

Experiences of social innovation for Blue Growth in the Dutch North Sea

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The subject: Blue Growth

A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sky is a gradient of orange, yellow, and blue. A large ship is visible on the horizon. The ocean waves are visible in the foreground.

Blue Growth is the long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole.

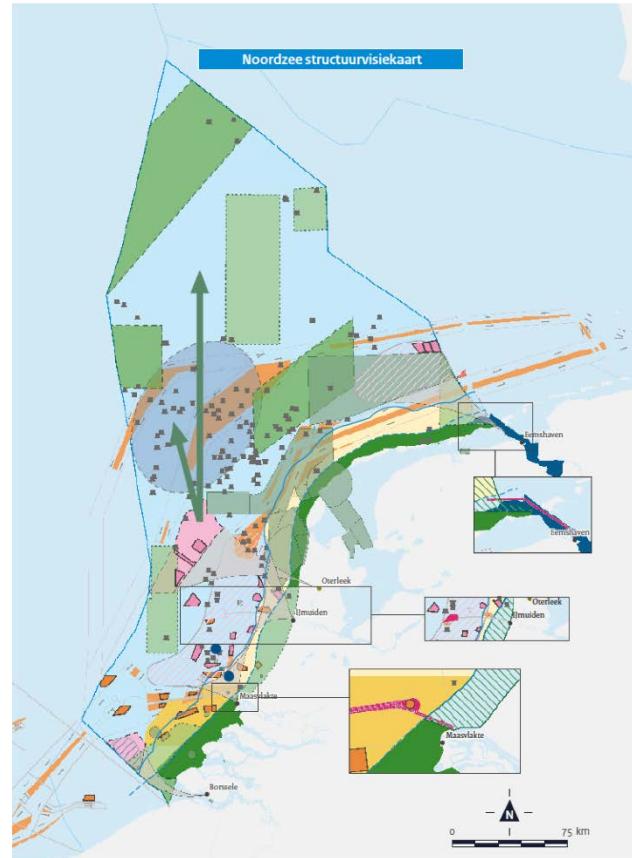
Seas and oceans are drivers for the European economy and have great potential for innovation and growth.

It is the maritime contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Blue Growth in the North Sea

Five Blue Growth sectors

- Aquaculture
- Renewable energy
- Seabed mining
- Coastal tourism
- Blue biotechnology



Policy instruments for Blue Growth

- Support for new technology development in 5 Blue Growth sectors
- Putting right 'enablers' in place

Blue Growth infographic

value and jobs

- Financial support
- Encourage partnerships for scale effects, learning etc



The problem with Blue Growth

- Top-down, policy driven approach
- Technocratic, emphasis on technology
- “Efforts to stimulate collaboration and inclusiveness have achieved uneven results”
- “Noted difficulties to attract investors”



“I have shared my vision, so now we have a shared vision”

Cartoon by Mark de Koning

The project

- What can we learn from a social innovation perspective on Blue Growth?
 - Is there social innovation in various sectors, at what intensity?
 - What explains differences between sectors?
 - What can we learn for improving Blue Growth strategy?
- Funded by Statutory Research Tasks Nature Policy
- Methodology: literature review and three case-studies

Defining social innovation

- “The process of inventing, securing support for, and implementing novel solutions to social needs and problems” (Phills et al, 2008)
- Three critical mechanisms of social innovation:
 - exchanges of ideas and values
 - shifts in roles and relationships
 - integration of private capital with public and philanthropic support.

Significance

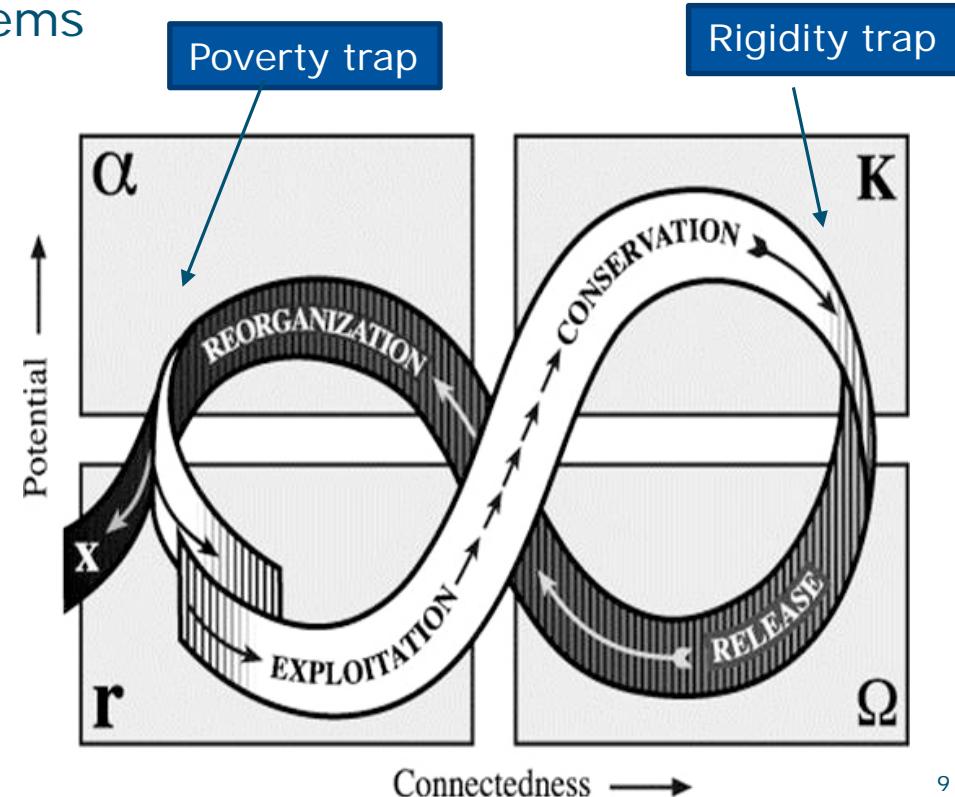
Three qualitative parameters for significance (Baker and Mehmood, 2015)

