

POST-EVENT BRIEF

ESPON-AESOP Roundtable: Coastal Planning in the North – New Governance and Planning Spaces for Sustainable Coastal Development

Virtual

8th September 2021, 13:00-16:30 (CEST)

Introduction



Coastal regions face various challenges for development and planning, such as accelerating climate change and new perspectives on natural resource exploitation (mining, energy, aquaculture, etc.), against the backdrop of ongoing economic and demographic dynamics. New professional practices at the local-regional level and cross-municipal collaboration are required to address these challenges while respecting local and indigenous cultures.

This roundtable brought together researchers and national, regional, and local stakeholders dealing with coastal planning. Special attention was given to the emergence of new governance and planning spaces that can promote more sustainable, balanced, resilient, and integrated development in coastal areas.

In particular, focus was placed on collaborative and co-evolutionary coastal zone planning across governing levels, sectors/themes, and actors (public, private, and civil society). Both mandatory and non-mandatory strategy-making and planning activities were discussed, as well as the related opportunities and challenges encountered in the coordination of these planning activities.

The aim of this roundtable event was to seek out potential pathways for better integration and coordination of key issues at stake in coastal areas, such as climate change, tourism, cultural heritage, aquaculture, and energy production towards a more balanced development. The second aim was to discuss how such integration and coordination can take place with respect to local communities, and how to include their resources and views on development needs and place identity.

An ESPON-AESOP joint event

The roundtable drew on evidence and experience from the professional communities of both the European Spatial Observatory Network (ESPON) and the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) in order to discuss new governance and planning approaches.

ESPON, founded in 2002, is an ESDF-funded European initiative on Territorial Cooperation, with the intention of building a pan-European knowledge base related to territorial dynamics over a wide range of areas. It distinguishes itself by performing Applied Research Projects, which creates comparable evidence on territorial potentials and challenges, and by demand-driven Targeted Analyses responding to requests by stakeholders. In addition, ESPON develops and provides tools for improved territorial observation and analysis. Finally, Transnational Outreach initiatives and events (including this roundtable) seek to achieve a wider uptake of ESPON knowledge.

AESOP, established in 1987, is a representative of the major Planning Schools of Europe, with over 150 members. It covers and expands on the core planning curriculum in Europe, hosts various events, a quality recognition program, the Young Academic Network, several Planning Journals and 16 Thematic Working Groups, where specific research challenges and opportunities are being debated to create more effective platforms for discussion and exchange of work amongst AESOP members. One of these thematic groups is the Nordic Planning group (PLANNORD) for networking and the exchange of planning challenges in the Nordic context, mainly (but not exclusively) comprising of Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and Denmark.

Focus on Nordic experiences

The roundtable discussed recent research, experiences, and lessons learned concerning coastal policy and planning activities in the northern part of Europe. This includes output from the PlanCoast project, funded by the Norwegian research council (NMBU). The PlanCoast project investigated framework conditions for a more sustainable and resilient governance of areas and resources in the coastal zone. Many conflicts can be identified in coastal areas, due to the convergence of differing interests and activities such as aquaculture, energy production, transport, fishery, nature protection, tourism, and recreation. At the same time, coastal areas are attractive for housing and second homes. The PlanCoast project has looked into the governance, legislative, and administrative challenges of dealing with such conflicts across sectors and authorities.

In addition, the Horizon 2020 PERICLES project was presented, with knowledge on the sustainable use of maritime and coastal cultural heritage. Attention to cultural heritage can provide a sense of place, unity, and

belonging. The PERICLES project presented potential pathways for both protecting and using cultural heritage aspects. This has been based on studies in eight case study regions throughout Europe, such as Denmark where several small coastal communities were investigated. The Vilsund case in Northwest Denmark revealed interesting developments in local collaboration across municipal borders, between authorities, museums and local communities, and across sectors. It also illustrated the challenges and opportunities of integrating intangible and immaterial cultural heritage into relevant policies.

Finally, the COAST project presented a “Sustainable Resilient Coasts Toolbox” for local authorities. The project started in 2020 and is a collaboration between partners from Iceland, Finland, Ireland, and Northern Ireland. It focuses on challenges and developmental aspects of coastal areas and will seek to support local authorities in the protection, promotion, and development of the unique natural and cultural heritage of their coastal zones. One interesting study, recently started within COAST, is an investigation of the Westfjords of Iceland, where the National Planning Authority is in the process of creating a first Marine Spatial Plan of the area as a testbed for all Icelandic coastal areas. A key challenge is to sufficiently cooperate with local communities and stakeholders while keeping national interests in mind.

