Framing the Blue Economy: Placelessness, Development and Sustainability

Celine Germond-Duret [iD]

ABSTRACT

This article examines the wide acceptance and endorsement of the notion of the blue economy. It places the blue economy at the intersection of three discourses: the placelessness of the sea, development and sustainability. These discourses, originating on land, have spread spatially, narratively and normatively to the marine realm — part of a larger process of the normalization of the sea via its inclusion in the dominant model of economic development. The author uses the concept of horizontal reciprocity to illuminate this process of normalization. The blue economy requires and justifies the governance of maritime space; it creates economic and political opportunities and generates knowledge and interventions, leading to the territorialization of the sea. The article therefore concludes with a call for further research to critically assess the connections between macro discourses and local realities, and to address the current challenges facing the oceans.

INTRODUCTION

'Excuse me', the anthropologist said. 'You say that life appeared. Where did that happen, according to your myth — I mean, according to your scientific account'.
The creature seemed baffled by the question and turned a pale lavender. 'Do you mean in what precise spot?'
'No. I mean, did this happen on the land or in the sea?'
'Land?' the other asked. 'What is land?'
'Oh, you know', he said, waving toward the shore, 'the expanse of dirt and rocks that begins over there'.
The creature turned a deeper shade of lavender and said, 'I can't imagine what you're gibbering about. The dirt and rocks over there are simply the lip of the vast bowl that holds the sea'.

Daniel Quinn (1992: 55)

Ishmael, the 1992 novel by Daniel Quinn, relates the creation myth from the perspective of a jellyfish. For the jellyfish, the sea represents the realm of

its universe, and the land is barely existent — it is invisible, at best empty and uninhabitable, and in any case not a place. The book invites a reflection on the different perspectives that can pertain to the same phenomenon, and on the myths upon which modern society has been founded. Informed by continental philosophical thinking, the social sciences have studied myths, constructed truths and discourses to highlight how relations of power are created and sustained through knowledge creation. This article aims to explain how the notion of the blue economy has come to be so widely accepted, by analysing three existing discourses — the placelessness of the sea, development and sustainability — using the framework of horizontal reciprocity.

The blue economy is defined by the World Bank as the 'sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health'.[1] It has been endorsed by a wide range of actors, from development institutions to conservation organizations. The World Bank administers PROBLUE, a trust fund that supports 'healthy and productive oceans',[2] and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) 'works with the EU to ensure that the blue economy's growth is tied to sustainable economies on both land and at sea'.[3] The involvement of the private sector and the discourse around 'ecosystem services' and 'natural capital' are central to the blue economy narrative, and the UN's Environment Programme Finance Initiative provides guidance to financial institutions investing in oceans through its Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Initiative.[4] The 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy adopted by the African Union (2012: 9) recognizes the 'urgent imperative to develop a sustainable "blue economy" initiative', and envisages the blue economy as the 'New Frontier of African Renaissance'. The first 'Sustainable Blue Economy' conference was held in November 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya and gathered a wide range of actors, from political and business leaders to the UN and other intergovernmental organizations, scientific experts and members of civil society.[5] An academic literature on the topic is now burgeoning; special issues have been published[6] and panel sessions and

1. See: www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2017/06/06/blue-economy (accessed 14 December 2021).
2. See PROBLUE: www.worldbank.org/en/programs/problue (accessed 23 July 2021).
3. See: www.wwf.eu/what_we_do/oceans/promoting_a_sustainable_blue_economy/ (accessed 14 December 2021).
4. Sustainable Blue Finance: www.unepfi.org/blue-finance/ (accessed 26 July 2021).
5. Sustainable Blue Economy Conference: https://enb.iisd.org/events/sustainable-blue-economy-conference/summary-report-26-28-november-2018 (accessed 1 November 2019).
6. See: 'Geography and the Blue Economy' in *Dialogues in Human Geography* (2017); 'The Blue Economy: Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Food Security in the Indian Ocean Region', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* (2018); 'Securing the Blue: Political Ecologies of the Blue Economy in Africa', *Journal of Political Ecology* (2019); 'What is Blue Growth?' in *Marine Policy* (2018); 'Blue Degrowth and the Politics of the Sea: Rethinking the Blue Economy', *Sustainability Science* (2020).

academic conferences have been held[7] in an effort to understand, interpret, criticize or implement the blue economy agenda. Within these reports and scholarly works there is a sense of confusion over the blue economy initiative/concept/buzzword, as perhaps exemplified by the term itself, which is sometimes capitalized (Blue Economy), sometimes preceded by *the*, and sometimes referred to as 'blue growth' (despite some differences in the meaning of these concepts, the latter, being for example, more restrictive).

Silver et al. (2015) analyse how the term 'blue economy' entered into use and locate its articulation within four human–ocean relations discourses: oceans as natural capital, oceans as good business, oceans as integral to Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and oceans as small-scale fisheries livelihoods. Basing their analysis on the 2012 Rio+20 Conference[8] (which they attended) as well as on preparatory documents, the authors offer a very insightful analysis of the genesis of the term. However, it is just as crucial to understand the dynamics behind the broad support which the concept has garnered. This article uses a horizontal reciprocity framework to argue that the notion of a blue economy results from the spread of discourses and practices which originally applied to the land to also include the sea. The framework characterizes the relations that operate between the land and sea and the projection of norms (as explained below). In particular, the analysis places the blue economy at the intersection of three discourses which originated on land (or on a land-based reflection on place) and which have been extended to the marine realm spatially, narratively and normatively. This extension is part of a larger process of what we might call the normalization of the sea through its inclusion in the dominant model of development. Discourses function as 'framework[s] of ideas that structure both knowledge and social practice' (Berg, 2009: 215). In a socially constructed reality, they are sets of representations that are projected onto social phenomena. Since challenges to dominant discourses are generally rare or unsuccessful, such discourses have a sustained influence on social thinking.

This article is informed by post-structuralist political ecology, in the same vein as work by Fletcher which draws on Foucault's governmentality and environmental governance to assess neoliberal environmentality in conservation policy (Fletcher, 2010). Post-structuralism 'has introduced the idea of discourse analysis in political ecology research and the importance of exploring and revealing the ways in which the environment and environmental problems are discursively constructed' (Neumannn, 2014: 7). As such, it enables us to contextualize knowledge claims and their role in the

---

7. For example, the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) held panel sessions at international conferences in 2015, 2016 and 2017, and in 2020 Southern Connecticut State University hosted the 'Coastal Transitions: Blue Economy' conference in New Haven (4–8 November).

8. The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development — or Rio+20 — was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (20–22 June).

production of social reality. In other words, discursive and materialist analyses are not incompatible: indeed, Escobar (1995: 130) goes so far as to say that 'there cannot be a materialist analysis that is not, at the same time, a discursive analysis'.

This article is not a discourse analysis per se; rather it examines how three existing discourses have contributed to and facilitated the acceptance of the idea of a blue economy. The article draws on documents and examples from a range of important actors, including governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. They are not meant to be exhaustive but are used to highlight widespread practices and ideas. The three discourses that are the focus of the article have been selected deductively, as they shape representations and practices related to the sea. The relationship between modern society and the ocean space (and nature more generally) should be understood in the context of the tension between development needs and environmental considerations. Highlighting how the blue economy builds on and echoes the three discourses, and the resulting narratives and practices, enables us to understand the challenges around the blue economy, including the issues of control and intervention, whether for marine environmental protection purposes, territorialization and planning, or resource exploitation.

HORIZONTAL RECIPROCITY AND NORMALIZATION

This article demonstrates that the acceptance and endorsement of the blue economy is based on a perception of the sea as placeless, and the diffusion of development and sustainability norms from land to sea. To explain this diffusion, the article uses a horizontal reciprocity framework to characterize the projection of norms within the land–sea relationship. Three concepts are important here — reciprocity, horizontality and normalization — which are explained below.

