Article

Theorizing Social Sustainability and Justice in Marine Spatial Planning: Democracy, Diversity, and Equity

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Abstract: This article elaborates a conceptual framework to examine social sustainability in marine spatial planning (MSP). Based on a critical literature review of key texts on social sustainability in MSP and the broader sustainable development literature we show the need to elaborate a cogent and comprehensive approach for the analysis and pursuit of social sustainability linked to the sea. We then theorize social sustainability by developing a conceptual framework through integrating three dimensions: Recognition, Representation and Distribution. While these three social sustainability/justice features clearly overlap and are interdependent in practice, the conceptual thinking underpinning each of them is distinctive and when taken together they contribute towards conceiving social sustainability as a pillar of sustainability. Our approach can support an analysis/evaluation of MSP in that, first, its broad scope and adaptability makes it suitable to examine the wide range of claims, demands, and concerns that are likely to be encountered across different practical MSP settings. Second, it acknowledges the opportunities and challenges of assessing, implementing, and achieving social justice within a broader sustainability framework.

Keywords: marine governance; social sustainability; social justice; conceptual framework; participation; representation; democracy; equity; distribution; recognition; distribution

1. Introduction

Emphasis on planning, organizing, and managing marine space has increased markedly over the past 15–20 years under the banner of marine/maritime spatial planning (MSP). These developments have resulted in a shift in governance of state-corporate-citizen relationships that are increasingly being linked to a series of conventions, practices, mandates, and provisions tied to achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in marine settings. The SDG framework acknowledges the importance of an inclusive development approach to address multidimensional inequalities by emphasizing how intersectional attributes, such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, disability, and spatial aspects combine in complex ways to cause both environmental problems and exacerbate inequalities [1]. Social sustainability is an integral dimension of the SDGs [2]. Yet, despite this recognition, social sustainability remains the least theorized and least elaborated of the three interrelated sustainability pillars [2,3]. This paper seeks to enhance MSP's capacity to contribute to meeting the social sustainability agenda outlined in the SDGs using the lens of social justice as a conceptual framework. The reasoning

behind our use of a social justice lens is our claim that justice renders social sustainability more tangible in MSP work, in terms of operationalization, analysis, and evaluation.

MSP has been celebrated as a way to deliver sustainability to seas through greater integration of sectoral interests, supporting proactive approaches in dealing with conflicts while facilitating sustainable Blue Growth [4]. Yet, a growing body of research has pointed to important blind spots that need to be redressed if MSP is to deliver sustainability at sea. These relate to vexing concerns over power asymmetry [5–7], meaningful representation in decision-making [8], just distribution of benefits and costs [9], as well as socio-cultural, rights, and knowledge recognition [10–12]. While these concerns clearly point to insufficient attention paid to the social dimension of sustainability in MSP practice [7], research is yet to articulate and package these social inadequacies into a cogent and comprehensive approach to social sustainability in marine governance and MSP. Failure to do so has implications for social justice, discrimination, and exclusion, the elimination or minimization of which constitutes a major trajectory to meeting SDGs at sea. Social, political, and economic inequality may have consequences not only for social and economic but also environmental sustainability, which is another aspect the SDGs and specifically MSP are attempting to address.

In this article, we outline an approach to examine MSP from a social justice perspective that has value for numerous marine stakeholders, including policymakers, planners, and researchers, as well as environmental and social campaigners. Importantly, the framework links to implications for how we might conceptualize relationships between discrete, unarticulated parts of the social in an integrated way. In doing so, we aim to contribute to scientific and practice-oriented discussions on how to approach the relationship between MSP and justice, by presenting a conceptual framework which could also be used analytically for ongoing/future MSP processes. This approach will also shed more light on how MSP can contribute to the broader sustainability dimensions of Agenda 2030 and beyond, particularly in terms of more explicitly addressing possibilities of inclusive, just, equitable, and "greener" Blue Growth. In articulating a comprehensive approach to social sustainability, we contend that the social dimension is not only fundamental to meeting environmental and economic goals, but is also important in its own right.

A social sustainability/justice framework has currency in marine governance, particularly at a time when global institutions such as the UN are increasingly relying on the oceans to meet the new SDGs—unlike earlier efforts (e.g., the Millennium Development Goals), which did not explicitly link sustainability to the oceans [13]. The 17 SDGs of Agenda 2030 place special importance on the need for synergy between economic, environmental, and social goals—broadening out the ambition to pursue societal wellbeing beyond mere economic growth. SDG 14, Life Below Water is fundamental to this objective. It is underpinned by the complex interplay of virtually all other SDGs—from no poverty and zero hunger to gender equality, reduced inequality, climate action, peace, justice, and strong institutions. This implies a recognition that, regardless of other merits (whether they be environmental protection or economic development), planning/management interventions that are not elaborated from a social perspective may work to further marginalize already disadvantaged groups/communities and thus undermine possibilities for collective action to support sustainable practices [1,10,14]. Thus, to strengthen the Decade of Ocean Sciences, this paper also lays out how social justice and other social imperatives can be both understood in relation to environmental concerns and be better embedded in the current "Blue Economy" push. Our starting point is that for the ocean to realize its full sustainability potential, we must not only consider the different SDGs simultaneously, but importantly, identify how to harness relationships between them into synergies across scales and boundaries—policies, practices, knowledge domains, and sectors, along the land-sea continuum, as well as across borders. A social justice-centered approach to marine sustainability that places societal wellbeing at its core is fundamental to this end.