The above-mentioned research projects and professional activities contain a wide range of conclusions and policy-relevant inputs concerning coastal development and governance. One of the most pressing points is that in order to enable the use of local communities and citizen participation as a resource for a more sustainable and resilient coastal planning, there is a need for improved inclusion and recognition of local development perceptions and place identity. Moreover, the discussion suggested that policy processes for local development can benefit significantly from deliberative ‘mobilisation’ approaches and building policies that are based on the local communities and which respect their organisation, cultural settings, and practices.

ESPON Evidence

These and other insights from Northern Europe were combined with:

- Recent insights from the ESPON Topic Paper on Maritime Spatial Planning and Land-Sea Interaction (April 2020);
- The recommendations from the ESPON BRIDGES project (Balanced Regional Development in areas with Geographic Specificities, especially concerning Coastal Areas (October 2019) and
- The institutional recommendations given in the ESPON COMPASS project (Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe).

The roundtable was concluded with comments from policy stakeholders from several Nordic countries.

Event Summary

Opening

Moderator Luuk Boelens opened the meeting and gave the floor to Wiktor Szydarowski (director of ESPON) for opening remarks.

Mr. Szydarowski set the scene for the event, thanking the organisers, and representatives of the different schools of planning. ESPON seeks to bring together researchers and policymakers in order to improve decision-making throughout Europe. Coastal planning is important in the Nordic regions, but the lessons learned there are relevant for the rest of Europe.

Mr. Boelens then sketched out the framework for discussing coastal regions. Though often depicted as an empty blue surface on maps, lots of things are happening at sea. We need to care and plan for offshore areas as sustainable places. This is partly arranged by Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), but we also need to look at land/sea interaction. The opening remarks were concluded with a reference to the [ESPON topic paper on MSP](#).

Session 1 ESPON Evidence

“Coastal governance and planning challenges in the North towards a more sustainable and integrated development” by Heather Ritchie, Ulster University (Northern Ireland), part of ICLRD.

Coastal towns in the UK have well-documented economic and social challenges. These communities have experienced growth and decline cycles. New environmental challenges are emerging while the impacts of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic are in full swing. So far, the planning response has been sectoral, piecemeal, and reactive. As an example, there are 11 different plans for the England coast alone. This is no longer sustainable: a common long-term strategy is needed. Another example is Northern Ireland: it has not yet enacted regional climate-change legislation. When it does arrive, it may provide more direction to issues like planning for coastal erosion. Until then, the operational basis is described as ad hoc. A case in point is Port Rush where the coast is simply packed in concrete, leading some to quip: “Northern Ireland will be ringed in concrete.”

The UK terrestrial planning system is discretionary and best described as a geographically overlapping patchwork, where four devolved administrations have developed their own tools for coastal planning. Over the last decade, a transition has taken place from a protective standpoint to a more regenerative perspective. Partnerships have emerged to meet these challenges, but the system is not aligned, integrated, or even stable. Public participation is well established, but more is needed to allow the public to help shape that policies affect their coasts.

