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In the Southern North Sea, a multitude of maritime sectors are active within **multi-level governance structures**. Activities are managed on **local, provincial, national and international** levels. Management objectives are only partly synergistic between these levels.

We zoom in on 2 national and 2 international approaches to integrated marine spatial planning and management, focussing on **fisheries, nature conservation** and **offshore wind energy** production.

Lessons and recommendations from the diverse MSP approaches in multi-level governance are drawn.



INTERNATIONAL

Dogger Bank (DB)

Cross-border MSP of Natura 2000 areas of a sandbank in 4 EEZs.
Conflict between conservation and economic development.

Leadership Ineffective: Intergovernmental *Dogger Bank Steering Group* invites stakeholders' input, but lacks internal agreement and official mandate for MSP.

- Multiple diverging sectoral interests
- Different national priorities
- Differing legal obligations on various institutional levels

Transparency lacking in process: Stakeholders do not know what their responsibilities in the process are, what is expected from them. What will fisheries lose? What are alternatives for fisheries? Apart from discussions on content (Where are the most sensitive bottom habitats?), process, expectations, responsibilities need to be discussed and agreed on.

Ineffective MSP due to lack of leadership and transparency.

NATIONAL

Skagerrak (SK)

Harbour porpoise protection in two Danish Natura 2000 sites.
Conflict between gillnet fishery and by-catch of porpoises there.

Leadership Efficient: Clear designation of authority to one ministry, the *AgriFish Agency* under the *Danish Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries*: sole responsibility for management of fisheries within all N2000 sites).

- Stakeholder views heard through a focused *N2000 Dialogue Forum*.

Transparency lacking in process: Stakeholders do not know what influence they can have in the process and what is expected from them. What will be the consequences of N2000 management measures for fisheries? Additionally, scientific uncertainties: Correct designation of areas? Success of conservation measures? It is unclear whether harbour porpoises (international home range) can be effectively protected in fixed national N2000 sites.

Process transparency needed. Uncertainty about effectiveness of national MSP due to international extent of conservation objective.

Wadden Sea (WS)

Cooperation on spatial management in an intertidal ecosystem.
Conflict between nature protection and sustainable development.

Leadership Effective: *Trilateral WS cooperation (TC)* manifests joint political commitment to nature protection, albeit legally non-binding. Secretarial support and *UNESCO World Heritage Site* designation (reputation, internat. financial support) strengthen management efficiency.

- Individual national management approaches tolerated.
- Official stakeholder platform prioritizes sustainable development.

Transparency Complex trilateral process needs more transparency. What impact/ influence can stakeholders have within the TC? Exchange between stakeholder platform and TC seems limited. Lack of mechanisms to deal with conflicts (fisheries). What is a sustainable fishery? Fishery sector frustrated.

Successful nature protection through effective leadership.
Conflict with fisheries so far neglected.

Belgian EEZ (BE)

Designation process of marine N2000 sites and zones for renewable energy in the past decade resulted in conflicts between nature conservation and other diverging sectoral interests.

Leadership The *federal* and the *Flemish government* each have exclusive authority for certain sea uses. There is a federal *Minister of the North Sea* (first time mandated in 2003) with a political mandate to achieve an integrated Belgian North Sea policy by developing legislation.

- This top-down approach is combined with stakeholder participation (formal and informal).

Transparency has changed over time from bilateral consultations behind closed doors, towards a more transparent process of participation/ public information supply. Uncertainty remains about consequences of the designation and management of MPAs for other sectors.

Top-down approach can be effective, if communication is transparent and the role of stakeholders is clear.

Lessons

- National or sectoral management objectives compete with those on other levels/ sectors.
- Future effects of proposed multi-level management are often not clear.
- In general, scientific data or access to data is limited (e.g. VMS data), and knowledge of the ecosystem is sometimes uncertain.

Recommendations

- Successful spatial management needs **clear delegation of responsibilities**, effective leadership, and benefits of mutual political will.
- Apart from content discussion, **transparency is needed about the planning process**, expected **roles** and **responsibilities**, and the **potential consequences** of MSP.
- Each spatially managed area is unique and requires a tailored management approach, depending on scale and objectives.

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