform for theory building to analyse social sustainability in MSP, underpinned by alternative theorizing adapted to suit different analytical or practice-based objectives. Granting greater visibility and tangibility to social sustainability as an issue of concern could be achieved by generating more detailed analysis of social sustainability in MSP practice. A reiterative approach that expands and enriches conceptual thinking through learning from wider discussions about aspects of social sustainability in conversation with ongoing examination of MSP practice is needed.

Economic, environmental and political crises at a local or broader scale may also influence social activity at the local scale. Focusing on the contributory factors of urban social sustainability highlights scale as an important issue. A number of factors can relate to multiple scales: social cohesion is often discussed at a national scale, employment at city or district scale, while others such as social interaction and local environmental quality relate to activity and places on a local and spatial scale. Economic, environmental and political crises at a local or broader scale may also influence social activity at the local scale. Focusing on the contributory factors of urban social sustainability highlights scale as an important issue. A number of factors can relate to multiple scales: social cohesion is often discussed at a national scale, employment at city or district scale, while others such as social interaction and local environmental quality relate to activity and places on a local and spatial scale.

4 Concluding Remarks

In the short term at least, it is highly unlikely that MSP will shift from a focus on supporting economic growth coupled with a concern for environmental protection. A programme to give greater attention and increased legitimacy to social sustainability in MSP is confronted by several challenges, some of which have been touched on in this chapter. Amongst these are the lack of agreement

on what social sustainability means. Bebbington and Dillard (2009) argue for instance that social sustainability poses greater problems in terms of specification, understanding and communication (and perhaps quantification) than the economic (as growth) and environmental (as protection) pillars of sustainability. Given that MSP is largely a state endeavour, this problem manifests itself in how to build common norms of social sustainability within borders. Building such norms across borders is likely to be even more difficult with countries at different stages of economic development and with different traditions, capacities and views about participatory democracy and welfare (redistributive) economics. Also, as we have noted, there is also the risk of internal contradictions within the social sustainability pillar itself, as calls for present generation equity (maritime development and redistribution) clash with intergenerational equity (environmental protection).

This does not mean that increased consideration cannot be given to fulfilling social sustainability ambitions within such a framework. Achieving enhanced focus on equity of outcomes from MSP is likely to be more difficult than deepening stakeholder engagement given that some (limited) strides have already been made in this direction—although creating genuine spaces where democratic struggle (agonistic decision-making incorporating contestability, openness, and/or strides towards less inequality in decision-making) is still likely to prove difficult to achieve in many settings. Incumbent interests in science, government and industry are unlikely to willingly cede power to focus more on equity; so if social innovation in MSP is to come about, an ensemble of strategies will need to be drawn on to reconfigure existing power relations at various levels. Flyvbjerg et al. (2012), drawing on Foucault, suggest that we should look for ‘tension points’ or ‘lines of fragility in the present’ that could be exploited to open possibilities for transformation.

In the concluding part of a chapter like this, a list of strategies for transformation is always going to be inadequate (demanding more serious and extended treatment), but here we proffer some actions for change, including through advocacy in existing MSP forums, awareness and conscious raising campaigns (e.g., of uneven power relations across scales, inequitable treatment, conflicts), giving greater visibility to initiatives that are seeking more democratic and equitable change (Gaventa 2006). Scholars as activists and analysts could *humbly* play a key role in highlighting who is excluded or disadvantaged through uneven distribution, as well as, supporting grass-roots mobilizations to magnify their voices with technical/institutional knowledge. While it is contested, arguably such a shift in thinking in resource planning has occurred elsewhere, for example, in Bolivia and Ecuador through the ‘neo-extractivist movement’, where governance transitions in these countries

expressly look to pursue a greater focus on social recognition, inclusion and equity, while pursuing growth through sustainable resource use (Acosta 2013). The notion of an ‘equity planner’ may also promise a ‘rebalancing’ of emphasis in MSP. However, unless this is undergirded by a more constitutive commitment to addressing features of social sustainability discussed in the chapter, it is unlikely to result in a significant reorientation of the existing MSP preponderancy of balancing environmental protection with economic growth.

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