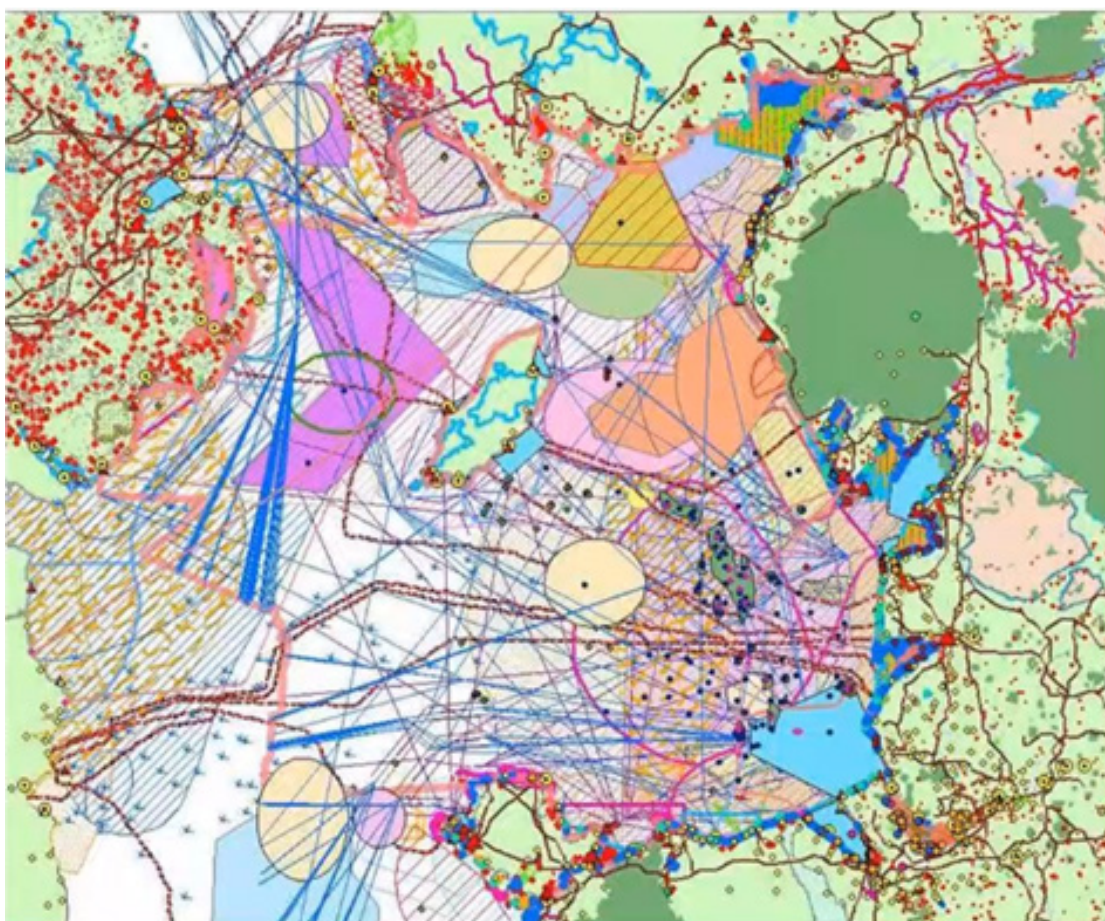


Figure 1: The complex system is reflected in the 200+ data layers that must be taken into account. Moreover, these are in a state of flux: from marine planning agenda to international trends and events. Source: Stephen Hull.

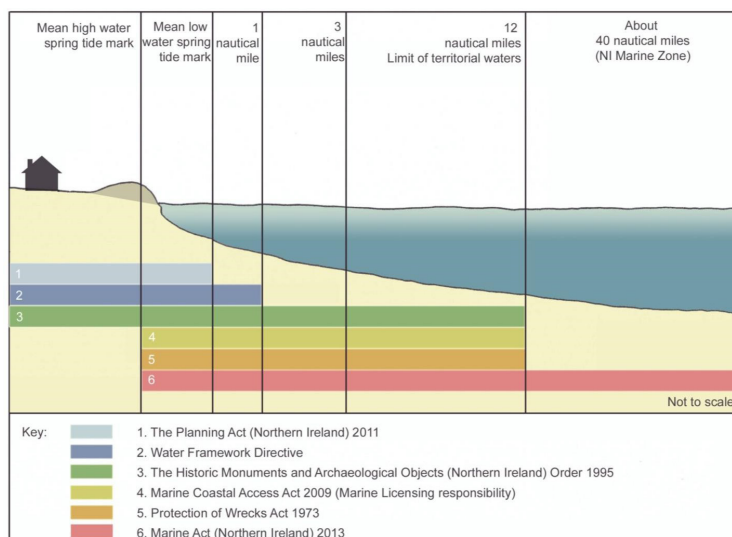


Figure 2: Geographical overlap between marine and terrestrial environments and regimes in Northern Ireland. MSP alone cannot facilitate effective coastal management. MSP and terrestrial systems must be complementary.