In Western thinking, land and sea have traditionally been regarded as separate entities — even as complete opposites — due to their distinct natures and the consequent possibilities for human activities (Anderson and Peters, 2014). The neglect of land–sea connections has even affected the field of ecology, as illustrated by Stoms et al.'s (2005) study on the creation of coastal reserves which shows how ecological interactions are often ignored. Pittman and Armitage's (2016) systematic review also highlights the lack of empirical studies related to governance across the land–sea interface. It shows that determining the boundary between land and sea for governance purposes can be difficult due to the nature of ecological and social processes. This aligns with Lebel's (2012) assessment. Lebel refers to coastal boundaries as 'administrative, policy and ideological fault-lines', and suggests that integrative research is needed to bridge the land–sea divide and support efficient governance (ibid.: 248–49). Garland et al.'s (2019)

meta-analysis emphasizes the lack of attention in the literature to the connection between the blue economy and discourses and practices conducted on land. It is, however, important that this connection is made and understood, given that land-based models are being imposed onto the ocean space (a process referred to as reciprocity of practices). For example, the creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has raised similar concerns and criticisms to those levelled at protected areas created on land, such as the potential risks of dispossession and green/blue grabbing (Adams, 2017; Hill, 2017). The management of ocean fisheries provides further evidence of the transposition of terrestrial practices into a marine context, with individual transferable quotas at sea being comparable to land enclosures (Fairbanks et al., 2018).

In addition to the 'flat' connections between different spaces, there have been calls to consider other dimension of spaces, originating in the debate on 'securing the volume' (Elden, 2013). Lehman (2013: 52) invites us to envisage oceans beyond their metrics, arguing that 'oceanic volumes show processes of uneven development and the materiality of imperial relations, as well as their potentials to be otherwise'. Steinberg and Peters (2015: 252) propose a 'wet ontology' that encourages us to think of the sea 'as a space of volume [and] recognize that the form of water opens new territories of control and conflicts'. Bridge (2013) draws on Mumford's 'syntax of modernity' ('mine: blast: dump: crush: exhaust') to discuss the vertical structure of resource extraction in the contemporary era (Mumford, 1934). If the 'radical mixing' of the underground and the surface contributes to the shock of modernity, as Bridge (ibid.) suggests, then processes such as seabed mining (Childs, 2020), the creation of artificial islands (Jackson and della Dora, 2009) or the Global Ocean Observing System (Lehman, 2016), which can all be part of a blue economy, cannot be disassociated from thinking on modernity and post-modernity, and consequently on development and sustainability.

The three discourses presented below (placelessness, development and sustainability) can also be envisaged three dimensionally. Ultimately, development and sustainability (and their corollaries, exploitation and conservation) are centred on resources that are found in the three dimensions of ocean space. The representation of the sea as placeless originates in the fluid materiality of the ocean, as opposed to dry and solid land (Peters, 2014: 188). Adey (2010: 2) asserts that 'both the ground and the air reside together in vertical reciprocity'; in the same way, this article advances the notion of 'horizontal reciprocity' to characterize the land–sea connection (via spatial, narrative and normative diffusion). This concept enables us to bypass the land–sea binary, and to envisage the blue economy as a broader, more encompassing process linked to existing dynamics and narratives on land. In relation to ground and air, Bishop (2011: 272) accepts Adey's description of vertical reciprocity but points out, 'this does not mean that the reciprocity is by any measure equal, nor does it diminish the human desire to use the

Figure 1. *Horizontal Reciprocity and Land–sea Diffusion*
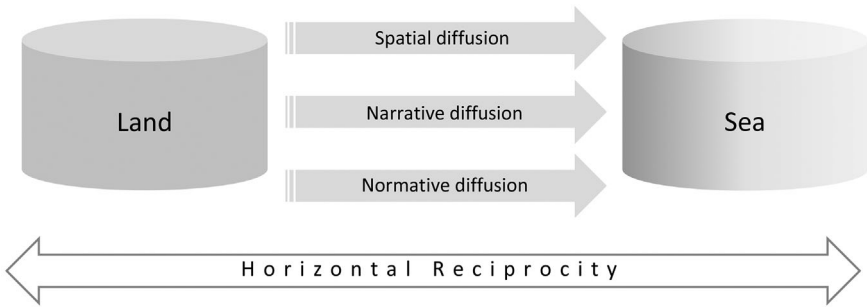
Source: Constructed by author

latter [militarily] to subdue and dominate the former'. Similarly, horizontal reciprocity does not necessarily refer to an equal relationship, as Figure 1 demonstrates: rather, it is about diffusion from land towards the sea, assimilating the sea into dominant thinking. Spatial diffusion refers to the diffusion of practices from land into another space (here, the sea, not just as a flat entity but considered in its volumetric dimensions), effectively extending the realm and influence of the land. Narrative diffusion refers to the diffusion of existing narratives, discourses and dominant thinking. Normative diffusion refers to the normalization of the sea according to the models developed on land.

The idea of normalization is important here. Normalization is the process by which norms spread. The concept has been used, for example, to assess the process by which Indigenous peoples can be affected by external interventions and normalized as 'developed' or 'modern' (Germond-Duret, 2016). The concept comes from Foucault, who talks about a 'normalizing judgement', a 'penalty [that] normalizes' and the 'power of the Norm' (Foucault, 1979/1991: 177, 183, 184). He refers to the homogenization of a group of individuals upon which is inflicted 'a constant pressure to conform to the same model … so that they might all be like one another' (ibid.: 182). In the land–sea context, normalization is not about suppressing the characteristics of the sea and making it look like land. It is about the spread of, and compliance with, existing norms. To use Foucault's formula, the purpose is not that 'they might all be like one another' but that the spaces, structures and agents of both land and sea might be incorporated into the dominant discourse of (sustainable) development.

In the following sections, each of the three discourses is discussed in the context of their land–sea horizontal reciprocity and the spatial, narrative and normative diffusion into the ocean space which, I argue, facilitates the acceptance of the notion of a blue economy.

PLACELESSNESS OF THE SEA

The sea has traditionally been considered a 'placeless void' (Steinberg, 2001), an 'empty' space outside of human and social experience (Germond and Germond-Duret, 2016). This representation has facilitated the economic use of the ocean and the concept of the blue economy. This can be understood in the context of the horizontal reciprocity between land and sea, as the perceived placelessness of the sea results from the transposition of, and comparison with, the characteristics of land.

The concept of place is central in human geography, although it is contested. Agnew (2015: 28) proposes that places are 'areas in which settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identify'. Since the 1970s, scholars in human geography have paid particular attention to 'place attachment' and 'sense of place' (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974, 1977) to account for the human experience and perception of place. The sea has traditionally been neglected by human geographers and social scientists in general, with studies of the sea mostly limited to issues of power, security, economics, transport and spatial planning. Cardwell and Thornton (2015: 161) argue that different disciplinary approaches to marine management frame 'distinct disciplinary imaginations of the ocean'. For example, scholars in economics frame the sea as 'flat, placeless, and mathematical, spatially equivalent across its extent', while it is a 'space of degradation and naturalness' for area-based conservationists, and 'an animated landscape inhabited by a community of beings' for anthropologists (ibid.). Despite the 'scholarly turn to the ocean' (Connery, 2006: 496), few studies have considered the sea as a place of human, social and political interactions. Within human geography, Jackson (1995: 88) argues that cultural geographers, 'predominantly Western, middle-class academics, bound by a European terrestrial bias, have accepted as *natural* the dominance of the land in understanding human interactions and relationships with environments'. Bear and Eden (2011: 487), highlighting the 'silence' of human geographers, associate oceans with 'lively spaces and spaces of movement'. In 2013, Bear addressed the 'lack of attention paid by cultural geographers to the sea' (Bear, 2013: 22), emphasizing the materiality of the sea, and employing the concept of assemblage to highlight the multiplicity of actants 'gathering and dispersing' across space and time (ibid.: 23). Observing the Pacific region and how islands and the ocean often combine in one territory, Gruby and Campbell (2013) recognize the link between ocean and identity. Analysing the expansion of shellfish aquaculture in British Columbia, Silver (2014: 115) describes how the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations' 'identity and land–sea territoriality are intimately connected to harvesting, processing, trading, and consuming seafood, including shellfish'. Silver and Campbell (2018: 241) consider the 'blue frontier' as a 'space of sociocultural, environmental and/or economic potential'. There have thus been some recent

attempts to investigate the social, political and cultural dimensions of the sea, but they remain the minority.

