

MARE Conference People & the Sea XII

Date: 26 to 30 June 2023 (including policy day) **Location:** University of Amsterdam (plus online)

Blue Fear – navigating ecological, social and existential anxieties during the Anthropocene

Oceans have always imbued seafarers with fear: fear of storms, pirates and shipwreck, and fear of the creatures that live beneath the surface. This conference suggests that such anxieties are currently broadening and intensifying. Not only are people afraid of occasional tsunamis and hurricanes that take lives and ravage coastal habitats. We are also afraid of what we have ourselves unleashed: the realities of sea level rise, climate change, pollution, overfishing and biodiversity loss. Scientists are working overtime to fine-tune the understanding of causes and effects and to provide possible solutions. International policy fora – such as those involved in the current Ocean Decade - are prodding policymakers and politicians to initiate meaningful mitigatory and adaptive action.

But Blue Fear is not only about abstract planetary boundaries and realities of the Anthropocene. It is affecting the lives of coastal and island habitants all over the world, the people whose livelihoods and identities are intertwined with the coast and the sea for centuries. And it is not only nature that is causing them worry. The human face of the coast is changing rapidly. New industries are materializing and claiming space: tourism, aquaculture, ocean energy, marine biotechnology, and mineral exploration, amongst others. New ‘belt and road’ initiatives are gaining shape and maritime boundaries are being disputed. Governments all over the world are re-zoning the coast and creating protected areas, all of which impose new limitations on human activity. Security concerns are resulting in the militarization of coastal regions with new and old forms of strife. All these demands for the use of coastal/marine space and resources are creating conflict and posing challenges.

Blue Fear impacts how society views, studies, discusses, and governs the ocean. Blue Fear can be the stuff of nightmares and callous manipulation. It triggers collective trauma, flight, and acts of resistance too. It reshapes religious beliefs and rituals. Fear, and related topics of grief and helplessness, shape what we see as possible actions and avenues of inquiry, and what is perceived as feasible. But Blue Fear does not only pose challenges, it also opens opportunities for invention and transformation: new patterns of livelihood, new technologies, new forms of collaboration, new legal arrangements. New hopes and motivation to engage, connect, and mobilize. It also leads to novel academic quests for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge, and new impetus for marine social science.

This conference takes Blue Fear as its starting point and invites us to look it in the face. It explores current opportunities and threats in the era of climate and anthropogenic change. How does Blue Fear manifest itself? Who does it belong to and what does it trigger? Where

does it take us? Blue Fear challenges us to ask ourselves what social scientists can contribute to understanding and dealing with Blue Fear, and to investigate the realm of ‘people and the sea’ from new angles. Fear need not be paralyzing nor a handicap. After all, fear provides an incentive to act and join hands.

The conference theme “Blue Fear” is divided into seven streams as described below. It is, however, also open to those with other thematic interests relating to people and the sea.

Policy Day

MARE always organizes a policy day in advance of its biennial conferences. The next policy day will take place on June 26th, 2023. The theme of the policy day will be announced shortly.

Conference Streams

Stream 1: Identifying Blue Fear—what are the trends?

This stream takes a panoramic approach to the theme of Blue Fear, investigating its expressions at different scale levels, in various geographical areas, and from different disciplinary perspectives. It asks how ‘fear’ and ‘anxiety’ affect the way we engage with coastal and marine environments and how it colours human understandings and responses. This stream is especially interested in how *the unknown*—emerging blue sectors and technologies, unpredictable weather and climatic patterns, unaccounted cultural, social, and economic impacts—influences Blue Fear and resulting actions. On the other side, panels may examine historical patterns of inequality, coloniality, commodification, blue grabbing, and how those patterns manifest in Blue Fear and resultant acts of resistance. Panels and papers may focus on specific topics or marine sectors or employ a comparative or more holistic approach.