2. Approach

The purpose of this article is to contribute a theoretical approach to social sustainability in MSP. Applications of conceptual frameworks can vary, but we hope a key use of the work we present here is to help researchers and practitioners investigate, examine, understand, analyze, and evaluate social sustainability as a social policy in different MSP settings. An important aspect of theorizing in this way in sustainability research is to support analytical depth, clarity, and insight, including what kinds of social values are promoted in framing social sustainability in marine contexts.

We then theorize social sustainability by developing a conceptual framework through integrating three dimensions: recognition, representation, and distribution. These conceptual categories, which we deepen by drawing on significant work in the social justice literature, constitute the proposed approach for understanding social sustainability in MSP. We intend for the framework presented here to serve as the beginning of a discussion that will help support constructive debate and further theorizing of social sustainability in MSP.

3. Why Care about Social Justice in MSP?

It has been suggested that maritime development is merely another stage in our emancipation from geographical determinism [15]. A new sense of the ocean is manifesting itself in the concept of "blue growth", which is being embraced by many countries; this is paralleled by global efforts to boost marine ecosystem knowledge and conservation through mechanisms such as MPA designation. In the global North, a new social awareness of the seas is also emerging, driven, e.g., by the recent focus on marine plastics, begging the question of what priorities will be set for the ocean and what the guiding principles of ocean development should be.

From a social justice standpoint, strategies to achieve sustainability in marine settings need to be defined in ways that do not delegitimize "sustainable and inclusive economic growth" and which do not exacerbate or extend risks or hardships to already disadvantaged or marginalized communities (or create "new" marginalized groups through redistribution of harm). Environmental gains and losses also need to be considered, and how these might impact social risks and hardships experienced by various communities. If various SDGs are to have meaningful purchase in marine governance and management, strategies must explicitly promote social inclusivity, deepen democracy, and promote equitable distribution of the goods and services derived from the sea. Therefore, a key challenge confronting marine planning and governance is to conceptualize strategic national interests beyond economic growth [16] to incorporate social aspects. This is all the more important if the leitmotif of MSP as a "balancer" of various interests is to have meaningful purchase and if the shortcomings associated with current MSP practice are to be redressed [9,17].

There are several reasons why MSP should examine social justice in more depth. One is related to the multiple connections people have with the sea, which are often tied to history and social connection and a strong "sense of place". People associate coasts and seas with feelings of belonging, meaning, identity, and self-worth, and derive both material and immaterial well-being from activities, engagement with a place, and locational experiences [18]. Social justice is therefore intimately linked to the ability of people to access these benefits and to express their identity in the places affected by MSP.

The second reason is linked to different marine planning and governance scales. For example, social cohesion is often discussed at a national scale and employment at a regional scale, while others, such as place-based social interaction, access to resources or experiences, and local environmental quality, relate to a more localized spatial scale (influenced by national regulations and international agreements), as related to variable social group identities. Here, scale is an important factor in thinking about how social issues relate to MSP.

Another key (albeit instrumental) reason why social justice should be understood and examined seriously is that it is closely connected to issues of trust, legitimacy, and accountability, which are indispensable ingredients for system efficiency and democratic integrity. For instance, the feeling that planning processes and outcomes are unfair and inequitable can lead to lack of trust in the system,

which may discourage participation, diminish the legitimacy of decisions and decision-makers, and sometimes spark contestations that lead to planning delays and increased legal costs for various actors [10,19].

4. Social Sustainability: A Critical Literature Review

4.1. Social Sustainability in the MSP Literature

It is important to note that only a few contributions in the reviewed MSP literature refer explicitly to, and provide some form of definition of, social sustainability, e.g., [17,20,21]. Others nonetheless deal with different social sustainability issues, and there are calls for a more integrated analysis of social sustainability [9,20,21]. More precisely, in analyzing social sustainability (albeit, often implicitly), some authors view MSP as a form of "ocean grabbing" [22,23]; as exhibiting many symptoms of the post-political condition [5,6,9,24]. Others emphasize the exclusion of coastal communities' socio-cultural values and benefits [6,11,25], a failure to consider the rights, needs, knowledge, and livelihoods of small-scale fishers (SSFs) and the coastal communities that they are embedded in [6,10,12,26,27], and a narrow interpretation of Blue Economy geared to facilitating economic growth (with a lack of attention paid to social inequality implications) [12,27,28]. Others, while acknowledging MSP's constraining attributes, view it as a force for change—opening spaces for resisting hegemonic forces, and empowering various stakeholders with the capacity for collective action [5–7]. While being mindful of the bigger debates over what social sustainability should include (discussed below), this critique, from an MSP/ocean governance viewpoint, can be sorted into four normative-analytical categories: (1) calls for increased recognition of distinctive socio-cultural or place-based (identity) relations [9–11,25]; (2) a focus on the (re)distribution of goods and bads of marine planning and governing [9,21]; (3) enhanced representation of a wider variety of (less organized) interests in decision-making processes and the rules that govern them [10,17,22,28–31]; and (4) the elaboration of modalities to empower weaker stakeholders [6,8,10], with roles assigned to the planner and the state [7].

The literature discussed above reflects a growing body of evidence concerned with injustice in ocean governance and MSP. However, this literature is fragmented and, as highlighted earlier, it analyzes social components of sustainability mostly implicitly, with very little reference to sustainability and justice. Furthermore, very little attention is paid to the relationality of social sustainability to environmental and Blue Growth objectives. Below, we review the broader sustainable development literature as a necessary step to developing a multidimensional social sustainability/social justice framework.