This general lack of interest can perhaps be explained as follows. From a physical/material perspective, the sea is uninhabitable and thus is rarely enacted or performed as a place, compared to the land. From a discursive perspective, the sea has traditionally been represented as placeless. These two material and discursive characteristics of the sea have in common a sense of 'empty space' rather than a sense of place. More than that, the sea has been assimilated to what has been defined as a placeless place (Relph, 1976) or a 'non-place' (Augé, 1992); like airports or motorway service stations. It is just a space of transit, with which it is hardly possible to develop connections and to which people do not get attached.

The meaning of emptiness has been selective and biased: dominant representations of the sea as empty mainly refer to people (i.e. the sea is uninhabitable) and not so much to resources. Moreover, this emptiness does not relate to volume, but merely to the surface of the sea. It is as if people are invisible, whereas resources are central, abundant and visible. In fact, as Satizabal and Batterbury (2018: 62) suggest, in the context of Colombia's Pacific Coast, 'the state has rendered … local epistemologies invisible, instead imagining space as static, bounded and "empty-yet-full"' (i.e. empty of people, yet full of resources). This is a recurrent feature of external interventions: local populations are either invisible, or ignored and bypassed. This is similar to some practices that impact Indigenous peoples on land; Indigenous peoples are often considered as remote or simply not there, so as to enable encroachment on their territories. Using Shields (1991) and his concept of place-myths, Davis (2005: 611) argues that 'multiple and contradictory place-myths can exist for the same place at the same time and … these myths can shift through time. … Power then dictates which version of place gets to be produced'. This means that different visions can exist or coexist, but one is produced as knowledge and becomes dominant. To represent the sea as an empty space proceeds from Western, terra-centric epistemologies and ontologies and is still dominant in discourses, although it has now been challenged by many academics. It is not just oceans that have been represented as empty, but some islands as well, as illustrated by Davis's (2005) discussion of Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands during the 1940s and 1950s. He demonstrates how the atoll was presented as 'deserted', despite the fact that people were living there, to enable the testing of nuclear weapons. Bikini Atoll was represented as a non-place, and in some instances as backward and unhealthy. Thus, it is not only oceans that have been represented as empty and placeless, but also entities within oceans. The practical and actual dominance of economics over other disciplines in relation to the global (sustainable) development agenda has in turn contributed to the perception of the sea as placeless. Through a placeless and economic prism, oceans are seen, above all, as providers of exploitable resources.

It has certainly been in the interest of powerful actors to adopt the notion of *mare nullius* (nobody's sea) or an empty space. The idea of *mare nullius*, as well as the freedom of the sea principle and the dominant Western construction of sea space more generally, have been in opposition with traditional marine tenure and have been used to justify interventions. This has parallels with similar processes on land (although *mare nullius* is much more resistant to challenge than its land equivalent, *terra nullius*, as discussed by Mulrennan and Scott, 2000). On land, areas are defined as empty or wild and untouched, and people are categorized as backward, to enable interventions, be they for missionary purposes, development projects, exploitation of natural resources, or nature conservation. At sea, this representation has resulted in the free flow of goods and capital, the projection of power, and the normalization of these phenomena, via the concept of *mare liberum* (free sea) (Connery, 1994, 2006; Germond and Germond-Duret, 2016; Steinberg, 2001). According to Steinberg (1999: 417), the ocean is an empty void put at the service of both capitalism and militarism, while Connery (1994: 40) refers to the 'bourgeois idealization of sea power'.

In a similar way, representing the sea as placeless removes all barriers to the spread of the concept of economic growth to the maritime space. The ocean is normalized as an economic space, reproducing existing land-based models. No effective narrative has been deployed to counter that position. The blue economy fits with this representation as it encourages the (sustainable) exploitation and global stewardship of marine resources. Helmreich's concept of blue-green capital enables us to comprehend this ambiguity of marine biodiversity seen both as commodity, or biocapital, and yet in need of preservation. The concept combines 'the freedom of ocean space and speculative sky-high promise' with the 'belief in ecological sustainability as well as biological fecundity' (Helmreich, 2007: 289). In this sense, capitalism can be associated with a homogenizing and normalizing force, which enables the pursuit of a neoliberal agenda (albeit with a sustainable narrative) at sea, and which, according to Campling and Colas (2018: 790) '"flattens" the geophysical division between solid ground and fluid water'. This fits with a blue economy agenda aimed at further interventions in a domain characterized by limited regulation and extended freedom. Broad support for the blue economy builds on the way the sea has traditionally been represented. Nevertheless, this is a two-sided phenomenon as the recent emphasis on the blue economy has in turn contributed to an increase in studies across academic disciplines that focus on the sea and the maritime domain, and to debates on the placelessness/placefulness of oceans.

The concept of a placeless sea results from land-centric thinking. The concept and understanding of what defines a place is transposed from land to sea through processes of horizontal reciprocity and normative diffusion. The sea is compared to the land; land as a place is solid, dry and tangible and connects to people's identity, whereas the sea is liquid, wet and intangible, something to which people do not relate. Land is a point of reference, a

known territory; when transposed, it results in the marine environment being considered placeless. As with any binary identity there is also an element of hierarchy (Germond-Duret, 2016): the sea is seen as being 'inferior' to the land because there is 'nothing' and 'nobody' there. Decisions are made on land, by land-based people. This construction of the sea as an empty space rather than a place of human and social relations has contributed to the normalization of the sea as an exploitable space open to development, most notably from an economic perspective, and has facilitated the acceptance of the blue economy agenda that opens up and extends possibilities. This narrative offers no grounds for objection to further interventions at sea.

DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

The second of the three discourses which have spread to the marine environment and facilitated the blue economy is development. The concept of development has been assessed, discussed, revised and expanded over the years to become more comprehensive and inclusive. However, despite these perceived changes, the development *discourse* has barely changed over time and has continued to promote economic growth and market expansion (Germond-Duret, 2011). Whether it is labelled 'economic', 'human', 'participatory', 'sustainable', 'green' etc., 'development' is ultimately open to external interventions aiming to exploit natural resources for the benefit of the economy. The blue economy has easily been integrated into this narrative as it aims to support 'sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors' (European Commission, 2020), providing another path towards development without challenging 'development' as a concept and practice.

The idea of a development discourse has been widely debated and criticized, with a prolific post-development literature (see, for example, Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 1992; Rist, 2008; Sachs, 1992; Sardar, 1999; as well as Nederveen Pieterse, 2000, for a response to post-development arguments). In an earlier publication (Germond-Duret, 2011), I highlighted four persistent myths within development discourse: 1) all societies tend towards development in a linear way (linearity); 2) development is essentially economic (economism); 3) tradition conflicts with development (anti-tradition); and 4) development is mostly achievable through a market economy and economic growth. Moreover, the implementation of development projects and interventions is facilitated by practices of opacity (lack of participation of local population) and technicality (preference for managerial over political approaches). In addition, development discourse has been associated with a normalization process, by which 'societies are encouraged or pressed to move from a state of abnormality to a state of normality — for example from underdevelopment to development or from tradition to modernity — through the application of the same development model (adjustment), the imposition of rules and self-discipline' (Germond-Duret, 2016: 1550).

