

MARITIME CLUSTERS: A GOVERNANCE SUCCESS? EVIDENCE FROM THE CAMIS PROJECT

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There is an increasing awareness of the importance of global seas and coasts, with coastal communities dependent on the marine environment for a range of ecological, economic and social services. The pressure on marine environments and their resources poses a stark challenge to the sustainability of many coastal communities. While, as yet, no perfect solution has been identified, what is clear is that responsibility for effective marine governance does not just lie with policy makers (McKinley and Fletcher, 2010; 2012). In order for marine governance to be effective in delivering sustainability, an integrated approach to managing these vital resources must be adopted. In recent years, the marine environment and associated resources have been at the centre of a policy evolution within the EU. Key to this has been the development of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) in 2007 which emphasised the need for a holistic and integrated approach to managing marine resources across Europe. In addition, promotion of the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010) designed to maximise employment opportunities, support economic growth and encourage sustainable development must be considered a driving force for policy development. Efforts are underway by Member States to ensure they are meeting the targets set by these EU political drivers in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

In order to successfully deliver on the objectives set out by recent policy, the development of effective and inclusive marine governance is being increasingly prioritised within EU political agendas. In recent years, there has been a marked 'turn to citizenship' as policy makers strive to develop more effective and implementable governance strategies (Valencia- Saiz, 2005; Fletcher and Potts, 2007; McKinley and Fletcher, 2010; 2012). While this movement away from top-down management has meant an increase in public involvement in marine governance, it must also include the diverse range of maritime industries whose futures are wholly dependent on the long term sustainability of marine resources. The importance of maritime industries to local, national and global economies is being increasingly recognised (Kildow and McIlgorm, 2010) and, as such, maritime industries must be viewed as an integral component of developing effective and integrated marine governance. Evidence to support this is found in the Maritime Clusters report commissioned by Commission of European Communities (2008), which states that maritime industries are vital to Europe, responsible for between 3-5% of European GDP. This diverse industry provides employment to over 3 million people in coastal communities, generating 40% of total European GDP.

As a European region, the Channel is a vital regional link, connecting the North Atlantic and the North Sea and acting as a transport link between the UK and France. The Channel Arc Manche Region was first recognised as a significant maritime region through the Espace Manche Development Initiative (EMDI) Project (EMDI, 2006). Following on from EMDI, the INTERREG IV A funded Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy Project (CAMIS) aims to develop an integrated management and policy strategy for the vibrant maritime industry sector currently present in the region. Although only recently recognised as its own region, the Channel region includes the major cities of Paris and London, and provides a strong connection between the UK and French coasts. The Channel provides the region with key transport links, diverse ecological ecosystems, and a varied cultural heritage, and is an area of real significance for Europe. The project proposes that by developing a common strategy and encouraging Franco-British collaborative relationships, the diverse range of factors influencing the Channel's coastal communities, social, economic, cultural and environmental, can be considered. Coastal communities play a

vital role in regional, national and international society and the security of their future is a key driver of the Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy (CAMIS) project.

As part of the CAMIS project, the role of maritime clusters is being evaluated as a mechanism through which coastal communities can undergo sustainable economic growth and development, whilst adhering to the relevant environmental policies and legislation. A cluster can be defined as a geographically linked group of companies and other associated institutions within a particular field (Porter, 1998). They can include a range of members, such as, specialist suppliers, manufacturers, sales providers, government bodies, as well as other institutions such as universities (Porter, 1998). In the context of maritime industries, the development of successful maritime clusters has been shown to have positive impacts on not just the cluster members, but for the wider economy (Policy Research Corporation, 2008). Like all sectors, maritime industries are working to mitigate the impacts of the global recession. It has been the proposition of the CAMIS project that the development of maritime clusters in the Channel Region could be a way of encouraging long term sustainability and encouraging coastal community growth and stability. The benefits of business clusters have long been recognised (Porter, 1998; Holte and Moen, 2010) including: opportunities for group purchasing and training, development of collaborative business relationships, encourage the generation of local supply chains, increased awareness of skills and expertise, reduced costs for businesses and enhanced development and economic growth. However, as with all new initiatives, the work has also highlighted some potential challenges including; a lack of understanding of existing policies and legislation, a perceived cost associated with collaboration and encouraging pro-environmental behaviour, a fear of losing competitive advantage, lack of awareness of the local/ regional skills and expertise, and a reluctance to change (McKinley, 2012).

Given the EU Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) promotion of maritime clusters, the work being conducted by CAMIS is both timely and necessary. Case studies examining the capacity for regional, sectoral and cross channel maritime clusters have been carried out with a diverse range of stakeholders. Research has been conducted through a series of facilitation workshops and in depth interviews with maritime stakeholders across the region, encompassing a diverse range of maritime industry sectors. To date, the research has shown that there is stakeholder willingness to engage in clustering for the benefit of the region's maritime industries and the communities they support. In particular, the CAMIS project has identified significant interest in the development of a cross border marina cluster, which would serve to engender Franco-British business collaborations, as well as the generation of a regional cluster in the South West of England. However, in order for these to succeed, there needs to be effective communication between and about the cluster, utilisation of existing infrastructure and relationships, and further promotion of the Channel Region as an area of maritime expertise and skill. Maritime stakeholders in the Channel area are keen to ensure they have a voice within their region, and the development of effective clusters, with support from regional policies and governance, will ensure this is realised. This research proposes that the findings of the CAMIS project could be used as a driver for policy change within the maritime industry sector, aiding the realisation of the goals set out by Europe 2020 (EC, 2012) and promoting the European Territorial Cooperation objectives. Through the findings of the CAMIS case studies, examples of best practice in terms of cross channel business development can be used as evidence to support changes in policy which will work to promote maritime clusters as a stabilising tool for coastal communities and their industries.

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