4.2. Social Sustainability in the Sustainable Development Literature

Much of the early literature dealing with sustainable development (SD) conceptually argues that the linkages between social justice, environmental protection, and public participation are political rather than inherently compatible [32–37]. For example, Goodin [36] argued that a balance arrived at (between SD dimensions) represents a choice amongst possible policy goals, so that actors in any given process may adopt conceptions of SD which comprise any possible combination of these dimensions. The point is that these dimensions are not necessarily compatible and there will be contests over how SD should be put into practice. As Jacobs [37] argued more than 20 years ago, sustainable development is not merely ambiguous but essentially contested.

Several typologies indicating the "strength" of commitment to SD have been formulated, expressed as weak and strong forms of sustainability. These typologies have been developed by a number of authors [38–41]. How the social dimension is conceptualized within these typologies depends on where the SD perspective lies along a continuum, moving from weak to strong perspectives (these, labeled "equity-" and "market-based" approaches by Dobson and "radical" and "conservative" by Jacobs, approximate to the "strong" and "weak" versions of sustainable development). The demarcation separating the two sides of the debate focuses on the degree of permissible substitutability between the economy and the environment, or between "manufactured capital" and "natural capital". In other

words, what hierarchy among the dimensions of SD is adopted depends on where emphasis is placed—either the ecological or the economic dimension. To some extent, the strong versus weak conception has been taken up in the MSP context by Qiu and Jones [42], albeit not directly considering the social dimension, but in discussion between perspectives that emphasize either blue growth or environmental protection. This perspective also links to the "capitals" model of SD, involving various relationships between manufactured, natural, human, and social capitals [43].

It follows from the discussion above that SD is a political concept (which, as we will see, adds importance to how we conceive social sustainability, given that democratic participation and procedural justice are widely seen as important in conceptions of social sustainability). Rather than providing an exhaustive discussion of SD, as such, our focus here is on how the SD literature has conceptualized social sustainability as an analytical framework linked to social policy objectives over the years [3,44–57]. The review thus serves as a conceptual canvas against which to examine how social sustainability can be approached in marine governance and MSP. From the literature, we identified an array of social sustainability conceptions and framework (see Appendix A) related to resource planning and management issues. They encompass concerns of place attachment, social cohesion, diversity, quality of life, learning and education, basic needs, equity (distribution of costs and benefits), social and cultural life, voice and influence, social security and protection, social network, self-organization/social mobilization, trust, legitimacy, accountable institutions, the politics of recognition, etc. Together, they point to the multidimensionality and scale of social sustainability as an analytical, normative, substantive, and practice-focused concept. Clearly, the different conceptions of social sustainability relate to and have implications for justice. Therefore, drawing on Fraser's [58,59] seminal work, we use social justice as coterminous with social sustainability, as requiring social arrangements which make it possible for all to participate in social life on equal terms, bearing in mind that this should be read as an ideal to strive for, rather than a reality that can be achieved. This allows us to distill three discernible social justice categories: (1) equity, conceived as fair distribution of goods and life chances, with a particular attention on the most vulnerable; (2) democratic engagement, conceived as participation in decision-making, collective action, and capacity to influence; and (3) social inclusion/cohesion, conceived as the importance of different social groups being recognized, being treated fairly, and being able to participate in society on equal terms.

Based on this SD literature and the social sustainability gap we identified in the MSP literature, we next built a multidimensional social sustainability/social justice conceptual framework, which we argue can support a more comprehensive understanding and examination of social sustainability, both as important in its own right and in relation to environmental and Blue Growth objectives. As Figure 1 shows, the framework contains three separate but interconnected and mutually dependent elements of the social that should aid in the analysis and evaluation of social sustainability in marine governance and MSP.
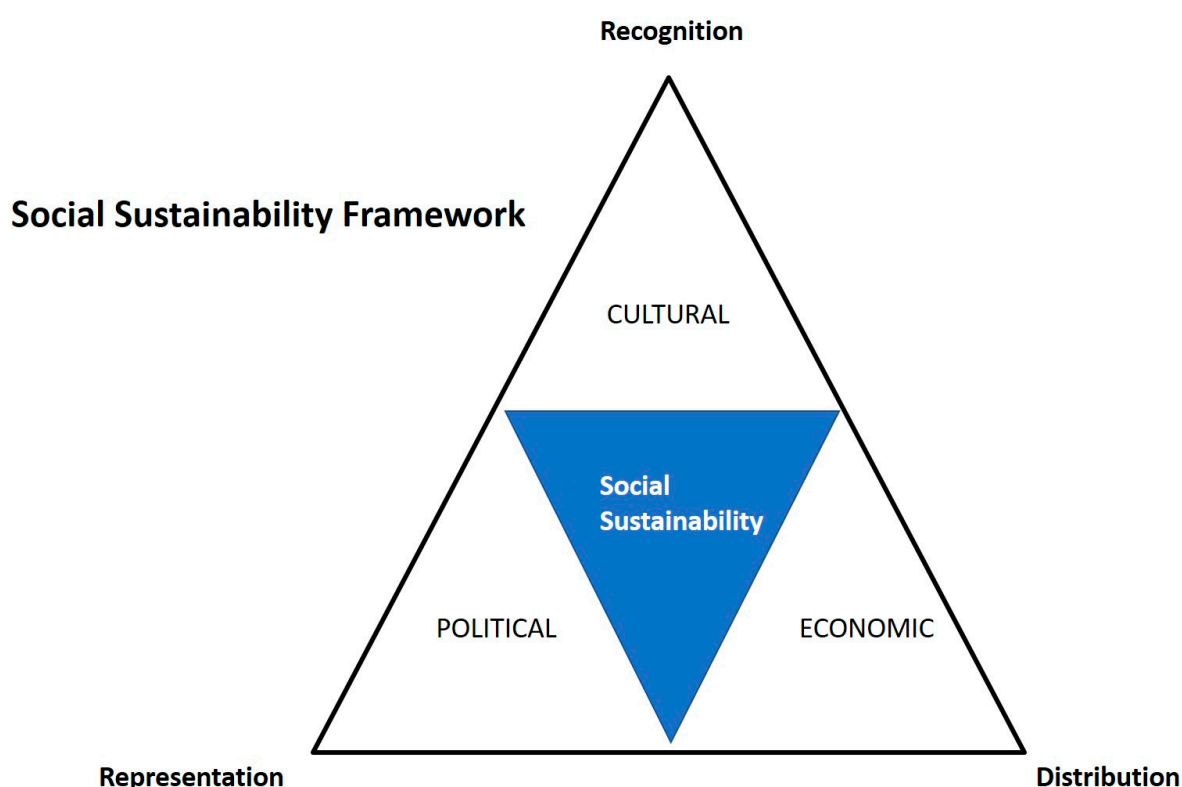
Figure 1. Social sustainability/justice conceptual framework (adapted from Blue et al. [60], which was based on Nancy Fraser's theory of justice).