Work on development, and criticisms of development, have observed processes occurring on land; development discourse and its resulting practices have spread over time to further territories and human societies, including isolated, traditional communities, through the imposition of norms (such as modernity and market economy). This narrative and normative diffusion has now spread to the marine environment.

The blue economy supports (sustainable) economic growth (and is sometimes referred to as 'blue growth'); it is above all an economic concept (as the name indicates), or an 'economic strategy' (Hadjimichael, 2018). As noted in the introduction, the term is defined by the World Bank as the 'sustainable use of ocean resources *for* economic growth, improved livelihood and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health' (emphasis added).[9] The UN Conference on Trade and Development defines the blue economy as '*economic* and *trade* activities that integrate the conservation and sustainable use and management of biodiversity, including maritime ecosystems, and genetic resources' (UNCTAD, 2014: 2, emphasis added). Although it is called the blue *economy* (and not blue *development*), it is still presented as a holistic initiative responding to economic, social and environmental concerns. It does not aim to replace national development plans, but rather to be integrated into them.

The blue economy has been endorsed by a wide range of actors, who refer to it as a component of their economic and development policy or development agenda. For example, Namibia's 5th National Development Plan includes the blue economy in its economic progression pillar (Republic of Namibia, 2017). Mauritius adopted an 'Ocean Economy Roadmap' in 2013, in which the 'ocean economy constitutes an important pillar to sustain development' (Government Information Service, 2013), while the Seychelles developed a Blue Economy Strategic Roadmap 'as a means of realising the nation's development potential through innovation and knowledge-led approaches' (Government of the Republic of Seychelles, 2018: viii). Since 2016, Kenya has established the State Department for Fisheries and the Blue Economy and launched the Kenya Marine Fisheries and Socio-economic Development Project, which prioritizes fisheries as a key issue for the blue economy. South Africa has launched Operation Phakisa, an initiative to facilitate the implementation of the national development plan. One of its components is an Ocean Economy Laboratory, which aims to unlock 'the economic potential of South Africa's oceans' (Government of South Africa, 2014). It is articulated around four areas: marine transport and manufacturing; offshore oil and gas exploration; aquaculture; and marine protection services and ocean governance. A report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2016: 5), entitled 'Africa's Blue Economy', associates water bodies with 'development spaces'. The document

9. See: www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2017/06/06/blue-economy (accessed August 2018).

discusses the 'need to modernize' and to undertake a 'structural transformation' (ibid.: xi). It states that the blue economy is more than just economic and makes references to sustainable development — although it also invites us to build on 'the experience with implementing Green Economy principles' (ibid.: xi) and calls for a 'bold new thinking' (ibid.: x), highlighting some confusion around the concept and its implementation.

Reading through these strategies, there is considerable optimism and confidence in the positive outcome of blue economy initiatives. As has been the case throughout the history of development, this new approach is presented as an evolution and extension of the development model; it is supposed to 'be better', or 'work better', without necessarily acknowledging the mistakes of the past or taking on board the lessons learned, such as the inefficiency of some development projects or strategies or their potential negative side effects. Choi (2017) implies that the blue economy is more than an economic project but discusses the political consequences of its implementation (the creation of governable spaces) rather than what it is intrinsically — that is, another path to 'development'. Voyer et al. (2018: 599) also foresee the political dimension of the blue economy as being 'a new governance tool … used to articulate appropriate use within the oceans'. Nevertheless, the concept is referred to as blue 'economy' and not blue 'governance'; its economic label prevails.

An important element to consider is the engagement of local populations. The opacity of some development interventions and decisions, and the lack of participation of local populations in development and conservation projects have been the subject of debate, recognizing the risk that people's involvement only serves to legitimize decisions already made (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Craig and Potter, 1997; Germond-Duret, 2011; Mawdsley and Rigg, 2003). Similarly, for blue economy initiatives, Barbesgaard (2018) suggests that the people who are impacted are not adequately represented in governance fora or, if they are, that the process only serves to legitimize a neoliberal agenda. Burgeoning empirical research has found coastal communities who feel that their particular concerns are not taken into sufficient consideration, and who have not always welcomed the operationalization of the concept of the blue economy (e.g. Hadjimichael et al., 2014). For example, Operation Phakisa has been criticized for its lack of consultation and involvement of local people and stakeholders (AllAfrica, 2017), and uncertainty prevails as to the inclusion of and benefits to artisanal fishers and small businesses in projects in the Seychelles (Persaud, 2016). Given that 'people are largely absent from the imaginative geography of the high seas' (Gray, 2018: 268), the problem of opacity may be even more acute in the marine space, which is seen as empty and placeless.

Development discourse has been characterized as a managerial and technical concept, lacking a political dimension (Ferguson, 1990; Young, 2002). Burgess et al. (2018: 331) use similarly technical language to discuss their rules for a 'pragmatic blue growth', which they define as 'an ambitious

framework for ocean management'. The first Africa Blue Economy Forum, in 2018,[10] offered a strong focus on job creation, investments, industry-driven solutions, the creation of networks and business opportunities — all technical aspects of development. While this approach is not universally endorsed, the use of a non-political and non-contentious narrative has facilitated the simplification, and consequently the adoption, of the notion of the blue economy. It has resulted in a certain conceptual vagueness, which, as with sustainable development, has paved the way for a wide range of interpretations. Development is associated with scientific progress;[11] the current emphasis on 'ocean science' (illustrated by the UN proclaiming the 2020s the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development[12]) reinforces the focus on scientific and technical aspects. According to Boucquey et al. (2019: 485), 'this emerging regime is supported by new productions of ocean space informed by growing global practices of information-gathering, geocoding and synthesizing via networks of scientific and political actors'. There is a vast array of technical tools and other measures at the disposal of these recent developments, such as 'remote sensing, artificial intelligence, big data, machine learning, transparency, and new policies [to] minimize illegal fishing' (Lubchenco and Gaines, 2019: 911). It is also thanks to scientific and technological progress that oceans have become more visible and garnered more attention and interest, for example 'the power of satellite tracking data and three-dimensional visualizations of ocean ecosystems … [which put] a face on the high seas' (Gray, 2018: 268).

It was clear that the UN associated the blue economy with an extension of development discourse and practice when it said that the 'the Blue Economy conceptualizes oceans as "Development Spaces"' (UNCSD, 2012: 3). The discussion in this article further connects the blue economy with the economism, opacity and technicality that are characteristic of development. The crucial role played by Pacific SIDS in the inception of the concept seems to counter the argument that the blue economy has been inspired by Western thinking alone. Given the quick and wide endorsement of the idea, however, it can be argued that the concept has been Westernized and adapted to fit the Western liberal model. There may also be a desire to conform to the model, using the same language and narrative, in order to facilitate investment in the maritime economic sector and marine conservation. Barbesgaard (2018) goes further, suggesting that the promotion of blue growth is the result of an alliance between environmental NGOs, the private sector and international institutions, thus minimizing the initial input from SIDS. Winder

---

10. The first Africa Blue Economy Forum was held in London on 7–8 June 2018, to coincide with Worlds Ocean Day. It brought together ocean leaders and experts to discuss the opportunities emerging from Africa's oceans.
11. Unsurprisingly, anti-development scholars oppose the hegemony of positivism and Enlightenment thinking.
12. See: https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade

and Le Heron (2017: 5) rightly describe blue economy discourses (plural) in terms of 'a rubric around which constellations of actors assemble for diverse purposes and in specific contexts'. Lewis's (2019) analysis of New Zealand highlights the presence of six different economies, which all integrate and respond to the blue economy agenda, resulting in various blue economy initiatives, from techno-scientific innovations to Maori community economy projects.[13] The blue economy is referred to as 'a discursive project that seeks to assemble diverse economic activities taking place in coastal and ocean seascapes. Accounting for it in these terms is simply a question of aggregating similarly narrow understandings of actualized economies at the sectoral or regional scale' (ibid.: 98). In other words, the blue economy can encompass a diversity of approaches and bypass the 'alternative–mainstream' divide.

