

Integrating Indigenous And Local Knowledge Into Marine Spatial Planning Processes: Lessons From Algoa Bay, South Africa

Authors : Nina Rivers¹, Mia Strand¹, Bernadette Snow³

¹Nelson Mandela University, ²Strathclyde University

E-mail Address: nina.rivers@gmail.com

ID: 11810

Submission:

Background

Intangible cultural heritage, as found in Indigenous and local knowledge systems (ILKS), continue to be largely neglected in area-based management (ABM) approaches such as marine spatial planning (MSP) both regionally in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) and more specifically in South Africa. There are several reasons for this exclusion, including both intentional and unintentional, where one prominent challenge is to identify and document intangible cultural values and linking them to specific places or geographical areas which fit the Euclidean logic of MSP.

An inadequate understanding of the cultural dimensions of marine ecosystems poses a significant challenge to conservation, planning and management professionals to include these in their programs. It is imperative that this knowledge gap be addressed as socio-cultural dynamics must be acknowledged, understood and integrated into ocean and coastal governance approaches to ensure sustainable use and protection of these areas. The study took place in Algoa Bay, South Africa, which is the site for the first pilot study of a MSP for South Africa.

Two primary objectives guided this research. The first was to first identify the various ILKS that currently exist in the Bay that need to be integrated into management approaches. The second objective was to identify practical mechanisms to integrate ILKS and cultural heritage into current and future ABM strategies such as integrated coastal management (ICM) and MSP.

Method

This research was divided into two parts with a bottom-up (Indigenous and local coastal users) and top-down (coastal authorities) approach. The first part was to identify what ILKS exist in the Bay. This was undertaken by a PhD candidate from 2020 to 2022 and culminated in a photography exhibition and recorded cultural ocean and coastal narratives of local coastal users in March 2022. The second part of this work, and focus of this study, was to identify practical pathways of how to integrate ILKS into ABM in collaboration with coastal authorities and Indigenous and local stakeholders. Data collection for the second part took place in two phases. The first phase included in-depth, one-on-one interviews in 2021 with ten local coastal managers and provincial and national coastal authorities in order to identify what factors hinder the uptake of

ILKS in their work as well as what mechanisms they currently use or can think of to integrate this kind of knowledge into their work more. The second phase involved a one-day multi-stakeholder workshop in 2022 with Indigenous and local ocean knowledge holders and coastal managers to identify concrete areas of change and practical recommendations to integrate ILKS into MSP.

Results

The one-on-one interviews and identified several “current and future mechanisms and pathways for knowledge integration” into coastal management, such as current engagement platforms; opportunities to network; environmental education initiatives; legally mandated knowledge integration; working with local organizations like NGOs and local nature conservancies; clear and consistent communication with local stakeholders and the co-development of MPA management plans.

The multi-stakeholder workshop culminated in eleven recommendations for integrating ILKS and knowledge holders into MSP. These include, in no order of priority, 1) a central and accessible database for all relevant coastal and ocean management information; 2) information to be presented in different languages and with visuals; 3) develop people-friendly communication strategies that are non-aggressive or exclusive. 4) increased transparency and communication from authorities with stakeholders; 5) improved communication between relevant sectors (e.g. government, civil society, NGOs); 6) designated coastal zonation and resourcing for cultural practices; 7) contextual approaches to MSP (no one-size-fits-all); 8) simplification of the fishing permitting system; 9) amend legislation pertaining to access of coastal areas; 10) reviewing current legislation to better include ILKS, and; 11) creating an ILKS association that sits at the national MSP working group.

Conclusion

The primary outcome of this study highlights a definitive need and want by coastal stakeholders in Algoa Bay to be better included and communicated with concerning how their coastline and ocean is managed. They also seek increased access to coastal areas and they call for revisions and amendments to current legislation to acknowledge, include and enable cultural practices. It also highlighted the very real challenges for coastal authorities to integrate ILKS in their day-to-day work. South Africa, like other WIO region countries, is a culturally diverse country and indigenous and local coastal communities must be included in how the Indian Ocean and its coastline is managed. By highlighting the challenges and then some practical recommendations of how to include ILKS and the people themselves, this can be a helpful move towards improved protection and sustainable use of our ocean.