5. Theorizing Social Sustainability in MSP

Fraser [59] conceptually connected concerns of democracy, equity, and social status to show how inequalities of class intersect with (various) inequalities of social status and political representation. The values of equity, diversity, and democracy may, in practice, conflict. Therefore, in navigating such a conflict, a social justice approach within the framework of social sustainability needs to be mindful of focusing analytically on both who the most disadvantaged social groups are, as defined by income or marginality, and how this occurs [61–64]. Table 1 summarizes our three intertwined social justice/sustainability categories, which we expand on fully below.

Table 1. Interrelated analytical categories of social justice/sustainability.

Recognition of Socio-cultural Diversity	The extent of recognition of (respect in relation to) the diversity of group identity (and related socio-cultural rights, needs, livelihoods, lifestyles, and knowledge).
Representation in Decision-making	The extent of who is included and who is excluded (and in which decision-making situation), as well as the how and time of inclusion in decision-making.
Distribution of goods and bads	How risks, benefits, pollutants, capacities, and resource/experiential access are distributed, particularly in relation to already disadvantaged groups.

The three categories outlined above interact to reciprocally influence and reinforce each other, but none are reducible to the other—in line with Fraser's [58] phrase, "no redistribution or recognition without representation" (p. 282), we therefore argue that analyses of social sustainability and/or efforts to work towards it must necessarily include all three of these dimensions. Although each analytical category provides valuable insights into social processes and consequences, only when

taken together do they provide a comprehensive conception of how to analyze and evaluate social sustainability/justice in practice. In what follows, we describe the arguments for the inclusion of each analytical category, how they interact with other analytical categories, and how they relate to MSP.

5.1. Recognition of Socio-Cultural Diversity

This analytical category of the framework is concerned with the recognition of group identity and needs, and relatedly, the inclusion of group diversity in MSP. Recognition, as conceptualized here, refers to inequities of social status and the institutionalized patterns, structures, policies, and practices that produce and sustain such inequities. Status inequality extends beyond economic class to include a wide range of axes of social differentiation [65]. Fincher [18] argued that "an awareness of the need to recognize difference helps us see that the favoring of certain interests over others may be unjust" (p. 75). Young [65] emphasized that "social justice . . . requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression" (p. 47). The argument here is that we need to explicitly consider the cultural dimension of social justice, because socio-cultural difference does not easily map onto political representation or, for that matter, economic inequality. Particular social/cultural groups are prevented from interacting on equal terms in society because of institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the required social standing [58,59]. Both Young [65] and Fraser [59] agree that a lack of recognition, as manifested by various forms of "exclusion, insults, degradation, and devaluation can inflict damage to both oppressed communities and the image of those communities in the larger cultural and political realms" [66] (p. 519). Misrecognition of this kind can result in "status inequality", which can work to depreciate social and cultural groups and their associated qualities (including values and perceptions of the value of cultural or experiential knowledge they may possess). This has important implications if we infer that recognition is an inherent precondition for political representation and distributive justice [67].

In terms of MSP, social misrecognition may take the subtler form of a lack of acknowledgement of segments of society whose cultural values and benefits are not visible or recognizable within planning practices, such as diffuse recreational groups or (formally) unorganized place-based communities, groups with historical rights claims to access, or some other cultural distinctiveness. Alternatively, it may be expressed in more organized group-based antagonistic conflicts, such as has been the case with small-scale fisheries in some MSP contexts [10]. Equal respect in MSP practices may mean giving an "equal" level of concern to the values, benefits, and activities that are important to all pertinent and "recognizable" social groups. Equity, as well as equality, means placing particular emphasis on those groups who are either most vulnerable, stand to be most "harmed" or whose values/benefits, experiences, and forms of knowledge have been marginalized/misrecognized in MSP (and/or the broader society)—in other words, "the worst off". This would be an argument based on moral standing. So, while theories of deliberative and distributive justice offer a way to improve democratic engagement and distribution, they do not place enough emphasis on the "social, cultural, and institutional conditions underlying maldistribution in the first place" [66] (p. 518). This is where a focus on the recognition of socio-cultural status (and relatedly, values, epistemologies, and benefits) provides more analytical precision, as well as extending and enriching the scope of justice.

