

Improving the implementation of participatory research approaches for ocean sustainability: the role and importance of gender, equity and inclusion

Background

Coastal and marine ecosystems are among the most productive globally, providing a range of critical goods and services that underpin societal well-being and prosperity. From the provision of food and shoreline protection from storm surges, through to income from tourism and numerous cultural and spiritual benefits, these ecosystems are considered an essential component of the basic global life support system for more than 40% of the world's population who live along their shorelines. However, despite their value and importance to humanity, increased pressures (e.g. through coastal development or from climate change) threaten the long-term persistence of these ecosystems and the services they provide (Nash et al. 2018), with subsequent impacts on societal health, well-being and prosperity.

Successfully navigating these challenges necessitate new approaches of knowledge production that are capable of integrating knowledge systems to develop solutions for contemporary challenges in ways that are ecologically, socially and economically desirable (Norström et al. 2020). In recognition of this, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners are increasingly turning towards participatory research approaches, such as knowledge co-production, to make progress in this space (Cvitanovic et al. 2019). Such research approaches reject the notion that science alone identifies the issue, researches the problem and then delivers knowledge to society, instead favouring a more interactive arrangement between academic and non-academic actors. In other words, participatory research approaches do not simply engage stakeholders as subjects in research processes, but rather, recognises them as co-generators of knowledge and actively engages them as equals within every aspect of the scientific process. When implemented effectively, participatory research approaches are posited to facilitate increased likelihood of achieving evidence-informed decision-making, and thus ocean sustainability.

The Project

The promise of participatory research approaches has led to substantial commitments by research funders and policy communities worldwide. For example, notions such as co-production are at the heart of global sustainability initiatives such as Future Earth and the Global Land Programme, and they form the foundation of national level strategies in the UK, Switzerland, Germany and Australia. However, it has become apparent that commitments to participatory research approaches have outpaced our understanding of how best to implement these processes to ensure their success, and that many challenges with their successful implementation remain.

One such challenge is understanding the role of gender, equity and inclusion in participatory research approaches. However, recent evidence related to the management of coastal and marine ecosystems suggest gender diversity, equity and inclusion in participatory approaches are key correlates of successful participatory research. Thus, the overarching goal of this project will be to empirically understand the role and importance of gender, equity and

inclusion for facilitating meaningful participatory research approaches, and the ways in which gender considerations can be improved and more effectively managed to enhance ocean sustainability. The project will take a case study approach, and use both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Eligibility

Admission to a Doctor of Philosophy degree at ANU requires:

1. An Australian Bachelor degree with at least Second Class or its international equivalent, or
2. Another degree with a significant research/thesis component that may be assessed as equivalent to paragraph (1), or
3. A combination of qualifications, research publications and/or professional experience related to the field of study that may be assessed as equivalent to paragraph (1).

Further information relating to eligibility can be found on the ANUs website:

<http://www.anu.edu.au/study/apply/anu-postgraduate-research-domestic-and-international-applications>

The candidate

The successful applicant will have a passion for environmental sustainability, particularly within marine settings. They will have a background in a relevant discipline (e.g. environmental science, marine social science, natural resource management, environmental psychology, science communication, etc.) and awareness/knowledge of social science research methods. They will also possess strong interpersonal skills, strong writing skills, and be able to work effectively as part of a small team and also independently. The project will require travel for fieldwork, so a willingness to travel is also required.

Supervisors:

[Dr Merryn McKinnon](#), Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, ANU.

[Dr Chris Cvitanovic](#), Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, ANU.

Funding

The successful applicant will be based in the [Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science \(CPAS\)](#) at the ANU. Scholarships are available for both domestic and international applicants, and CPAS will work with the successful applicant to guide them through the scholarship process.

To apply

To be considered for this position, in the first instance please forward a current CV (2-page maximum) and short cover letter (1-page maximum) to Dr Merryn McKinnon (merryn.mckinnon@anu.edu.au) and Dr Chris Cvitanovic (christopher.cvitanovic@anu.edu.au). In the cover letter, be sure to let us know why you are the perfect candidate based on the skills outlined above. Shortlisted candidates will then be invited to skype to discuss their applications further.

Applications will be assessed on a rolling basis as they are received, and this position will remain open until filled.

Further reading

Norström A, Cvitanovic, et al. (2020) [Principles for knowledge co-production in sustainability research](#). Nature Sustainability, doi:10.1038/s41893-019-0448-2.

Cvitanovic C, Howden M, Colvin RM, Norström A, Meadow AM, Addison PFE (2019) [Maximising the benefits of participatory climate adaptation research by understanding and managing the associated challenges and risks](#). Environmental Science & Policy 94, 20-31.

Nash KL, Cvitanovic C, Fulton EA et al. (2017) [Planetary boundaries for a blue planet](#). Nature Ecology and Evolution 1(11):1625–1634.