



Document title	Information on OCEANS PACT project
Code	6-4
Category	INF
Agenda Item	6 - Coordination of Horizontal Action Spatial Planning and MSP related projects and events
Submission date	10.03.2020
Submitted by	HELCOM Secretariat
Reference	

Background

A project “Ocean Sustainability Pathways for Achieving Conflict Transformation (OCEANS PACT)” was granted funding in a recent [call for proposal](#) by Belmont Forum on Ocean Sustainability. In 2019 the proposal leader professor Michael Gilek from Södertörn University in Sweden approached the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and asked a support to the proposal, because the consortium conceived the Working Group as a potential “partnering stakeholders”. Such stakeholders will be given the opportunity to provide input and advice on the project. Such stakeholders are also seen as potential end-users of the results. The HELCOM-VASAB Working Group agreed on giving a letter of support to the proposal.

OCEANS PACT aims to analyse and transform diverse natural resource conflicts in marine settings towards more sustainable pathways. Natural resource conflicts and the potential for their transformation will be studied in a range of ocean and coastal contexts in the Baltic Sea, South Africa, Norway/Barents Sea, India, Brazil and the United States. A transdisciplinary approach based on active input from stakeholders is adopted throughout the research process, including problematization, implementation and dissemination.

According to the project leader this new, 3-year project is expected to start in the first half of 2020. This document written by the consortium leader clarifies the initial ideas on how the project would collaborate with the HELCOM-VASAB MSP working as one of the “partnering stakeholders”.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Information on OCEANS PACT project

OCEANS PACT has been developed in response to the Belmont Forum call 'CRA Ocean Sustainability'

Ocean Sustainability Pathways for Achieving Conflict Transformation (OCEANS PACT)

Partners in Sweden (lead), Brazil, USA, South Africa, Norway and India (see Fig 1)

Aims

OCEANS PACT aims to develop a theoretically informed methodological approach suited to analyzing and transforming diverse natural resource conflicts in marine settings towards more sustainable pathways.

Natural resource conflicts and the potential for their transformation will be studied in a range of ocean and coastal contexts in the Baltic Sea, South Africa, Norway/Barents Sea, India, Brazil and the United States. A truly transdisciplinary approach based on active input from stakeholders is adopted throughout the research process, including problematization, implementation and dissemination.

Envisioned role of stakeholders

To facilitate co-design, co-implementation and co-dissemination of OCEANS PACT research and outputs, partnering stakeholders will be given the opportunity to provide input and advice on the scoping of case studies, conflict & sustainability assessment, possibilities for conflict transformation & sustainable pathways, communication/capacity building and cross case learning & tools development (Fig. 1). Practically, this will be organized through (1) an overarching dialogue forum giving advice on the general implementation and impact of the project and (2) a set of case-specific dialogue forums. To make the process feasible and effective, these forums will be based primarily on web-based engagements (e.g. interactive webinars) and, when needed, visits by project researchers to meetings already planned by the stakeholders. A maximum of 1-2 focused engagements will be organized per year over the 3-year project. It is important to note that, while participation and input to the dialogue forums should be seen as a possibility rather than a requirement, the project will be committed to explicitly address/respond to all input/advice received. This two-layered structured and intensive approach to forging research-stakeholder partnerships will ensure that the research is continuously and reflectively shaped and steered to ensure a salient and practical conflict transformation approach is adopted. The approach is adapted to particular case study contexts, but is also geared towards providing insights on how to address conflict so as to be able to transform to ocean sustainability at a more general level.

Summary of the proposed project

As the number and diversity of ocean users and stakeholders are increasing, so are the potential conflicts between different interests, values and perceptions. Natural resource-based conflicts in oceans and coastal areas are invariably grounded in antagonistic relations and struggles over access, control and benefits. This underlines concerns about environmental sustainability, justice and socio-economic inequalities linked to uneven power relations. How to balance different priorities leading to competing needs and interests, while adapting to socio-environmental changes in oceans, therefore become critical questions for transformations to sustainability. In response, the OCEANS PACT project argues that prospects for moving towards ocean sustainability are indelibly tied to building science-based and practice-oriented capacities/knowledge to analyze, productively manage and if possible resolve ocean conflicts. Using a transdisciplinary research approach we aim to obtain deep understandings of diverse ocean conflict settings through the active collaboration of context-specific research teams that include diverse social and natural science expertise and stakeholders' experiences and perspectives. We adopt a comparative research design across a wide-range of geographical and socio-political ocean settings traversing the Global North and South to analyze and transform conflicts in South Africa, Norway/Barents Sea, the Baltic Sea, India, Brazil and the United States (Table 1). In these settings we will generate analytical understandings to inform the development of transformative knowledge-based tools and approaches. In doing so and building on our strong links to Future Earth's Ocean Learning Networks, we expect our research to have different types of scientific, social, and political impacts that will inform and affect changes towards sustainability in the specific ocean context

settings we study, as well as, generating knowledge to support the careful scaling up of insights, methodologies, tools and approaches for addressing planetary level sustainability concerns.

Keywords: conflict transformation; sustainability assessment; marine governance; Blue Economy; coastal development; power, equity; action research; natural resources; fisheries

Table 1. Tentative OCEANS PACT case studies

Case study	Conflict characteristics & sustainability pathways
Baltic Sea Region	Transform current and emergent conflict between large-scale offshore wind energy (OSWE) capacity development and traditional sea uses and competing values in national and transboundary marine spatial planning. Sub-cases across the region will be explored (i.e. Estonia, Poland, Sweden and Denmark)
Brazil – EEZ in the South Atlantic with focus in São Paulo state coast	Synergise eight on-going transdisciplinary science-policy national and subnational processes to transform conflict between diverse blue economy development initiatives and small-scale fisheries (SSF) in Brazilian EEZ focusing on São Paulo state coast. Working closely with SSF, conservation NGOs and other sectors (including government and other resource users) to identify challenges and opportunities posed by diverse blue growth and climate change agendas
South Africa, coastal and EEZ waters	To critically examine the sustainability of assumptions and practices underpinning development models in SA coastal and EEZ waters in particular initiatives associated with growing the blue economy - "Operation Phakisa" with a focus on generating knowledge and building capacity to enhance involvement of coastal communities in ocean planning and decision-making processes in selected case studies (mining, fisheries, MPA expansion and aquaculture)
Norway, Barents Sea, Lofoten area	Transform conflicts between oil exploitation and national/international fisheries interests with a focus on evaluating newly introduced institutional mechanisms that have been introduced to reconcile conflict and promote sustainability
US, Atlantic Sea	Evaluation of efforts to transform conflicts between important national interests, including Defence and strategically backed diverse blue economy development (e.g. OSWE) and fishing in the mid-Atlantic regional ocean planning effort
India, Arabian Sea region of the northern Indian Ocean	Transform conflict between blue economy development and sustaining SSF livelihoods, including a focus on the Mumbai Region. Assess and analyze protest action and legal challenges in coastal and EEZ waters among fishers, between fishers and other users, and between coastal resource based communities and urban development imperatives, in the context of climate change impacts.

Figure 1. OCEANS PACT research organization (Work packages, task leaders etc.)