Analysis and evaluation of social recognition in MSP would then entail an examination of which groups and communities have specific social and cultural claims to marine space and resources, and whether they are recognized or not as legitimate claimholders. A key entry point into such an examination would be legislation, policy, and court decisions, which may or may not explicitly recognize particular vulnerable groups and their specific social and cultural identity. In Canada, for instance, a number of well-tailored policy, legislative, and legal instruments exist, including memoranda of understanding that explicitly recognize the specific historical and socio-cultural identity of indigenous coastal communities, including their ocean knowledge and management practices [68]. In contexts where there are no groups with indigenous identity and status, a close reading of the various

policy and legal instruments could also provide an understanding of whether coastal communities with "non-formal" identity and status (but who often hold strong identity claims relating to place (e.g., sacred sites), ancestry, seascape, and resource access, etc.) are given recognition or not.

Recognition is important not only for the wellbeing of recognized groups, but also for marine governance and sustainability as a whole. Indeed, MSP as a marine governance regime is possible because of the consent and shared interpretive horizon of various stakeholders—their will to collective action as a way to minimize the risk of a tragedy of the commons-type situation [7]. Recognizing and empowering otherwise excluded groups can work to increase legitimacy, trust, compliance, and system stability. There is also evidence that increased recognition of indigenous and coastal communities has environmental gains, especially when their capacity for action is augmented, say, through the valorization of their group identity, traditional management practices, and experiential knowledge. For instance, Tafon [7,10] and Jones et al. [69] discussed how coastal residents in Estonia and indigenous communities in Canada fought off maritime interventions that were perceived to have negative impacts on marine conservation and fish populations.

5.2. Representation in Decision-Making

Representation is closely linked to recognition, but takes it one step further to the various instruments used in decision-making and the influence groups can wield. Whether or not the cultural identity and status of a community is recognized in different legal and policy instruments, and the extent to which groups with "non-formal" legal status are given recognition in these instruments, ultimately determines the extent and degree of their influence in decision-making. By representation (or misrepresentation) in MSP, we refer to the politics of participation in different decision situations, where subjective, hidden, invisible, and visible forms of power may play to the advantage of the powerful and to the disadvantage of the least powerful [7]. Representation or participation in MSP decision-making here is concerned with who is included and who is excluded in decision-making, as well as how persons and groups are included in struggles and contests related to decision-making over marine space. Representation in MSP is a way to address inequitable distribution of marine-based values, experiences, and goods, and the conditions undermining social recognition (as discussed above). Meaningful representation can, to some extent, challenge institutionalized exclusion, a social culture of misrecognition, and current distributional patterns. Seen in this way, democratic and participatory decision-making procedures are then both an element of, and a condition for, social justice [65].

Therefore, this analytical category also focuses on the procedures that direct who is recognized as a legitimate stakeholder in various decision-making situations. Issues of membership, formal procedures, and praxis (i.e., how it is done) are important here. As argued before, while the other analytical categories presented here interact with representation (the implications of misrecognition and maldistribution, etc.) they cannot be reduced to it [70]. Economic inequality is a significant barrier to representation because it "constantly produces and reproduces hierarchies of power" that preclude genuine engagement in planning decision-making [71] (p. 2). What is in question here, then, is whether recognition of socio-cultural status and difference (and the way it connects with economic inequity and other disadvantages) is translated into the right to participate and whether the conduct of the actual participatory experience can sufficiently remedy whatever differences may be manifest in social resources of power [72]. So, to continue with the small-scale fisheries example—even though SSFs' knowledge may be recognized and their social status as a key marine stakeholder community acknowledged (given credibility)—decision-making procedures of their participation would have to enable "equitable participation" (say, through taking account of various social-scientific involvement capabilities, experiential knowledge, uneven power relations, time, disparate worldviews, etc.).

Proponents of deliberative democracy arguing from a procedural perspective assert that public policy-making and planning ought to be conceived as argumentative practices [73] (p. 2). As such, within a democratic community, each recognized party should have its say, without either institutionalized power or technical expertise distorting the interaction. Of course, in practice, establishing such

preconditions, especially when decision-making is to be underpinned by scientific understanding, as is the case with MSP, is deeply challenging, if not downright impossible. Nonetheless, the analysis and evaluation of just representation also entail an examination of the status that is given to groups' local experiential knowledge, cultural values, and other value-rationalities. We refer to the extent to which the above elements are recognized, strengthened, and utilized in various MSP decision situations, from strategic environmental assessments, to planning and appeal processes, as well as in the media [7]. Just representation thus requires on the part of the planner a commitment to the Foucauldian parrhesiastic conduct, i.e., ethico-political planning—the act of determining a "critical moment" in planning and applying reflective judgment to it [7]. This may entail balancing knowledge and power relations fairly so as to both minimize social, political, cultural, historical, identity, and economic misrecognitions and ensure the equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of MSP.

5.3. Distribution of Goods and Bads

We have argued in the previous sections that the underlying social and cultural status of groups has implications for their representation. However, it is insufficient for social sustainability/justice to only consider recognition or representation, as the fairness of the distribution of resources and adverse impacts relative with others must also be part of a social sustainability agenda [74]. We further add here that who is included or excluded and the extent to which stakeholders can influence decision-making processes ultimately affects distribution. Distribution as defined here refers to the relative equity of allocations of outcomes or the impacts of MSP decision-making, which (as argued above) is partly determined by the degree of just recognition and representation. Views about what may constitute equitable planning outcomes in MSP will differ. Nonetheless, equity acknowledges that individuals and social groups start from different places, histories, inheritances, social status, worldviews, social resources and capital, positions of discrimination, power, marginalization, advantage, and so on, and that MSP has a role to play in balancing planning outcomes fairly. The role of the state is pivotal here, as it should invest in reforming those "social arrangements that institutionalize deprivation, exploitation, and gross disparities of wealth, income, and leisure time, thereby denying some people the means and opportunities to interact with others as peers" [70] (p. 74). Thinking about equity as outcomes in MSP could mean ensuring that the benefits and burdens of planning decisions are distributed fairly across the different axes of society, which might include access to marine resources and space or access to jobs created as a result of maritime investment enabled by MSP. However, acknowledging that people/groups flourish in different ways and rely on different values/benefits/conditions, equity in MSP could also mean not doing more harm to, and empowering already disadvantaged or vulnerable social groups, and making decisions about the sea that help advance equality.