“Reflections on different coastal governance and planning systems – lessons to be learned from the ESPON COMPASS project” by Prof. Vincent Nadin

Vincent Nadin introduced himself as a town planner, with an expertise in spatial planning. Coastal zones have been a concern for policymakers for decades, but policies collide and clash – and rarely combine. Spatial planning may, however, provide solutions to some of the issues raised in the previous presentation. In particular, the COMPASS project can help strengthen cross-fertilisation between planning policy and sectoral agendas. Data was collected from 32 ESPON countries to understand changes in spatial planning systems since the year 2000, mostly on the basis of expert opinion.

The project explains some of the reasons why coordination, collaboration, and integration are difficult – politics and vested interests are important factors. It also revealed a trend towards approaches that seek integration, and over longer periods of time. The project found that if you want to enhance political will, we need to arm policymakers with a solid evidence base. There are tools, sets of actions, where there is a lot we can do, some of which are very hard or perhaps not possible at all. Some actions may be so easy, one could wonder why they haven't been done yet. Another central issue is trust, and that is very hard to work on. In any case, planners have to stop making things worse. For example, we are still building at very vulnerable locations, even in the Netherlands where there is a long history of building with water in mind.

Spatial planning needs to be adapted and reformed to enable cross fertilisation. Changing that requires public support. We have to shift the planning discourse from central to comprehensive planning, in a range of initiatives, with rigorous tools that help protect natural capital. We need to make these connections within the mainstream urban planning system and not by bolting on more 'systems' to the existing structure.

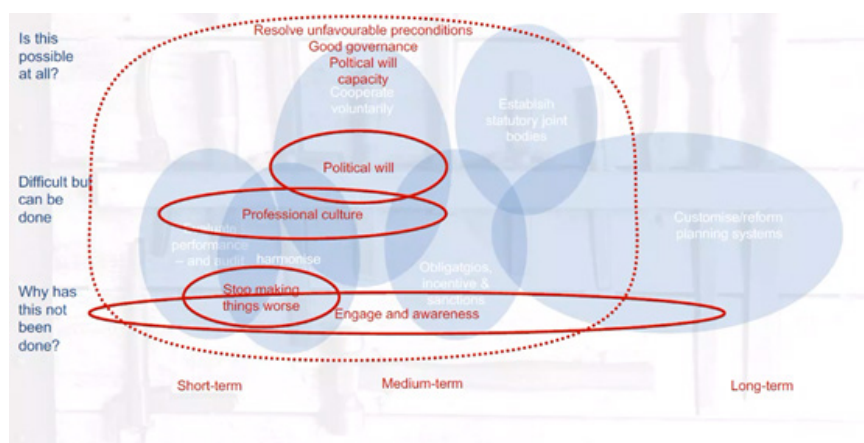


Figure 3: Preconditions for cross-fertilisation

“Integrating territorial specificities of coastal areas in planning” by Dr. Franziska Sielker, University of Cambridge, BRIDGES project

The BRIDGES project investigated the geographical characteristics of coastal regions. The project was built around four topics and 20 case studies, with the topics being: 1) innovation and economic development, 2) accessibility and transport, 3) social development, and 4) physical environment, natural resources and energy. The data rendered gives us more insight into the present state and opportunities for development of activities such as tourism or wind farms.

The collected data allows for a more subtle and clear delineation of what coastal areas actually are. Coasts are a limitation and an interface. In the narrow strip where the ocean meets the land, we find many different interacting and competing spatial challenges and opportunities. Coastal areas function as interface for cross-border maritime interaction with neighbouring regions. Port cities interact directly with major ports halfway around the world through freight and passengers. Coastal communities are involved in and impacted by natural resource exploitation and depletion at sea.

Looking at one case, the Algarve, the interconnection of challenges becomes immediately clear. In the Algarve region there is a high population density on the coast. There is a huge urbanisation pressure due to a swelling population and demand for seasonal occupation. Mass tourism is a mixed blessing. A regional planning strategy, *Plano regional de ordenamento do territorio para a região do Algarve*, proposes to plan for smart specialisations within the region, focusing on tourism, agri-food, forestry, green economy, health and life sciences, ICT, and creative industries. Another case, the Norfolk Suffolk region, is also developing rapidly, but in the energy sector rather than tourism. Developments like the Galloper windfarm impact coastal towns, while also creating economic opportunities. Spatial policies tried to develop places where energy companies create key hubs at a distance from tourist areas. These cases show that the problem is not really integrating and balancing the different challenges, but focusing on one problem at a time, and spreading them out spatially.