In sum, the blue economy has extended development discourse to include the sea. Horizontal reciprocity operates by diffusing development thinking into the ocean space (spatial, narrative and normative diffusion). Because this diffusion of the development discourse has occurred without any critical reflection on development processes on land (issues such as opacity and technicality), one might wonder if and how the implementation of the blue economy will differ from development practices on land, and to what extent it will support the sustainable development of oceans and not just their sustained exploitation.

SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSE

The development discourse cannot be disassociated from the sustainability (sub-)discourse. The urgent need to address environmental issues and to work towards a sustainable society have been recognized by most actors, although a wide range of views and understandings of sustainability, from 'weak' to 'strong' and from anthropocentric to eco-centric (Hector et al., 2014), have resulted in different practices.

Reflection on environmental protection goes hand-in-hand with reflection on economic development, as illustrated by the 1972 Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972), one of the first attempts to explain this relationship, and the Brundtland report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), in which economic growth sits at the centre of the discussion on sustainable development.[14] Several studies have attempted to classify institutions according to their concerns for

---

13. The six economies envisaged by Lewis (2019) are grouped into two broad categories: non- or partially capitalist (including Māori and community economies) and capitalist (including commodity, techno-science, foundational and distinctiveness economies).
14. Although these two publications adopt opposing positions. For a detailed history of sustainable development, see Adams (2009).

environmental and economic issues. Brekke (1997) stresses the idea of weak versus strong sustainability, the equivalent of Burgenmeier's (1994) distinction between proponents of the economy of the environment versus proponents of ecological economics. The first analyses environmental issues through the prism of economics (economic rationality, cost-benefit analysis, and emphasis on economic growth as the best tool to tackle environmental problems), while the second believes that economic activities need to be constrained by environmental limits. Adding a social dimension to the analysis, Alcock (2008) establishes a typology of environmental NGOs according to their focus on ecological sustainability, economic efficiency, or distributive equity. Dryzek (2005) identifies four main environmental discourses (problem solving, sustainability, survivalism and green radicalism) but does not directly relate them to the global economic system. One could also argue that the problem-solving discourse is located within a broader sustainability discourse, as its agents claim to adhere to sustainable development principles. The blue economy is a good example of a concept that is associated with sustainability and is focused on problem-solving considerations (see, for example, Ehlers, 2016).

The most comprehensive and detailed classification of sustainability visions is that established by Hopwood et al. (2005). They draw on O'Riordan's (1989) categorization, ranging from strong eco-centric to strong technocentric views, and classify actors according to what they see as the necessary changes in the society's political and economic structures: retaining the status quo, a reform of the system, or a transformation of the system. While a simplification, this classification shows that the view shared by the most important and influential international actors (such as the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development) are in favour of a status quo and that their conception of sustainable development is not based on strong environmental and social concerns. In 2009, Adams wrote that 'the "greening" of development calls for a quite fundamental reassessment of the concept of development itself' (Adams, 2009: xvii). While the reflection on green development resulted from the need to rethink and reform development and economic growth, the 'blue-ing' of the economy did not proceed from a critique of development, but rather from an extension of green economy considerations into the ocean space.

Recent interest in the sea has centred around two main visions: oceans as the providers of natural resources and economic opportunities, and oceans as threatened by environmental degradations. Voyer et al. (2018: 596) note the 'inherent conflicts' between these two views, and argue that the concept of the blue economy 'attempts to embrace the opportunities associated with the ocean, while recognizing, accounting for and, in some cases, addressing its threats'. The contradiction here is clear, especially given that the threats posed to the marine environment often result from natural

resources exploitation associated with the pursuit of economic benefits. As with any discussion concerning sustainability, the question is how to reconcile the two dimensions and how to achieve an equilibrium between them — if indeed that is feasible and desirable. Different approaches to sustainable development result in different approaches to the sea: it may be seen as needing protection, as a host of ecosystem services, as a commodity, or as a provider of resources to be exploited in a (sustainable) way (Germond and Germond-Duret, 2017). Once again, the social dimension of sustainable development is neglected (Germond-Duret, 2014).

The notion of the blue economy can be moulded to fit these different approaches; as a concept, it can be interpreted and applied in different ways, emphasizing either the environmental protection and stewardship dimensions, or the opportunities for exploitation (with a risk of ocean privatization and ocean grabbing). Within O'Riordan's (1989) classifications, mentioned above, the blue economy has been endorsed by non-radical reformists and proponents of the status quo. It has been widely accepted precisely because it does not challenge existing narratives, in the same way that the green economy avoided 'a negative and disempowering pro-growth/anti-growth binary' and 'direct conflict with the existing hegemonic growth discourse' (Ferguson, 2015: 29).

For example, UNECA's *Africa's Blue Economy* makes direct references to sustainable development in Africa. It invites us to 'change the paradigms' but does not expand on what innovative approaches and solutions could be proposed as alternatives. While the report recognizes the need to move away from top-down policies and the limitations of a development model solely centred on economic growth, its vision is very much inspired by the dominant thinking on sustainability and development. Progress is still understood in economic terms: it is 'important to measure real economic progress as part of a Blue Economy strategy' (UNECA, 2016: 20), and alternative measuring tools focus on ecosystem services and their valuation. Existing economic structures are not challenged, with the implication that sustainable solutions can be found from within the system. For example, the report argues that: 'Globalization of finance, investment, and pursuit of high return opportunities in the Blue Economy, if coupled with proper investment policies and frameworks, offers an opportunity to attract global capital in key resource sectors to accelerate development' (ibid.: 18).

The diffusion of sustainable development into the marine environment is best illustrated by the inclusion of a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on oceans and marine resources, with SDG 14 aiming to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The blue economy is located at the intersection between these ecological concerns and liberal economic objectives. The World Bank's 2017 report 'The Potential of the Blue Economy' details how it can contribute to SDG 14.7, which aims to 'increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs [least developed countries] from the sustainable use of marine

resources'. It also highlights how this target is instrumental to reaching many of the other targets related to SDG 14 (World Bank, 2017). UNCTAD's Special Adviser for the Blue Economy recently declared that the blue economy has the potential to support not just SDG 14 'but also the Global Goals on poverty, hunger, jobs, gender equality, partnerships, resilient communities, and climate change' (Bertarelli, 2020). Similarly, UNECA claims that the blue economy is not only linked to SDG 14, but to 'the majority of the SDGs in a variety of ways' (UNECA, 2016: 9). It could, for examine, contribute to SDG 8 through 'job creation', to SDG 16 through the 'promotion of continental peace and security', and to SDG 12 through the 'promotion of more equitable trade of goods and services' (ibid.). Singh et al.'s (2018) assessment of the SDGs supports this conclusion, positing that all the goals are related to SDG 14, and that achieving the targets related to the oceans would positively benefit sustainable development in other sectors. These examples illustrate the interpenetration of the blue economy and the SDGs, and show how sustainability ideals have been normalized into the marine environment.

Despite this interpenetration, however, the blue economy and the SDGs do not serve the same purpose. The blue economy spreads to the marine space as part of the sustainability discourse, reflecting a rather weak (but dominant) vision, as it is first and foremost an economic concept, which takes environmental aspects into consideration. The SDGs, and SDG 14 specifically, serve as guiding principles. Any activity at sea (whether labelled blue economy or not) must now follow these principles and be guided by this overarching aim, either by directly contributing to it, or at least by not impeding progress towards it. Lee et al. (2020) recognize this tension between environmental needs and industrial goals (such as carbon emission reduction versus energy provision) and see the SDGs as a way to resolve this conflict between opportunities and threats. The contradictions and incompatibilities of certain goals are not unique to the SDGs and were already highlighted by Rist (2008) in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); one example is the decline in poverty at the price of increased pollution and growing inequalities. Lee et al. (2020: 2) also acknowledge that 'the identification of the scope and boundaries of the blue economy in line with the UN's SDGs is vague, even challenging', as is the identification of key stakeholders and their interests.

