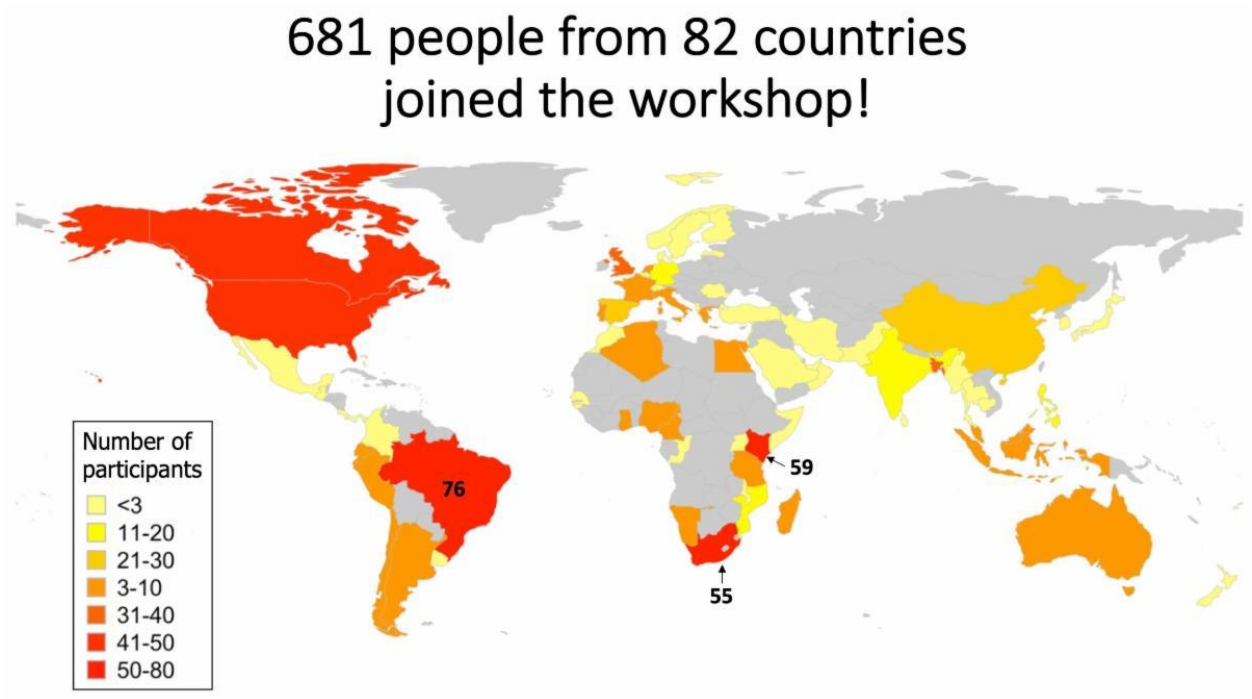
Summary of the Marine Spatial Planning Workshop

Last month IMECaN ran a 3-day virtual workshop on marine spatial planning and the need for balance across social, cultural, economic, and ecological objectives. The workshop provided a theoretical and practical understanding of MSP across multiple criteria, and also created a platform for an international ECR community to share information, experiences, and opportunities.

We had nearly 700 early career researchers from 82 countries register for the workshop. The diversity of attendees was staggering, with 67% of participants from the Global South. The ability to engage and connect with so many people from around the world was truly invigorating and inspiring. Whilst the global pandemic necessitated a virtual format, this workshop has showcased how free virtual events can be more inclusive than in-person meetings and maximise knowledge sharing among countries and continents. In future, virtual meetings will help to reduce the carbon footprint of scientists as well as increase accessibility to those who are unable to travel internationally.

Below we summarise the 3-day workshop for those who were unable to join. You can also watch recordings of all the talks here.



Day 1: Introduction to Marine Spatial Planning

The first session gave an introduction to Marine Spatial Planning with case studies from Israel, Mexico, South Africa, Germany, Norway, and Brazil. We had presentations from Michelle Portman (Israel Institute of Technology), Jorge Alvarez Romano (James Cook University), Mandy Lombard (Nelson Mandela University), Vanessa Stelzenmüller (Thünen-Institute of Sea Fisheries), Leopoldo Gerhardinger (University of Sao Paulo), Gunnar Sander (Norwegian Institute for Water Research). The talks summarised basic concepts of MSP, practical approaches to including dynamic environmental conditions, as well as challenges and opportunities for implementing MSP.