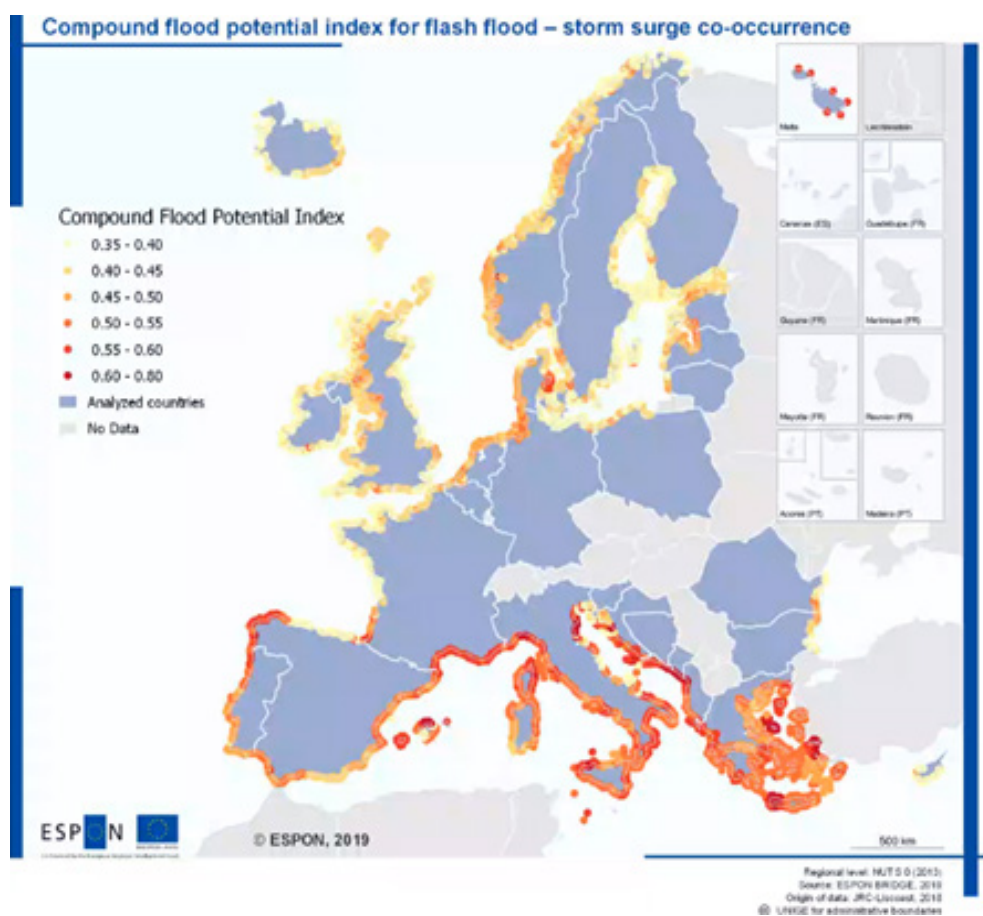


Figure 4: Flood potential index for flash flood and storm surge co-occurrence

Q&A Session 1

The discussion included both spoken word and comments in the chat. Over the chat, participants shared compliments, comments, and links to relevant research, requested clarification of terms or specific planning codes, with the presenters and curators responding.

Some of the most interesting notions were:

- Examples are emerging of new governance and planning spaces across jurisdictions and sectors. There is more training and capacity building. A guidance note for marine planners has been published, but there are not that many examples.
- One of the biggest obstacles to enhance collaboration is the lack of trust. How can trust be enhanced? Training and learning could encourage this. Incentives could be used, for example by requiring cities to cooperate as a precondition for funding. Often the planning system lists a set of objectives. But planning needs to identify the objectives of other stakeholders, in the public and in companies, and then build strategies to achieve them.
- There are Interreg and other EU-financed collaboration projects, but this is insufficient. Surprisingly, Interreg does not seem to have a strong impact on mainstream planning and spatial development, which is disappointing. The Nordic countries generally perform 'above average' for cross-fertilisation, but our experts mostly give examples of specific projects or programmes, not mainstream planning.
- Since 2000/2001 there have been two major crises that affected most European countries severely - the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Sielker's team have updated population data, showing new patterns in the seasonality of population in for example Belgium and Spain.
- Coordinated planning of sea and coast uses seems to be a necessity. MSP-LSI (<https://www.espon.eu/MSP-LSI>) proposes an approach to assessing LSI and to use the results in planning (both, terrestrial and maritime planning).