Marginalized groups, whose identities will vary from setting to setting, will disproportionately face barriers that prevent full participation and generation of favorable planning outcomes on par with those who have or are accorded more dominant social status. Furthermore, power imbalances and their resultant distributive injustices can take shape not only across but within social groups. For instance, women are not equally positioned as a homogenous group. In the Global South, for instance (where there is much evidence of resource inequalities), it is likely that urban, older, educated, as well as professionally and economically affluent women will gain more status and political space, and draw more benefits in terms of planning outcomes than will their rural, younger, less-educated, unskilled, and less-affluent counterparts. The point here is that factors such as class, status, ethnicity, gender, location, vocation, and age will ultimately intersect to produce varying levels of inequality and inequitable distributions of outcomes across different contexts.

To emphasize the role of the state in ensuring equitable distribution of social resources signals a recognition that MSP planners cannot (fully) be aware of, or control the root causes of structural economic inequities, including their resultant socio-political differentials [7]. Yet, planners can, through reflective attention to relative disadvantage, make remedial efforts at their decision-making level, e.g., by ensuring that the MSP process is as accessible as possible and that entry-level barriers to

participation are overcome (e.g., capacitating individuals and groups and considering practical aspects such as the timing of meetings). Fainstein [75], writing about terrestrial planning, added that fair distribution of benefits and the mitigation of inequitable distributions of harm should be a planner's central objective.

Distribution as a conceptual category thus highlights the barriers to participation/representation associated with the allocation of resources, the recognition of values, worldviews, needs, and identity, and the conferral of status to marginalized or vulnerable groups. The relative equitable distributions of outcomes of planning thus require intervention within and beyond the realm of planning. Here, other institutions, e.g., so-called "boundary organizations" [76]—environmental and other organizational entities that span the traditional boundary between science, policy, and practice—can contribute towards minimizing inequities. A boundary organization (e.g., International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), an intergovernmental marine science organization) can assist practitioners and policymakers through, for instance, expanding the scope of its work beyond an environmental/ecological remit to the generation of social justice-relevant data on resource inequalities and maldistributions, and modalities for equitable redistributions.

6. Importance of Analyzing Interactions among Sustainability Dimensions: Social-Environmental Interactions

We have already emphasized the importance of considering social and environmental concerns in interaction. The interrelationships among the social dimensions, in relationship with environment-related factors in MSP and associated management actions, can either work to undermine or nurture human wellbeing and/or flourishing [26]. Analysis and evaluation of MSP therefore needs to consider how the multiple dimensions of sustainability interact. Figure 2 therefore shows the interrelationship of social sustainability with the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability. Here, we focus on the links between the environment and the analytical categories that make up the social sustainability/justice conceptual framework discussed above.
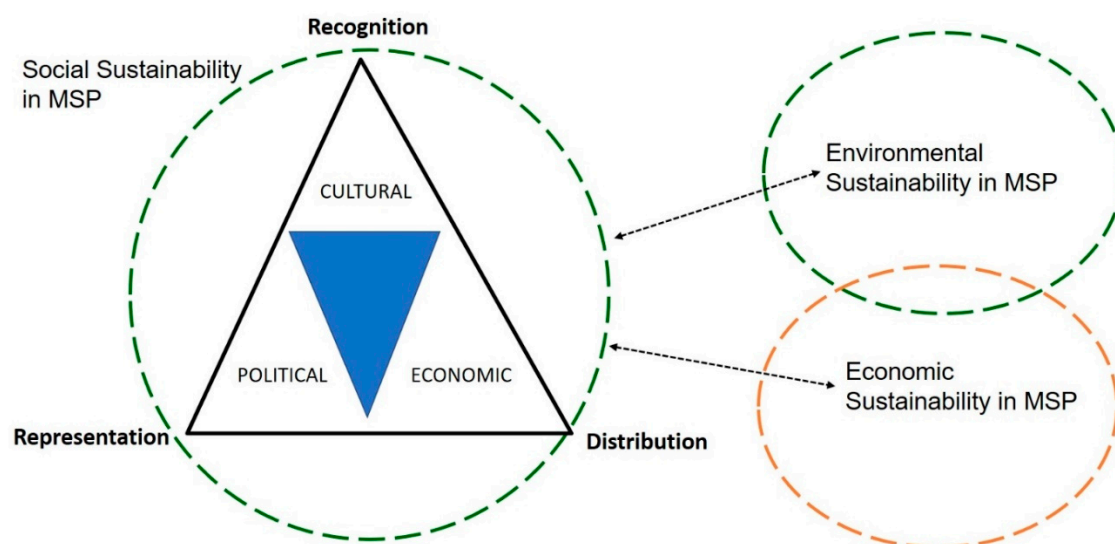

Figure 2. Social sustainability's links to other dimensions of sustainability.

Recognition puts emphasis on the contextual and cultural bases of perceptions and engagement with particular environmental values/resources/experiences. This places importance on the variety of cultural contexts from which various meanings of the environment are derived. It infers an interdependence between the welfare of particular groups and the sustainability of related environmental values, goods (resources), and qualities in marine settings. In MSP, an ambition should therefore be to articulate, recognize, and respect these relationships of human (cultural) and

non-human interdependence now and for the future. Moving beyond this rather anthropocentric and instrumental conception, Schlosberg [67] also confronts us with an even tougher challenge of recognizing "nature's own processes of unfolding potential, evolution, and growth" (p. 14). This begs the question if, and how, nature should be understood as an actor in its own right and how the intrinsic value of nature or distinct elements can be appropriately recognized in MSP.