- Scale: such as number of people affected
- Scope: deep and multi-dimensional way
- Resonance: capturing people's imagination in a powerful way



Adaptive cycle (Holling, 2001 and others)

- Based on dynamics of ecosystems
 - R = growth or exploitation
 - K = conservation
 - Ω = collapse or release
 - A = reorganisation
- Front loop from R to K
- Back loop from Ω to A
- Two traps



EU and social innovation

- “Social innovations are new ideas that meet social needs, create social relationships and form new collaborations. These innovations can be products, services or models addressing unmet needs more effectively.”
 - Networking (community portal)
 - Competition and contests (e.g. European Social Innovation Competition)
 - Funding (direct funding, e.g. H2020, Collective Awareness Programs)
 - Ecosystems (improve conditions)
 - Impact (show impact)
 - Incubation (support incubation structures)
 - Exploring (look for new ideas)

A photograph of an offshore wind farm. The image shows numerous white wind turbines with three blades each, mounted on yellow and black foundations in the dark blue ocean. The turbines are scattered across the frame, with one prominent one in the foreground on the left and a cluster of three in the middle ground on the right. The sky is a clear, pale blue with a few wispy white clouds.

Offshore wind energy





Offshore mussel aquaculture





Seaweed aquaculture





Significance of social innovation



Large energy companies dominant

Strong focus on technological innovation and cost-price reduction

No cross-sectoral innovation

National government supports



Societal pressure to innovate

Very little innovation, within resisting sector

One entrepreneur has a different view ("mussels for food security")

Low trust

"Government siding with NGO"



Small scale but growing

Support through research funding

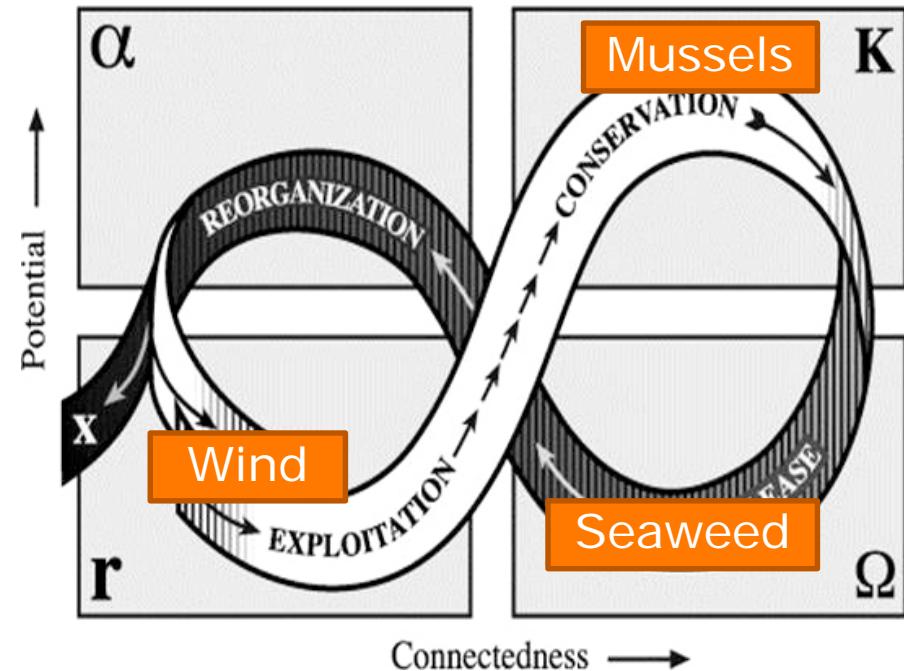
Emphasize the potential for seaweed

Stichting Noordzeeboerderij as new organisational form

Government support at different levels

Three sectors on the adaptive cycle

- Wind sector to grow on the front loop
- Mussel sector stuck in the rigidity trap
- Seaweed aquaculture as (the beginning of) radical innovation



Consequences for Blue Growth strategy

- Little social innovation taking place
- Can this be stimulated by governance?
- Timing is key!
 - Recognize windows of opportunity for social innovation
 - Backloop: reorganising sectors





Consequences for Blue Growth strategy

- Little social innovation taking place
- Can this be stimulated by governance?
- Timing is key!
- How to stimulate social innovation?
 - Avoid poverty and rigidity traps
 - On the back loop, initiatives need support (not technology)



And for coastal-rural development at large

Acknowledging the potential of social innovation

- More dynamic than at sea;
- Take the dynamics in sectors into account
- Government instruments should match the dynamics at play
- Recognize the value of disorganisation on the back loop



Thanks for your attention

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