Stream 2: Protecting and Adjusting Blue Livelihoods for well-being in the light of blue fear

The new blue economy may exacerbate existing dilemmas for coastal inhabitants rather than deliver on its promises. This stream takes these fears on, particularly in terms of what this has meant for communities on the coastal frontline. What new opportunities have emerged or been made available and how have existing ways of life been challenged? Do the fears of coastal inhabitants match, compare or contrast with the fear scholars and other experts project into the wider discourse? After all, the fear of development for one can also be the hope or promise of development for the other. Can there be a balance? And who gains the benefits and who bears the costs? This stream welcomes contributions grounded in blue livelihoods, addressing fears of injustice, inequity, loss of tradition and identities, gender discrimination and violence, precarious work and changing wellbeing. It also considers livelihood strategies such as migration and career shifts and the implications they have for wellbeing.

Stream 3: Claiming and producing new knowledges and diverse epistemologies to address blue fear

This stream focuses on the role of knowledge in ocean policy, politics, and decision making. It explores how different users, interests, scientists and industries contribute to the formation of marine epistemologies and their dissemination, uptake and use. Knowledge formed from diverse practices including but not limited to everyday experiences, idiosyncratic or systematic knowledge production, or information coming from a recognized expert, will have impact on values, principles, and procedures in ocean policy and politics. Different interests and agendas inevitably drive knowledge production and dissemination, and this may produce conflicts, most dramatically in the cases of so-called 'fake news'. Fear can make one less receptive to new information, can divide and polarize, or drive consensus, creativity, and constructive action. Important questions are how the different discursive formations of ocean knowledge frame the human-ocean relationship in different ways and inform decisions about how to meet future challenges. This stream welcomes papers that address how knowledge production, authorization, negotiation, inclusion and exclusion lead to different understandings of human-ocean relationships and how these understandings have impact on ocean policy, politics, and outcomes.

Stream 4: Governing in the face of blue fear

This stream focuses on how Blue Fear changes, challenges and advances the governing, steering and managing of the Blue Realm. Governing bodies belonging to states, industry and civil society must deal with opposing uses of oceans: 1) the industrial development within (new) maritime sectors, such as shipping, fisheries, offshore oil and gas production, offshore renewable energy, cruise tourism, coastal tourism and deep seabed mining, etc. 2) the changing livelihoods of those connected to the oceans and its resources and 3) the conservation challenges to protect the species and nature of the oceans. How does Blue Fear reshape the need for tradeoffs around the use and conservation of the oceans and how does this impact governance processes? Who gets a say in how governance processes adapt to and provide hope for those in fear? Does Blue Fear lead to more reflexivity and does it change power dynamics for the sustainable transformation of blue governance? This stream welcomes contributions about how blue fear impacts the governance of the blue realm, the distribution of power, processes of reflexivity and capacity building, and issues of legitimacy and equity in maritime planning and decision making.

Stream 5: Pursuing blue justice in the face of blue fear and dispossession

In the emerging blue growth era, coasts and oceans are subject to ever-rising conflicts over the distribution of space and resources. People at the forefronts of environmental change or those standing in the way of blue growth aspirations, are fearful of displacement and dispossession. While blue justice principles imply attention to the representation of marginalized people to ensure equitable access to healthy shorelines and oceans, many policies, practices and ideologies, intentionally or not, seem to stand in the way. What is the character of the ensuing contestations? How are the games of accumulation and dispossession played, how are they justified, how are they resisted, and to what effect? This

stream focuses on blue justice in the face of fear. It invites papers that reflect on processes of blue appropriation as well as people's struggles in defense of their coasts and livelihoods, and in the pursuit of blue justice. Contributions seek to deepen our understanding of how ocean and coastal grabbing represent old and new forms of resource extraction and spatial appropriations. They ask how do people of the sea experience and respond to these intrusions as well as other pressures like organized crime, illicit resource extractions, smuggling and trafficking of goods and people, and coastal securitization?