To be governable, environmental matters of concern must be translated, visualized, and communicated via various representations—both in terms of actor representation and performativity in informal and formal governance processes, as well as symbolically through artifacts and devices that function as representations of particular realities, e.g., maps, models, tools, approaches. Structural exclusion occurs through misrepresentation or lack of representation in MSP. When social groups' relationships to environmental values, goods, and qualities are not recognized, they do not have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their environmental relations. There are several important challenges of having an effective "representation" linked to the environment. An aspect of this is how an increase in transnational politics and governance, as well as transboundary environmental concerns (and governability) are challenged by traditional understandings of the nation-state, democracy, and representation. There is also tension about how to marry what Mäntysalo et al. [77] calls "input-oriented legitimation" of the planning process, focused on optimizing the democratic merit of decision-making (e.g., deliberative decision-making at smaller scales), with "output-oriented effectiveness" focused on implementing decisions that are in the "common good" (usually conceived at larger scales, e.g., national). This adds extra difficulty in determining who should be the legitimate representative of environmental values, benefits, or states. Such challenges are also compounded by the confounding problem of how to represent future generations [78]. This is a particularly acute concern, considering the uneven distribution of climate change risks and how mitigation and adaptation strategies may adversely affect already marginalized or at-risk groups.

Paying attention to the linkages between distribution and the environment requires analyses of "who is to benefit and who is to be burdened" as a result of MSP decisions [67]. The "who" here also relates to who is recognized as having interests or is affected, as well as who is represented in decision-making (and who gets to decide how decision-making is arranged). A normative question related to this is how we ought to distribute goods and bads, resources, or opportunities in MSP. Responses vary depending on the distributive theories of justice adopted, but, tacitly at least, an understanding shared by all theories is that if maldistribution exists, it should be rectified and that those who are worse off should be prioritized in any rectification of a maldistribution situation [37,63]. Dobson [35] argued that there is no necessary functional relationship between material equity and environmental sustainability. This view, however, fails to see how inequitable distribution of what we might call environmental goods and bads may work to undermine capacities to deliver environmental sustainability as societies become more fragmented, conflict-ridden, and cooperatively recalcitrant. Informing MSP with an operational environmental justice policy could mean a greater capability to be proactive in the distribution and achievement of environmental "goods".

7. Important Considerations for Application in MSP

This section touches on important challenges that will need to be considered and handled when applying the conceptual framework on social sustainability to MSP in different empirical settings.

Scale is important when examining the different but interrelated categories of social justice/ sustainability. It should also be noted that justice (as the adage goes) lies in the eyes of the beholder and that one group's justice (recognition, representation, and distributive justice) could mean another's misrecognition, misrepresentation, and maldistribution, both within and across scales. Another key aspect of scale is that countries have different needs, and MSP is practiced differently, with varying needs, political priorities, frameworks, and administrative traditions that will translate to different challenges, strategies, and opportunities. The intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity across scales is also important in evaluating or delivering social sustainability.

Some elements of the outlined framework may matter more in some contexts and less in others. Conceptual frameworks need to be contextualized, filled with content, and used for interpretation from case to case. Determining what matters most in a given context ultimately requires meaningful interaction toward knowledge cogeneration among various tiers of government, planners, researchers, the private sector, the civil society, boundary organizations, and resource-dependent coastal communities. The role of MSP and planners as arbiters of different interests, ambitions, and values becomes crucial here, not least as facilitators of a process that needs to take account of all these various challenges. Greater focus on social justice in MSP may lead to changes in how the role of MSP planners and marine planning, as such, is conceived.

Concerns may be raised that centering social sustainability/justice in academic study or MSP practice is a distraction to the main game of facilitating Blue Growth in a way that ties together economic/environment dimensions in "environmentally sustainable economic growth". As we have argued throughout this paper, it is our strongly held view that a focus on social sustainability/justice is necessary if we are to realize (or even steer towards) sustainable use of the oceans, seas, and marine resources, as articulated in the SDGs.

8. Concluding Remarks

This article has argued for and described a social sustainability/justice conceptual approach to examine MSP. How to best capture the multiple, but intertwined aspects of social sustainability/justice in a public policy approach such as MSP is a complex and difficult task. While the social sustainability/justice features described in Figure 1 clearly interrelate and overlap in practice, the conceptual thinking underpinning each of them is distinctive, and when taken together they contribute towards conceiving social sustainability as a pillar of sustainability—covering and integrating democratic, socio-cultural diversity, and equity-related analytical categories. We have emphasized that social sustainability/justice spans recognition, representation, and distribution as core integrative dimensions. We have argued that social sustainability/justice constitutes a recognitional problem inasmuch as MSP operates in global and localized systems with misrecognized group diversity and difference (identity, status, needs, values, knowledge, capacity, etc.); a representational problem insofar as MSP plays out in the context of different arenas, forms, and scales of power, inclusion, and exclusion, and a distributional problem insofar as MSP is rooted in politico-economic systems of differentials in the distribution of wealth and other social resources that affect patterns of ownership, control, distribution, and consumption. We have also insisted that in order to understand the relationship of these intertwined analytical categories to multidimensional sustainability, we need to consider how they are linked to environmental and economic concerns, although we only focused on interactions with the latter. We have further argued that this approach can support an analysis/evaluation of MSP in at least two meaningful ways: first, its broad scope and adaptability make it suitable to engage with the wide range of claims, demands, and concerns that are likely to be encountered across different practical MSP settings; second, it acknowledges the opportunities and challenges of assessing, implementing, and achieving parity and justice through participatory democracy.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Social policy concepts and objectives from selected social sustainability literature.

