



## Bridging Shades of Blue

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is a global initiative to change how we co-create and share knowledge. We need to find new ways of creating self-organising, bottom-up learning and impact networks. Stakeholders, researchers, funders, and facilitators need to be able to connect with each other. Experience, concerns, and potential solutions - many of which only reside in people's heads - need to be shared fluidly, openly, and in near-real time, unimpeded by language barriers or access and use of technology. Innovative approaches should be grounded in breaking free from top-down, hierarchical systems to find new ways of enabling everyone involved in the co-creation of Ocean knowledge to form self-organising networks to inform policy.

However, while the transformative capacity of ocean networks is increasingly necessary, it is also untapped in its full potential. Partnerships of people with different knowledge backgrounds drive countless marine research and policy initiatives, but are often afterthoughts or lack committed resources, therefore achieving sub-optimal impacts.

We highlight one shade of 'Blue' deserving more attention – the ocean's past, our blue heritage, is often not given enough credit for innovating towards ocean sustainability. Our lack of knowledge about the origin and changing nature of anthropogenic pressures is often hampered by restricted historical social-ecological baselines of the human footprint on marine ecosystems and coastal peoples. Ocean science must seek better integration of the humanities and social sciences, to engage oral traditions, history, art, and culture in more inclusive and just blue planning and blue economies. The ocean's past can also be better understood through long-term ocean and coastal proxy data as the foundation of predictive models on natural systems; these are crucial for informed, realistic, sustainable, inclusive and equitable management.

It is also critical to use this knowledge to inform policy. The IPCC and IPBES provide consensus-based narratives on climate and biodiversity respectively. A new international panel for ocean science is the next logical step in the evolution of consensus-driven scientific assessments to mobilize action by bridging ocean science and policy. An International Panel for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) will amplify SDG14 and further elevate the ocean in the global agenda. By coordinating existing initiatives, within the Decade, the IPOS would facilitate the co-creation of knowledge for a sustainable ocean future.

A major challenge: how to engage ocean citizens' knowledge to bridge the divide between visions of the "Blue Economy" and "Blue Justice"?

For instance, small-scale fisheries' (SSF) crucial contributions to humankind stand in stark contrast to their marginalisation in decision-making. To ensure resilient fishing communities that can protect the ocean and coasts, SSF requires healthy coastal and ecosystems, secure access to marine resources (SDG14b), and active inclusion of their traditional ecological knowledge in decision-making processes. SSF demands that governments address the lack of science-based, transparent, participative fisheries and ecosystem-based management; threats posed by pollution, competition for coastal and marine spaces and resources from other blue economy sectors; and that they invest in long-term equitable resource management, ecosystem conservation and restoration, and innovations developed by fishing communities themselves.

Community-focused organizations at the UN Ocean Conference have contributed knowledge about social struggles, while advancing a human rights-based approach to protecting ocean and fisheries resources. We urge you to support their work during this International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022), particularly their Call to Action, launched at UNOC.



**Recommendations:**

- Support marine learning networks through enabling long-term transdisciplinary programmes.
- Support the recently launched the "Manifesto: Humanities 4 the Ocean" and promote the importance of understanding the history of ocean ecosystems for socially equitable and environmentally sustainable ocean-based development.
- Highlight the importance of co-creation of knowledge and solutions with ocean citizens.
- Support the creation of IPOS.
- In the UNOC political declaration, support Blue Justice by centering social equity and traditional ecological knowledge of SSFs at the heart of sustainable use of marine resources, ocean conservation and blue economy innovations with a stand-alone article that strongly supports small-scale fisheries.

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