The next session provided a brief overview of the MSP Challenge development over the years, followed by a practical activity on the spatial aspects using the MSP Challenge 2050 simulation game. It is available through its website. It is a computer supported simulation-game, developed by Breda University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands, that gives maritime spatial planners insight in the diverse challenges of sustainable planning of human activities in the marine and coastal ecosystem. Participants developed a greater understanding of the myriad of challenges and complexities that exist when developing a marine spatial plan, including the ecosystem modelling using Ecopath with Ecosim food web approach. For most of the attendees, the MSP Challenge 2050 is a promising tool and future versions of the game may provide more effective tools to enhance MSP processes.

Day 2: The Missing layers

The first part of the second day session focused on the missing layers in Marine Spatial Planning - addressing the cultural, social and indigenous knowledge that needs to be incorporated in marine social planning. We had case studies to highlight these issues from Brazil, Bangladesh, Sweden, 'The Other Side' and the global common oceans. The keynote was given by Priscilla Lopez (Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil), followed by Shanta Shamsunnahar (Wildlife Conservation Society, Bangladesh), Kira Gee (Helmholz Zentrum Geesthatcht), Marlene Brito-Millan (Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, México), and Guillermo Ortuño Crespo (Stockholm Resilience Centre, Sweden). The talks included bridging the gaps between the dominant economic rhetoric and social-ecological systems approach, citizen science supporting conservation through fisherfolk network, social-cultural evidence gaps around non-material values, ocean grabbing, environmental justice and indigenous communities in governance of marine spatial planning.

The Center for Interdisciplinary Environmental Justice (CIEJ) facilitated a session called *A Call to Defiance: tools for decolonial feminist science.*Participants shared how colonization and its structural legacy has shaped homelands and the positionality of identities within ongoing systems of oppression and discrimination. CIEJ guided discussion on how individuals can codify a singular, dominant perspective to how the scientific enterprise continues to be enmeshed in colonial racial hierarchies. CIEJ also introduced a framework for breaking down the historical, functional, and dynamical relationships between the work of colonization and the work that we do as scientists. Two examples illustrated how colonial science continues to enact violence through sacrificing people, land, and water for the sake of 'progress': nuclear bomb testing to "end all world wars" in the Pacific Marshall Islands, and groundwater lithium mining for "renewable" energy in the Andean Altiplano with whom CIEJ practices solidarity science. The workshop defiantly called for science that challenges deeply-rooted and subdued colonial structures and works in solidarity with people resisting oppression for both humans and non-humans alike - decolonial feminist science, and, by engaging colleagues from all over the world, CIEJ ignited an enriching conversation towards liberatory practices within MSP.

Day 3: Considering marine governance

The first session of the 3rd Day focused on the role of governance in MSP, with presentations from Karen Alexander (University of Tasmania), Denning Metuge (Nelson Mandela University), Maria José Juan Jordá (AZTI), Tim White (Global Fishing Watch) and Kemal Pinarbasi (University of Basque Country). Presentations included case studies from Australia, South Africa, the United States of America, transboundary and ecosystem-based MSP and management of highly migratory species at an ecosystem scale. The speakers listed a number of challenges in the governance of MSP but also several opportunities such as increasing capacity building and partnerships.

The next session included a series of flash talks from early career researchers working in MSP. Speakers included Nina Rivers (Nelson Mandela University) on co-designing an MSP in South Africa; Julie Reimer (Memorial University of Newfoundland) on moving MSP from theory to practice; Jennifer Rehren (German Research Foundation) on participatory plans in small-scale fisheries; Priyatma Singh (University of Fiji) on ocean governance in Fiji; Catarina Frazao Santos (University of Lisbon) on integrating climate change in MSP; and Tania Mendo (Scottish Oceans Institute) on integrating small-scale fisheries into MSP.