An interesting example of where environmental and other coastal policies were linked and led to cross-municipal blue growth planning such as the initiative is "[ICZM Northern Bohuslän](#)".

Session 2 Good practices

"PlanCoast and Nordic coastal planning – governance and planning challenges" by Knut Bjørn Stokke, NMBU and Carsten Jahn Hansen, Aalborg University

Mr. Stokke explained that the PlanCoast project had focused on two sectors, aquafarming and offshore wind energy in an international perspective. Norway and Denmark, for example, both have to strike a balance between protection and development.

With respect to Norway, stronger protections were put in place in 2009 by the PBA, and later by National Guidelines for shore management in 2011. Before that, Norway had weak guidelines and worked towards development through planning and differentiation in three zones with different protection regimes. In contrast, Denmark had strong national guidelines dating back to 1937, with planning zones stretching 3 km into the sea ("kystnaerhetssone"). Protections were extended to 300 m from the shoreline in 1994. Unlike Norway, the 2000s saw liberalisation of national controls, opening the way to the development of thousands of second homes along the coast. The key to striking a balance between development and protection is local planning based on a broad participation in a system of multilevel governance. Urban and rural regions need differentiated planning approaches.

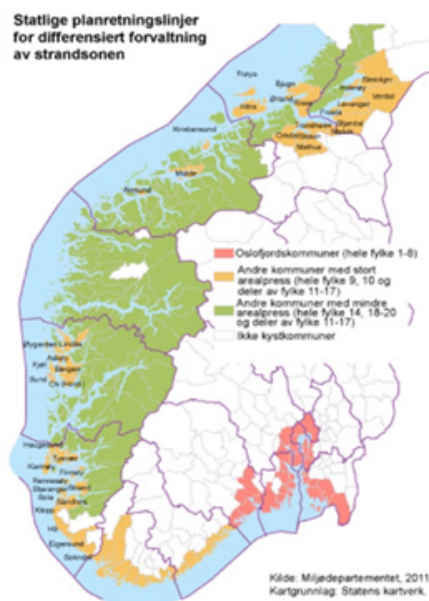


Figure 5: The Norwegian 2011 national guidelines for differentiated planning and management along the coast sets three protection regimes of diminishing strictness. The zoning requires piecemeal local dispensations to be substituted by open local planning processes representing all interests.

Some in-depth comments were then made by Mr. Hansen about the Danish case, drawing on the Horizon 2020 PERICLES project on sustainable use of maritime coastal cultural heritage. This project had a wider scope than just conservation versus development, and also examined local interests and identity. One case mentioned in this research is Vilsund, in the north of Denmark. Vilsund has strong culture of taking on development issues. The communities have been very strong in setting up strategies on both sides of the coin, and increasingly understand their shared challenges and opportunities.

The research involved interviews, stakeholder meetings, and workshops. Participants were very open, asking themselves what kind of cultural regional storyline could be taken up. Ideas that emerged were, for example, positioning Vilsund as a meeting place with a maritime recreational and sports profile. It was concluded that the discussion on cultural heritage can help to create a better, more 'healthy' sense of place (in terms of interests and identity), rather than the more utilitarian look at space (in terms of land use). Still, one of the lessons learned is that cultural identity can be oversimplified when approached in solely in terms of tourism development.



Figure 6: Meeting session between Vilsund stakeholders and community members.

“COAST - the resilience of remote coastal communities in the face of climate change through community empowerment” by Maria Wilke, PhD candidate at the Agricultural University of Iceland

Coastal planning is relatively new in Iceland. The research by Ms. Wilke within the framework of the COAST project focuses on public participation in coastal planning in the northwest of Iceland as a means to improve resilience of communities in the face of climate change. This region is characterised by settlements on peninsulas where water flows inland. No specific marine education programme exists and the coastal communities are challenged by demographic decline, and gender imbalance. Accessibility is poor in the wintertime both by road and air. Cruise ships have stopped arriving since COVID, and fisheries are struggling.

The presentation explained the planning system and key legislation. Lately maritime spatial planning efforts concentrate on resolving conflicts between coastal and ocean use, especially cruise ship tourism and aquaculture/fisheries. Participation is important for gaining public acceptance and legitimisation. The philosophy follows Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, with co-creation as an ideal. However, various obstacles have been identified in practice.