In sum, there are indications that the blue economy may not proceed from a strong sustainability vision. Rather, it is a problem-solving concept which does not challenge the present model of sustainable development, which itself fails to challenge the dominant discourse of development. As the name indicates, it is an economic concept, not an ecological one, focusing on economic development within the maritime domain (Winder and Le Heron, 2017) — a natural system with its own specificities. Thus, although the narrative has an ecological component which relates to the sea, it is not informed by a critical assessment of previous ecological practices conducted

on land. In other words, the dominant sustainable development narrative and practice have spread to the sea via the blue economy through horizontal reciprocity; normalization of the concept is facilitated by the sustainability component, which 'justifies' the implementation of the blue economy at sea, in ways which echo the practices of sustainable development on land.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The above discussion shows that the wide support and endorsement achieved by the blue economy can be explained through land–sea horizontal reciprocity and the normalization and diffusion of three existing discourses: the placelessness of the sea, development and sustainability. The practical implications and challenges resulting from these discourses include further control of, and interventions within, the maritime domain, whether for resource exploitation, marine environmental protection, or territorialization, management and planning. According to Choi (2017: 38), the blue economy creates 'new spatial rationalities, which fundamentally change how we perceive sea space and dispose things and relations in that space'. It is a dual dynamic: the perception of the sea facilitates the blue economy while the blue economy requires and justifies governance of the maritime space. It creates new economic and political possibilities and results in further knowledge creation and interventions. The development discourse normalizes economic interventions at sea, control of and power over the maritime space, and market-based marine management practices; the sustainability discourse normalizes environmental interventions at sea, control, territorialization and striation of the maritime space (for instance, via conservation projects). The perceived placelessness of the sea renders all of the above actions more possible and acceptable since the sea is represented as 'belonging to nobody', in terms of identity, but to economic actors, in terms of exploitable resources.

Of course, there is no single vision of *a* blue economy, and different interpretations and practices coexist. However, there are commonalities between the different perspectives. Voyer et al. (2018) highlight three: commodification (the neoliberalization of nature, with economic valuation given increased importance); delimitation (including the use of marine spatial planning); and securitization (with maritime security providing a safe environment to achieve the blue economy). One can argue that these three common elements are facilitated by the persistence and dominance of narratives surrounding development, sustainability and placeness of the sea. A practice of territorialization emerges from the interpenetration between these three discourses and the blue economy.

As discussed elsewhere, there is an ongoing territorialization of the sea (Germond and Germond-Duret, 2016; Roszko, 2015; Suárez-de Vivero and Rodríguez Mateos, 2014). The blue economy contributes to this trend, since

it reinforces the perception of the sea as a space that needs to be organized, managed, administered and controlled. Marine management maps reimagine the sea as a grid, divided into various zones and areas depending on the activities of users — defence, drilling, fishing, protected areas, recreation, sea lines of communications (SLOCs), etc. These representations are reinforced by the concomitant use of legal maps showing the division of the sea into different jurisdictions, such as exclusive economic zones and territorial waters.

The blue economy presents the sea as a complex space requiring coordination between various stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, fishing industries, public authorities, scientists and shipping companies. But despite this all-encompassing approach, ocean governance under the blue economy label tends to adopt a rather technical vision of the sea which contributes to the ongoing process of its territorialization. Zoning practices are also informed by security considerations (e.g. Ryan, 2015), since investors demand a secure and safe environment. For example, in South Africa the blue economy narrative has been used to justify the country's claim to extend its continental shelf, leading to an increase in the size of its territory, and the potential creation of a 10th province. This territorialization would result in further exploration and exploitation of marine resources (van Wyk, 2015). Boucquey et al. (2019: 485) discuss a '"third phase" of ocean enclosures [that] has involved an unprecedented intensity of map-making that supports an emerging regime of ocean governance decisions where resources and their utilization are geocoded, multiple and disparate marine uses are weighed against each other, spatial trade-offs are made, and exclusive rights to areas and resources are established'. The governance, territorialization and ocean science facilitating these processes are all interlinked and result in a techno-managerial approach towards oceans, which demands sustained and critical attention (Campbell et al., 2016). More broadly and fundamentally, scientific and technical approaches to the oceans have contributed to the production of a certain type of knowledge about the ocean space (Gray, 2018), neglecting its social and placeful dimensions.

It is worth noting that beyond the process of territorialization, a broader process of terrestrialization is taking place. The idea of terrestrialization has not been used in the context of land–sea horizontal reciprocity, nor more generally in social sciences. The term is commonly used to refer to species evolving from an aquatic milieu to a terrestrial one, a form of land colonization, through the adaptation of species to life on land. Hence this is a sea-towards-land dynamic. Here, in contrast, terrestrialization refers to the normalization of terrestrial narratives, policies and practices to the sea.

The processes of territorialization and terrestrialization are linked to the 'creation of governable spaces' as highlighted by Choi (2017: 37), which is as 'potentially dangerous as governmentality' (ibid.: 38). Inspired by Choi (2017), Steinberg and Kristoffersen (2018) investigate the implementation of the blue economy in the Arctic region through Norway's ocean

management policy, concluding that it is a means for legitimizing, maintaining and extending state power. In their words, 'efforts to sustain the seas may be rooted in efforts to sustain the state' (ibid.: 147). Beyond governance of the ocean space, a marine governmentality operates in the context of the sea. Following Foucault, this is not a process imposed by force, but one that occurs through disciplinary power. However, the biopower at play (which aims at developing and sustaining the sea) does not act solely through knowledge and ideas but combines with the dynamics taking place at the production level. For instance, territorialization is also associated with the movement of capital at sea, as discussed by Steinberg (2001: 165) who refers to spatial ideology at the service of capital, and by Connery (1994: 40) who uses the term 'bourgeois idealization of sea power'. Campling and Colas (2018) propose the term 'terraqueous territoriality' to refer to a capital accumulation strategy transcending the land–sea binary. For them, capital accumulation 'seeks to territorialize the sea through forms of sovereignty and modes of appropriation drawn from experiences on land' (ibid.: 776). For instance, they consider the exclusive economic zone to be 'emblematic of terraqueous territoriality' as 'it incorporates sovereignty (exclusive), appropriation (economic) and territory (zone) in its very title' (ibid.: 780). In 2004, Mansfield argued that neoliberalism was becoming a dominant mode of ocean governance, centred around privatization and markets. She also claimed that the state was playing an instrumental role in neoliberal regulation, for instance by creating and maintaining property rights. The blue economy has both responded and contributed to the spatial (and territorial) extension of neoliberalism and state control. Appropriation, control and management cannot be disassociated from the concept of territory (Elden, 2010; Steinberg, 2009) and territorial expansion cannot be disassociated from exploitation. In the same way that the green economy can result in green grabbing, the blue economy can result in blue grabbing — the appropriation of marine resources and coastal lands, by either private or public actors (Bennett et al., 2015). Barbesgaard's (2018) analysis of 'ocean grabbing' highlights the prominent role given to market-based mechanisms and to the private control of natural resources. Debates and concerns over the commodification of nature now extend into the marine domain.

CONCLUSION

This article has used the concepts of horizontal reciprocity and normalization to critically assess the blue economy and locate its relationship to processes occurring on land. The three discourses discussed (placelessness, development and sustainability) have spread spatially, narratively and normatively to the oceans, and can be examined in isolation or in combination to understand the dynamics at play. They have naturalized the notion of the blue economy, leading to its wide acceptance and endorsement. The article

has highlighted the need to reflect on dominant discourses shaping ideas and policies and their practical implications.

