Sea Areas – Multiple Functions and Perceptions

- Increase in number and intensity of sea uses (cf. Fig. 1);
- Increasing number of actors;
- Actors follow different interests, and
- may have different perceptions of areas.

In other words, different actors may look through a different lens onto the same area and at the same issues.

Policy instruments such as Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) are tools to bring these different perspectives together.

In such a context rational aspects of use and profit achieved from the sea are coupled with emotional perceptions, the latter also including unpredictability and danger [1].

Policy and Power: A Conceptual Framework

- Ecological systems provide ecosystem services;
- Individual actors or specific groups use ecosystem services based on their specific trade-offs;
- Trade-offs include costs and benefits, but also beliefs, personal values, ethical considerations and individual perceptions of issue and area;
- In the frame of existing regulations and jurisdictions, the decisions of actors affect the existing use pattern, the resulting pressures on the ecosystem and the environmental status;

Recommendations

- Take into account interactions at different scales, affecting the institutional and social, as well as the ecological domains;
- MSP needs either to develop into a broad and inclusive communication process or to become embedded into such processes;
- Differences in society about the meaning of the sea and different perceptions of pressing issues could probably get better recognised when MSP is guided by consensus-oriented long-term visions.

References