[Stream 6: Maritime heritage between fading past and uncertain future](#)

Heritage is a modern concern preoccupied with ordering and uncertainty, propelled by a sense of the accelerated passage of (linear) time but also by future fears. This panel addresses the future of (maritime) heritage in the light of blue fear inviting papers that would reflect on the maritime heritage not only from the perspective of preservation of old and authentic items and practices but also including the idea of heritage as a form of creative production. Heritage as an input for new patterns of livelihood, new technologies, new forms of collaborations and new legal arrangements. In that way we would like to change the perspective from loss to gain, from past to future, from fear to hope. Can we imagine future maritime heritage going beyond archiving, conserving, stasis, and product? A heritage that invites creative imaginations of future maritime livelihoods? This stream also invites papers that reflect on the role of maritime museums in the future and bring to the fore question such as what makes heritage maritime heritage, what is the future of maritime heritage in the context of Anthropocene, what kind of safeguarding practices are tailored for such future, and what is the role of new technologies?

[Stream 7: Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary marine sciences: Stepping together into unknown territory](#)

It is increasingly noted that multifaceted global challenges benefit from a holistic perspective that oversteps our current academic structure of disciplines or crosses the boundaries between science and society. Rather than applying different disciplines in parallel to different facets of an issue, interdisciplinary science seeks to break into previously unknown territory and produce new insights and fields of inquiry. However, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary science can be met with skepticism or fear, for example from disciplinary or academic gatekeepers, with protectiveness of disciplinary space, criteria, and resources. Constructed divisions and disciplinary jargons can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts and hierarchies, and disagreements on what is natural, what is social, what can be knowledge, and what is science. Interdisciplinary fear also comes from within, as scientists struggle with doubt within their unique blended spaces. This stream invites papers that reflect on the challenges, trade-offs, and methods developed to move into the many unknown territories between disciplines, and to reflect on their process and outcomes of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge creation.

Policy Day

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Conference contributions

If everything proceeds according to plan, this MARE conference will once again take place in the centre of the city of Amsterdam. For regular attendees, the campus of the University of Amsterdam is familiar ground, as is the monumental church where we normally host the conference dinner. But we will not do away altogether with the advantages of the virtual realm, with which we gained experience during the MARE conference in 2021. We will therefore create facilities to allow viewing of conference events from a geographical distance.

In addition to regular paper-based panels, we encourage panel proposals with innovative formats that stimulate interaction and dynamism. These include such as roundtables, workshops, brainstorm sessions, debates, artistic interventions, exhibition (virtual excursion), documentary film (photo essay/story) screenings with discussion, meet the author sessions, book presentations etcetera. We strongly encourage the submission of pre-arranged panels. If you have an idea for a panel but only a partial list of presenters, please submit and we will help connect you to others. For more regular panels, we encourage thorough discussion of presented papers, for example by including discussants or peer reviewing. We also welcome the submission of individual abstracts (max 300 words) for oral presentation. Please note that sessions will be 1.5 hours long and that participants may submit only one lead-authored paper proposal (although they may initiate or be second author in other kinds of proposals).

Deadline for panel, paper proposals and other conference formats:
31 January 2023 (GMT), via the conference system (to be announced)

Structure of proposals:

Regular panel proposals

Panel proposals should clearly state:

- The name, affiliation, and email address of the panel organizer
- A brief (max one A4 page or 500 words) panel abstract and up to five keywords
- The proposed paper titles, abstracts, authors (and their affiliations) to be included in the panel (if available) and the format
- The conference stream to which the panel relates

Alternative format panel proposals

- The name, affiliation, and email address of the panel organizer
- A brief (max one A4 page or 500 words) panel abstract and up to five keywords
- The proposed format of the session
- The conference stream to which the panel possibly relates

Paper proposals

Abstracts should clearly state:

- Author(s) name
- Author(s) affiliation
- Author email address for correspondence
- The conference stream to which the paper relates

Abstracts should be less than 300 words in length (please do not use abbreviations or cite references in the abstract) and include up to 5 keywords representing the main content.

Panels and individual submissions should be submitted electronically. This will be done via the virtual conference platform, with specific details on the submission process coming soon. Visit www.marecentre.nl or contact info@marecentre.nl for further details and updates.