The horizontal reciprocity framework can also be used to understand other developments taking place at sea. In terms of maritime security, for example, spatial diffusion refers to the projection of security and the reproduction of security practices in the maritime space (in other words, territorialization of the maritime space for control and surveillance purposes). Narrative diffusion refers to the idea of the sea being treated in the same way as land; the oceans can be controlled and managed; there are borders at sea; and the vocabulary applicable to land can also be applied to the sea (grids, surveillance, etc.). Normative diffusion refers to the application of control to all spaces (controlling flows of people and goods at sea). In a similar way, we can think of marine protected areas (schemes applied in a different space and context but following similar norms).

It is widely recognized, especially in Foucauldian thinking, that there is one hegemonic discourse within a given field. Development dominates thinking on modernity. Sustainability dominates reflections on nature–society relations. Placelessness has dominated Western thinking about the sea. This does not mean that alternatives do not exist, but they do not have the same power of transformation and normalization. Any normalization process includes an element of disciplinary power which impacts on a whole range of different actors, who internalize the dominant discourse, reproduce knowledge and act in accordance with newly accepted norms. This explains why the blue economy has appealed to a wide array of agents. Similarly, in the development field, public authorities, private actors and NGOs alike act on behalf of development and reproduce knowledge, albeit with different values and interests; even alternatives are often framed under a broader development umbrella. The same can be said of sustainability. In all cases, agents and agencies are constrained by dominant discourses and ideas.

This is not to say that knowledge, ideas and norms are immutable and that nothing can alter the discursive circle of discourses inducing practices and practices reinforcing discourses. The discussion in this article has highlighted the ongoing need to relate meta-narratives and their practical implications to the broader structures that underlie them. It calls for further research and case studies to unpick and critically assess the connections between macro discourses and local realities regarding the implementation of the blue economy. In addition to the spatial, narrative and normative diffusion described here, harmful practices and mismanagement can also spread. Critical reflection on previous practices on land is vital if we are to avoid similar negative externalities spreading to the marine environment. Norms and narratives cannot be disassociated from resulting practices. Without a change of thinking and without questioning profound beliefs and myths driving human activities, the damaging practices applied on land are likely to be reproduced at sea. Addressing the global challenges involving the

oceans requires an analysis of how mistakes occurring on land (in the form of environmental degradations and social inequalities) result from specific knowledge structures, and how these knowledge structures are reproduced and normalized at sea.

REFERENCES

Adams, W.M. (2009) *Green Development: Environment and Sustainability in a Developing World* (3rd edn). Abingdon: Routledge.

Adams, W.M. (2017) 'Sleeping with the Enemy? Biodiversity Conservation, Corporations and the Green Economy', *Journal of Political Ecology* 24(1): 243–57.

Adey, P. (2010) *Aerial Life: Spaces, Mobilities, Affects*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

African Union (2012) '2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy'. Addis Ababa: African Union. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11151/2050_aims_srategy.pdf

Agnew, J.A. (2015) *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Alcock, F. (2008) 'Conflicts and Coalitions within and across the ENGO Community', *Global Environmental Politics* 8(4): 66–91.

AllAfrica (2017) 'South Africa: Operation Phakisa — a Disaster in the Making', AllAfrica 5 October. https://allafrica.com/stories/201710260095.html

Anderson, J. and K. Peters (eds) (2014) *Water Worlds: The Human Geography of the Oceans*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Augé, M. (1992) *Non-places: An Introduction to Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Paris: Le Seuil.

Barbesgaard, M. (2018) 'Blue Growth: Savior or Ocean Grabbing?', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(1): 130–49.

Bear, C. (2013) 'Assembling the Sea: Materiality, Movement and Regulatory Practices in the Cardigan Bay Scallop Fishery', *Cultural Geographies* 20(1): 21–41.

Bear, C. and S. Eden (2011) 'Making Space for Fish: The Regional, Network and Fluid Spaces of Fisheries Certification', *Social and Cultural Geography* 9(5): 487–504.

Bennett, N.J., H. Govan and T. Satterfield (2015) 'Ocean Grabbing', *Marine Policy* 57(July): 61–68.

Berg, L.D. (2009) 'Discourse Analysis', in N. Castree et al. (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, pp. 215–21. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Bertarelli, D. (2020) 'Developing a Vibrant Blue Economy Is Feasible, but We Need to Collaborate'. Remarks delivered at the UN Global Compact SDG Business Forum 'The Ocean and the 2030 Agenda: The UN Ocean Conference as a Key Milestone', Geneva (23 September). https://unctad.org/fr/node/28902

Bishop, R. (2011) 'Project "Transparent Earth" and the Autoscopy of Aerial Targeting: The Visual Geopolitics of the Underground', *Theory, Culture & Society* 28(7–8): 270–86.

Boucquey, N., K. St Martin, L. Fairbanks, L.M. Campbell and S. Wise (2019) 'Ocean Data Portals: Performing a New Infrastructure for Ocean Governance', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37(3): 484–503.

Brekke, K.A. (1997) *Economic Growth and the Environment: On the Measurement of Income and Welfare*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Bridge, G. (2013) 'Territory, Now in 3D!', *Political Geography* 34(2013): 55–57.

Burgenmeier, B. (1994) *Economy, Environment, and Technology: A Socioeconomic Approach*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Burgess, M.G., M. Clemence, G.R. McDermott, C. Costello and S.D. Gaines (2018) 'Five Rules for Pragmatic Blue Growth', *Marine Policy* 87: 331–39.

Campbell, L.M. et al. (2016) 'Global Oceans Governance: New and Emerging Issues', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 41: 517–43.

Campling, L. and A. Colas (2018) 'Capitalism and the Sea: Sovereignty, Territory and Appropriation in the Global Ocean', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36(4): 776–94.

Cardwell, E. and T.F. Thornton (2015) 'The Fisherly Imagination: The Promise of Geographical Approaches to Marine Management', *Geoforum* 64: 157–67.

Childs, J. (2020) 'Extraction in Four Dimensions: Time, Space and the Emerging Geo(-) politics of Deep-sea Mining', *Geopolitics* 25(1): 189–213.

Choi, Y.R. (2017) 'The Blue Economy as Governmentality and the Making of New Spatial Rationalities', *Dialogues in Human Geography* 7(1): 37–41.

Connery, C.L. (1994) 'Pacific Rim Discourse: The US Global Imaginary in the Late Cold War Years', *boundary 2* 21(1): 30–56.

Connery, C.L. (2006) 'There Was No More Sea: The Supersession of the Ocean, from the Bible to Cyberspace', *Journal of Historical Geography* 32(3): 494–511.

Cooke, B. and U. Kothari (eds) (2001) *Participation: The New Tyranny?*. London: Zed Books.

Craig, D. and D. Potter (1997) 'Framing Participation: Development Projects, Professionals and Organizations', *Development in Practice* 7(3): 230–36.

Davis, J.S. (2005) 'Representing Place: "Deserted Isles" and the Reproduction of Bikini Atoll', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95(3): 607–25.

Dialogues in Human Geography (2017) 'Special Issue. Geography and the Blue Economy', *Dialogues in Human Geography* 7(1).

Dryzek, J.S. (2005) *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Ehlers, P. (2016) 'Blue Growth and Ocean Governance — How to Balance the Use and the Protection of the Seas', *Journal of Maritime Affairs* 15: 187–203.

Elden, S. (2010) 'Land, Terrain, Territory', *Progress in Human Geography* 34(6): 799–817.

Elden, S. (2013) 'Secure the Volume: Vertical Geopolitics and the Depth of Power', *Political Geography* 34: 35–51.