The research seeks to understand how community engagement impacts MSP in Iceland. It does so by examining the effects of different participation strategies. The methods include document analysis, participant observation, and interviews with stakeholders. The preliminary findings from the COAST project are not particularly encouraging. In general, the strategies occupy a rather low position on the participation ladder, mainly the consultation rung. Moreover, people do not seem to be informed and barriers to participation are not addressed and controversial issues avoided. Finally, municipalities do not always feel in control of MSP because they only have jurisdiction 215m into marine space.

“Coastal development challenges and practices in the far North – integrating cultural heritage and cross-municipal collaboration”, Stein Arne Rånes, Troms & Finnmark County, Norway

Troms has a population of 240,000 but is the size of Norway and Belgium put together. Fishing and agriculture are the biggest economies, feeding Europe and the rest of the world. Marine spatial planning has been going on for three decades. Troms county was the first region with a coastal plan, which was updated in 1999.

The planning process is closely related to the fishing industry. Just before 2000, the Ministry announced that only municipalities with a coastal plan would get new fishing license. To make this plan, knowledge and data were needed, including seafloor mapping. In 2010 they saw that more was needed than seafloor knowledge, and a more ecosystem-based approach was adopted.

In the 2010s, municipalities started to work together to draw up plans. They learned about a coastal plan further south in Norway that could serve as an example. One of the main lessons was that people needed to recognise their own ideas and interest in the plan. This set about a 180-degree turn away from the top-down approach. A grassroots group was established and paid to advise the municipalities, who later adopted the plans. This was considered a successful process.

Coastal communities are in the front line of climate change and they have to work on their resilience. People working at sea have some important messages for planning: you need to deal with instability, uncertainty, insecurity, and change. New practices are needed to increase equity in the transition and ensure that nobody is left behind. Burdens should be shared, as we share the ocean.

Currently, we are striving to make our data more accessible. We need a broader perspective on who we are talking to, involving young people, and less educated people. An interesting inspiration is the Silk Road UN project.

Q&A Session 2

Tom Goosse summarised the chat. Most comments concerned queries for further information from participants. Other interesting points raised were:

- The consensus is that implementation is much more difficult than making the plan. It always depends on local circumstances.
- To spearhead activities you need some kind of legitimacy/mandate and resources.

- Leadership is a crucial factor in governance - it is difficult to invent. One suggestion is to hold a focus group of key actors and ask them if they are doing any voluntary cooperation, and what they intend to do in the future.
- Not everything can be achieved through consensus. For example offshore wind farm development is highly competitive. Choosing the best locations from a community point of view means refusing others. Also, the cumulative impacts of a number of developments need to be taken into account.
- One example of research to study is the MERMAID project. Next to that, the controversies at the moment can develop into new innovations and challenges tomorrow.
- Unless you are binding or working bottom-up/outside-in, it is difficult to promote implementation, if you cannot enforce a plan or have some other kind of carrot and commitment among key actors. This is an interesting theme for further international comparative research and also a practical thought on evaluation for planning - based on all the new marine and coastal plans and different planning and management systems in place.

Roundtable discussion: comparing ESPON and AESOP evidence in the Nordic context

Dr. Hansen opened the round table discussion by reiterating the key questions, and then gave the floor to the guests.

DK ministerial representative – Jane Kragh Andersen, Special Consultant at the Danish national Authority for housing and planning

Ms Andersen gave thanks for the presentations and raised four common elements.

1. Knowledge as a basic element, such as the mapping of the coastal zones and the many good examples of conflicts in these areas, fishing renewable energy, tourism, etc.
2. How do we work on these conflicts in multilevel, transdisciplinary governance?
3. Cases are useful as illustrations to learn more about working locally with new stories to engage people. A lot of people are not aware what is going on.
4. New approach to spatial planning, to get a new focus on strategy, leadership and cooperation: based on cross-fertilisation. A new planning act (2017) in Denmark offers new possibilities, new zoning. This year it will be evaluated.

NO ministerial representative – Kirsten Nordli, The Norwegian national department of Local authority and modernisation affairs.

