

Marine Spatial Planning: spaces of protection and conservation, sovereignty and development

Planejamento Espacial Marinho: espaços de proteção e conservação, soberania e desenvolvimento

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Abstract

The research question is whether Marine Spatial Planning is a tool, a methodology, a political process, or a combination of the three. Thus, this paper provides an understanding of Marine Spatial Planning: its origins, historical analysis, development, implications, and agendas, both globally and in Brazil. Concepts like politics, economics, law, the environment, geography, and strategy employed in ocean studies, which are always changing and being talked about in terms of how they work together and clash, are used as theoretical references. The research methodology employs an extensive bibliographical review of primary and secondary sources while prioritizing qualitative analytic methods. Conclusions are drawn about the international maritime community's understanding of Marine Spatial Planning, specifically its role in enhancing ocean governance and restructuring state marine territories, as well as the intricate connections between these aspects. In Brazil, despite the relative priority of political power in the last decade, given Brazil's international commitments, Marine Spatial Planning is still in its early stages, with not much expressed in effective domestic actions.

Keywords: Marine Spatial Planning; Protection and conservation; Sovereignty; Sustainable development.

Resumo

A questão da pesquisa é se o Planejamento Espacial Marinho é uma ferramenta, uma metodologia, um processo político, ou uma combinação de todos esses elementos. A partir daí, o artigo busca fornecer uma compreensão do Planejamento Espacial Marinho: suas origens, análise histórica, desenvolvimento, implicações e agendas, tanto a nível global como no Brasil. Conceitos afetos ao estudo dos oceanos, como política, economia, direito, meio ambiente, geografia e estratégia, que se encontram em constantes mudanças e discussões sobre suas interações, são usados como referenciais teóricos. A metodologia de pesquisa emprega uma extensa revisão bibliográfica de fontes primárias e secundárias, priorizando métodos analíticos qualitativos. Por fim, são apresentadas conclusões sobre a compreensão da comunidade marítima internacional em relação ao Planejamento do Espaço Marinho, especificamente quanto ao seu papel no reforço da governança dos oceanos e na reestruturação dos territórios marinhos estatais, bem como nas complexas inter-relações entre estes aspectos. No Brasil, apesar da prioridade relativa do poder político na última década, tendo em vista os compromissos internacionais assumidos, o Planejamento Espacial Marinho ainda se encontra em estágio embrionário, o que se traduz na pouca efetividade das ações empreendidas.

Palavras-chave: Planejamento Espacial Marinho; Proteção e conservação; Soberania; Desenvolvimento sustentável.

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Introduction

Is Marine Space Planning (MSP) a methodology, a policy, or a strategy? This is the question driving the investigation in this scientific study. The primary objective of this study is to comprehend the concept of MSP, its utility, and its significance in safeguarding, conserving, utilizing, and enhancing marine, coastal, and oceanic spaces, regardless of their national jurisdiction, while considering their intersections with borders and boundaries within an inclusive maritime governance framework.

Marine space encompasses the diversity and interdisciplinarity of the life sciences, as well as the humanities. Understanding the borders and limits of marine regions requires a broad understanding of Political Science, which includes, in the strictest sense, Strategic Studies and International relations. Poor global maritime governance and limited maritime public policy reflect the lack of a more in-depth discussion on maritime sovereignty, which is inextricably linked to the security and defense of natural resources.

Because politics is the epistemological core of Strategic Studies, this area is concerned with problematizing political, economic (capital accumulation), and social reality through defense and security, which includes analyses of strong correlations between states at the international level and the formulation of state policies aimed at protecting national interests (FIGUEIREDO, 2015).

Thus, politics, economics, strategy, and human geography all play a role in marine space management projects that are part of state sovereignty. It seeks to achieve the objectives related to the conservation and protection, use, defense, and sustainable development of the state marine spaces, as is the essence of the MSP in all of its areas of action: maritime transport, renewable energies, marine conservation and protection, mineral extraction, fishing, aquaculture, and oil and gas exploration, in addition to defense.

To implement this paradigm of integration between sovereignty and development by national institutions, a shift in viewpoint is required in the State's multisectoral cooperation and integration process. The decentralization of ocean and space studies is inextricably connected to this stimulation.