Authors	Key Dimensions	Policy Objective
Murphy (2012) "The social pillar of sustainable development"	Equity	Refers to the distribution of welfare goods and life chances based on fairness and it applies to national, international, and intergenerational contexts.
	Awareness for sustainability	Refers to raising public awareness of sustainability issues with a view to encouraging alternative, sustainable consumption patterns.
	Participation	Refers to the goal of including as many social groups as possible in decision-making processes.
	Social Cohesion	Commitment to combating the kinds of environmental conditions which cause civil strife/planning which promotes social integration and environmental sustainability simultaneously.
Nunes et al. (2016) "The importance of health and well-being for SDGs"	Health and well-being	A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, including good living conditions (e.g., housing, employment).
Cuthill (2009) "Key factors of social Sustainability"	Social Capital	Promoting social networks and a sense of social responsibility.
	Social Infrastructure	Providing facilities which address need and capacity for participation.
	Social Justice + Equity	Providing equitable access to essential welfare services and employment, especially for vulnerable groups.
	Engaged Governance	Promoting bottom-up, participatory democracy.
Missimer (2017) "A strategic approach to social sustainability"	Diversity	Diversity leads to more variety and in an environment of constant change and uncertainty.
	Learning	Social and institutional learning to be able to sense changes and respond to complexity and constant changes.
	Self-organization	Complex adaptive systems are usually self-organized systems without system-level intent or centralized control.
	Trust (social capital)	As a necessity to coordinate the system in its adaptation and allow for collective action.
Vallance et al. (2011) "A threefold schema of social sustainability"	Development sustainability	Addresses basic needs, and includes equity (inter and intra-generational), employment, education, justice, freedom, access to influential decision-making, and general "capacity-building", the distribution of power and resources, and access to basic infrastructure and services.
	Bridge sustainability	Emphasizes behavioral change in order to achieving biophysical environmental goals.
	Maintenance sustainability	Refers to the maintenance of socio-cultural features in the face of change and also the ways that people react to these changes, that is, whether they embrace or resist them.

Table A1. *Cont.*

Authors	Key Dimensions	Policy Objective
Harris (2000) "Basic Principles of Sustainable Development"	Social equity	The fulfilment of basic health and educational needs, and participatory democracy are crucial elements of development, and are interrelated with environmental sustainability.
Jabareen (2008) "A new conceptual framework for sustainable Development"	Equity	Encompasses various concepts, such as environmental, social and economic justice, social equity, equal rights for development, quality of life, equal economic distribution, freedom, democracy, public participation and empowerment.
Carter (2001) "The politics of the environment"	Equity	The distributional implications of any measure to prevent or alleviate environmental degradation.
	Democracy	The achievement of intragenerational equity will require measures to help poor and disadvantaged groups, and that these groups should have the opportunity to define their own basic needs.
Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017) "Social sustainability: A new conceptual framework"	Equity	Redistributive; recognition; participative.
	Safety	Concerns the rights to be protected and secured in situations of vulnerability (the degree of risk mitigation to vulnerable societies).
	Eco-Prosumption	Refers to modes of consuming, producing, and gaining values in socially and environmentally responsible ways.
Dobson (1996) Environment sustainabilities:	Social justice	What is to be distributed, and to whom, and whether justice is best regarded as being procedural or substantive.
Haughton (1999) "Environmental justice and the sustainable city"	Futurity	To give regard for the needs of future generations.
	Equity	Covering social justice regardless of class, gender, race, etc., or where they live.
	procedural equity	Participation so that people are able to shape their own futures.
Sen (2000) "The ends and means of sustainability"	Equity	Provision of equitable opportunities and outcomes for all its members, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community.
	Diversity	Promotion and encouragement of diversity.
	Interconnected/Social cohesion	Provision of processes, systems, and structures that promote connectedness within and outside the community at the formal, informal, and institutional level.
	Quality of life	Meeting of basic needs fostering a good quality of life for all members at the individual, group and community level (e.g., health, housing, education, employment, safety).
	Democracy and governance	Democratic processes and open and accountable governance structures.
	Maturity	The individual accepts the responsibility of consistent growth and improvement through broader social attributes (e.g., communication styles, behavioral patterns, indirect education, and philosophical explorations).

Table A1. *Cont*.

Authors	Key Dimensions	Policy Objective
Partridge (2005) "'Social sustainability': a useful theoretical framework?'"	Decent quality of life for current and future generations	Social inclusivity beyond consideration in economic-environment dynamics just, equitable, inclusive, and democratic.
Woodcraft (2012) "Moving from concept to practice"	Social and cultural life Voice and influence	Illustrates how people experience their place. Participation and the potential to shape their future.
Åhman (2013) "Social sustainability – society at the intersection of development and maintenance"	Basic needs and equity	The basic needs agenda covers mostly physical aspects of human life such as food, housing, and health, whereas equity focuses on the social disparities that threaten to rip society apart.
	Education	Increasing the level of education in a society is a presupposition for increasing the level of societal participation and political representation.
	Quality of life	Complement the material aspects of welfare, such as living conditions, with immaterial aspects, such as an individual's subjective well-being/recognition.
	Social capital	Entails relational aspects such as trust and codes of conduct.
	Social cohesion, integration, and diversity	Embraces diversity—a divided society cannot be seen as sustainable over time, and therefore the vision of integration is core to social sustainability.
	Sense of place	How people's perceptions and relationship with a place are constructed.

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