Ms Nordli is from the planning department. In Norway people know a lot about the hard-core interests in the sea, and they have a planning Act, stretching one mile into the sea. But they also have strong sectoral laws going sometimes as far as 12 miles into the sea. As much more activity develops at sea, planners and policymakers need to consider whether terrestrial planning and building codes sufficiently address these interests. There is still a lot of work to do, to make it more integrated than just one or two interests. We need to work together to work the system.

FI Ministerial representative – Tiina Tihlman, Counsellor at the Finnish Ministry of Environment

Coming from a remote village, Ms. Tihlman knows something about (the attractiveness of) remote areas like coastal zones and archipelagos. The coast is a diverse area with many activities. After working on coasts for a long time, she is now moving on to coastal management strategies and projects. MSP in Finland didn't start with planning, but with discussing future scenarios. Participants were asked to draw up the plan. The planners didn't interfere but focused on engaging participants in an open-minded way, based on trust. After two years of cooperation they finished the plan in just a half year, because it was then so easy. It's important that you cooperate across different government levels and across different interest groups.

The roundtable discussion then revisited the core questions of the event in an open dialogue with participants. In the end, it was concluded that there are ways to integrate different interests and invite local communities to engage in real cross fertilisation. It was also appreciated that this is an essential and inspiring, if fragile, process.

Conclusion

In the wrap-up by Mr. Hansen, it was noted that the role of national authorities is changing. Sustainability policies require a different approach, through participation, facilitation, adaptation. Ways are being discovered to enable local communities to move forward, which can be difficult when all actors are horizontally positioned. The danger is confusion (who is does what?), and a lot of lost work, but we don't want to go back to rigid systems either.

In the wrap-up by Mr. Boelens, he pointed out that seas could open up new potentials. Ten years ago he and his students started to discover the seas, which were very open at the time. The students came up with fresh ideas about how to seize offshore opportunities. When this dynamic planning comes to the shore where there is concrete, bricks and roads, how does it match up? Another issue to improve community engagement is that we are still stuck at the low ladders of Arnstein. We have to start with local interests; public opinion is the start of political will. We have to start with co-creation, co-evolution in a dynamic setting, so we know what to make. What can new governance become? Mr. Boelens thinks it is going in the co-evolution direction. He is very hopeful, even though it is very difficult.

Event Evaluation

The Attendees

A series of announcements were distributed for this conference from the ESPON newsletter and passed on by ESPON contact points. This was accompanied by a pre-event brief. In total, 333 invitations were sent out (not counting forwarding from ECPs and others), and 126 people registered for the event. During the event there were, on average 68 attendees, with a maximum of 86.

The vast majority of registrants came from Denmark (29), followed by Croatia (15), Belgium (12) and Estonia (12). Interestingly, there were also a few registrations from South Africa and India. About 18% of the registrants identified themselves as policymakers, 29% as researchers and 9% as coming from the private sector (a relatively large portion (39%) marked "other"). Of the policymakers, almost all were either from the national (13) or local level (5). Of the 16 people filling in the post-event survey, 11 indicated they had learned about the event through either the ESPON website or ESPON email invitation, with the remainder being either directly invited or tipped through social media or working colleagues.

During the conference, questions were asked in the chat, many of them were directed to the regional stakeholders about policy specifics, or details from examples in the presentation. Speakers addressed these concerns during their talk, afterwards in the chat, or during the Q&A session. At some points, the chat-threads slightly deviated from the spoken session.

Satisfaction with the event

16 people filled in the post-event survey. The results were very positive, with thirteen indicating being "very satisfied" and three "fairly satisfied" with the event. Elaborating on this, the diverse program was praised where practical case information and hard data was combined with theoretical insights and reflection. More critical responses took issue with short time allotted to individual speakers respectively, and the technical limitations of Teams as compared to Zoom.

When asked whether the event lived up to expectations, the responses were again overwhelmingly positive. It was said that the event provided an update on MSP vis-à-vis urban planning, and insights were directly applicable in day-to-day professional life. Throughout the responses, most people mentioned being "inspired" by both the content and atmosphere in the meeting.

Most of the 16 respondents also agreed that the meeting was valuable to connect to others in the field. Follow up conversations were planned in the conversation and in the chat.

Finally, when asked how they will use the event, several mentioned sharing the information with colleagues, local authorities or stakeholders. All respondents replied they will seek out ESPON engagement in the future, which is significant as roughly half reported not to have used ESPON evidence in the past.



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