The logic of power extends to the capitalist production logic in geographical space in these interrelationships, with the expansion of capital itself as its starting point in these new places of development. According to Santos (1996) and Harvey (1992, 2004, 2005), space-time compression breaks through boundaries in an increasingly accelerated time, where the space dispute is a competitive advantage for the manufacturing system. The sea, according to this concept, is space and has been a source of progress, survival, and power for people and nations, while faster technical evolution, which enhances the possibilities of using ocean resources, corresponds to time.

When countries began to view the sea, its bed, and subsoil not only as a means of transportation or a source of food but also as wealth generators and of considerable strategic importance, the geopolitical agenda, the economic significance, natural resources policy, and the strategic direction of power began to influence national and international relations, causing repercussions at all levels of the economy (MARRONI; ASMUS, 2013). So, the conflicting part of geopolitics comes from the uneven distribution of resources, with plenty in some areas and not enough in others, while countries need to use them for their own economic gain.

Till (2021) argues that the greatest global military threats to national areas can originate from the sea, driven by the depletion of natural resources and hostile players' accidental or deliberate involvement in disputes.

The MSP presents itself around the globe as a valuable tool for managing marine areas, whether they are state-owned or for human use, regardless of the prospects for collaboration and conflict, the latter of which may present opportunities for sustainable development. And it cannot be different in Brazil.

Methodology for conceptual reinterpretation in the context of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)

The present article employs a methodological framework that transcends superficial analysis, acknowledging the inherent intricacy of our research subject. We aim to surpass conventional limitations and thoroughly explore the comprehension of MSP, taking into account its intersection with critical issues of conservation, protection, defense, and sovereignty. In order to accomplish this objective, we integrate theoretical frameworks, empirical data, and interdisciplinary dialogue, meticulously investigating the interactions and fundamental mechanisms involved. Our ultimate goal is to propose a new paradigm for comprehending MSP — one that is vital for the sustainable future of our oceans, marine territories, and, ultimately, our planet.

Consequently, through qualitative analyses and a comprehensive bibliographic review, this paper seeks to address these issues in three sections. The first responds to the proposed question, the second presents current global discussions on the establishment of the MSP, and the third provides an overview of the discussions about Brazil's MSP and its cross-border character with South Atlantic neighbors in a region that presents unique challenges and opportunities due to its geographic characteristics, existing spatial uses, and governance arrangements. Further exploration of Brazil's MSP in this context would shed light on how it aligns with neighboring countries' approaches and contributes to sustainable development in the region.

Ultimately, the global development of this tool, political process, and plan underscores the criticality of understanding the organizational space of the oceans and seas, particularly in light of the immense marine biodiversity essential to the planet's survival. The interaction between state sovereignties and ocean governance leads to the creation of instruments that regulate these spaces and serve the interests of the entire international maritime community. These instruments are based on less asymmetrical relations, seeking a geopolitical balance between coastal states and the major players of the global system.

Only a few complete MSPs exist in the world. The political process in Brazil is premature and heavily dependent on bureaucratic centralization for more effective results.

What is MSP? What is it for? How to do it?

Vivero (2021, p. 2) claims that there are various coexisting perspectives on the subject matter at present. From a geopolitical perspective, the configuration and development of a state's territorial boundaries have a significant impact on the formulation of Marine Spatial Planning. So, the Marine Spatial Planning can be seen as a unique way for each state to deal with maritime conflicts within the framework of their own political-economic organization models, using administrative or political resources that are already in place. Each MSP is its own world, responding to specific needs and demands. The uncertainty surrounding MSP stems from a lack of a broad enough perspective to answer this question.

It is possible to say that MSP corresponds to a political process for organizing or reorganizing the sea as an important space for conservation, use, sovereignty, and development, and that it is still in the stage of national and international reference. MSP does not have a legal framework. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) stands in for the legitimacy of this construction.

MSP organizes coastal and oceanic marine spaces, human-ecosystem interactions, maritime transport, renewable energy, marine conservation and protection, mining, aquaculture, oil and gas exploration, military-naval defense (sovereignty), and a variety of other political, social, and economic issues.

There are numerous opportunities for interaction in the aforementioned areas. Such a collaborative and integrative process, which moves MSP forward, derives from an understanding of the space in which we live, protect, and use it as an element of marine use management in its most diverse sectors (EHLER *et al.*, 2019).

These authors allocate spaces in a way that minimizes conflicts between activities and nature, or, when possible, maximizes compatibility between sectors. One important part of this idea is that MSP is at the cutting edge of many fields