Escobar, A. (1995) *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Esteva, G. (1992) 'Development', in W. Sachs (ed.) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, pp. 6–25. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

European Commission (2020) '2020 Blue Economy Report: Blue Sectors Contribute to the Recovery and Pave Way for EU Green Deal'. Brussels: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_986

Fairbanks, L., L.M. Campbell, N. Boucquey and K. St Martin (2018) 'Assembling Enclosure: Reading Marine Spatial Planning for Alternatives', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 108(1): 144–61.

Ferguson, J. (1990) *The Anti-politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ferguson, P. (2015) 'The Green Economy Agenda: Business as Usual or Transformational Discourse?', *Environmental Politics* 24(1): 17–37.

Fletcher, R. (2010) 'Neoliberal Environmentality: Towards a Poststructuralist Political Ecology of the Conservation Debate', *Conservation and Society* 8(3): 171–81.

Foucault, M. (1979/1991) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin.

Garland, M., S. Axon, M. Graziano, J. Morrissey and C.P. Heidkamp (2019) 'The Blue Economy: Identifying Geographic Concepts and Sensitivities', *Geography Compass* 13(7): 1–21.

Germond, B. and C. Germond-Duret (2016) 'Ocean Governance and Maritime Security in a Placeful Environment: The Case of the European Union', *Marine Policy* 66: 124–31.

Germond, B. and C. Germond-Duret (2017) 'Critical Geographies of the Ocean: Mobilities and Placefulness', in J. Monios and G. Wilmsmeier (eds) *Maritime Mobilities*, pp. 25–41. Abingdon: Routledge.

Germond-Duret, C. (2011) *Banque mondiale, peuples autochtones et normalisation* [*World Bank, Indigenous Peoples and Normalization*]. Paris: Karthala Press.

Germond-Duret, C. (2014) 'Extractive Industries and the Social Dimension of Sustainable Development: Reflection on the Chad–Cameroon Pipeline', *Sustainable Development* 22(4): 231–42.

Germond-Duret, C. (2016) 'Tradition and Modernity: An Obsolete Dichotomy? Reflection on Binary Thinking and Indigenous Peoples', *Third World Quarterly* 37(9): 1537–58.

Government Information Service (2013) 'GIS Newsletter'. Port Louis: Prime Minister's Office, Government of Mauritius.

Government of the Republic of Seychelles (2018) 'Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap Charting the Future (2018–2030)'. Victoria: Government of the Republic of Seychelles. www.seychellesconsulate.org.hk/download/Blue_Economy_Road_Map.pdf

Government of South Africa (2014) 'Unlocking the Economic Potential of South African's Oceans'. Executive Summary, Operation Phakisa (15 August). Cape Town: Marine Protection Services and Governance, Government of South Africa. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/21094/Presentation%20-%20Operation%20Phakisa.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Gray, N.J. (2018) 'Charted Waters? Tracking the Production of Conservation Territories on the High Seas', *International Social Science Journal* 68(229–230): 257–72.

Gruby, R. and L. Campbell (2013) 'Scalar Politics and the Region: Strategies for Transcending Pacific Island Smallness on a Global Environmental Governance Stage', *Environment and Planning A* 45: 2046–63.

Hadjimichael, M. (2018) 'A Call for a Blue Degrowth: Unravelling the European Union's Fisheries and Maritime Policies', *Marine Policy* 94: 158–64.

Hadjimichael, M., A. Bruggeman and M.A. Lange (2014) 'Tragedy of the Few? A Political Ecology Perspective of the Right to the Sea: The Cyprus Marine Aquaculture Sector', *Marine Policy* 49: 12–19.

Hector, D.C., C.B. Christensen and J. Petrie (2014) 'Sustainability and Sustainable Development: Philosophical Distinctions and Practical Implications', *Environmental Values* 23(1): 7–28.

Helmreich, S. (2007) 'Blue-green Capital, Biotechnological Circulation and an Oceanic Imaginary: A Critique of Biopolitical Economy', *BioSocieties* 2(3): 287–302.

Hill, A. (2017) 'Blue Grabbing: Reviewing Marine Conservation in Redang Island Marine Park, Malaysia', *Geoforum* 79: 97–100.

Hopwood, B., M. Mellor and G. O'Brien (2005) 'Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches', *Sustainable Development* 13(1): 38–52.

Jackson, M. and V. della Dora (2009) '"Dreams so Big only the Sea Can Hold them": Man-made Islands as Anxious Spaces, Cultural Icons, and Travelling Visions', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 41(9): 2086–104.

Jackson, S.E. (1995) 'The Water Is Not Empty: Cross-cultural Issues in Conceptualizing Sea Space', *Australian Geographer* 26(1): 87–96.

Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (2018) 'Special Issue. The Blue Economy: Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Food Security in the Indian Ocean Region', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 14(2).

Journal of Political Ecology (2019) 'Special Issue. Securing the Blue: Political Ecologies of the Blue Economy in Africa', *Journal of Political Ecology* 26(1).

Lebel, L. (2012) 'Governance and Coastal Boundaries in the Tropics', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 4(2): 243–51.

Lee, K-H., J. Noh and J.S. Khim (2020) 'The Blue Economy and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities', *Environment International* 137. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2020.105528

Lehman, J. (2013) 'Volumes beyond Volumetrics: A Response to Simon Dalby's "The Geopolitics of Climate Change"', *Political Geography* 37: 51–52.

Lehman, J. (2016) 'A Sea of Potential: The Politics of Global Ocean Observations', *Political Geography* 55: 113–23.

Lewis, N. (2019) 'Cultivating Diverse Values by Rethinking Blue Economy in New Zealand', in C.P. Heidkamp and J. Morrissey (eds) *Towards Coastal Resilience and Sustainability*, pp. 94–108. London and New York: Routledge.

Lubchenco, J. and S.D. Gaines (2019) 'Editorial: A New Narrative for the Ocean', *Science* 364(6444): 911–95.

Mansfield, B. (2004) 'Neoliberalism in the Oceans: "Rationalization, Property Rights, and the Commons Question"', *Geoforum* 35(3): 313–26.

Marine Policy (2018) 'Special Issue. What is Blue Growth?', *Marine Policy* 87(1).

Mawdsley, E. and J. Rigg (2003) 'The World Development Report II: Continuity and Change in Development Orthodoxies', *Progress in Development Studies* 3(4) 271–86.

Meadows, D. et al. (1972) *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*. New York: Universe Books.

Mulrennan, M. and C. Scott (2000) '*Mare Nullius*: Indigenous Rights in Saltwater Environments', *Development and Change* 31(3): 681–708.

Mumford, L. (1934) *Technics and Civilisation*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Nederveen Pieterse, J. (2000) 'After Post-development', *Third World Quarterly* 21(2): 175–91.

Neumann, R.P. (2014) *Making Political Ecology* (2nd edn). London: Routledge.

O'Riordan, T. (1989) 'The Challenge for Environmentalism', in R. Peet and N. Thrift (eds) *New Models in Geography*, pp. 77–102. London: Unwin Hyman.

Persaud, I. (2016) 'A Million Cans of Tuna a Day: Where Next for Seychelles' "Blue Economy"?'. Paper delivered in the Blue Growth Narrative and the Global South session at RGS-IBG International Annual Conference, London (31 August).

Peters, K. (2014) 'Taking More-than-human Geographies to Sea: Ocean Natures and Offshore Radio Piracy', in J. Anderson and K. Peters (eds) *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Oceans*, pp. 177–91. Farnham: Ashgate.

Pittman, J. and D. Armitage (2016) 'Governance across the Land–Sea Interface: A Systematic Review', *Environmental Science and Policy* 64: 9–17.

Quinn, D. (1992) *Ishmael*. New York: Bantam Books.

Relph, E. (1976) *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Limited.

Republic of Namibia (2017) 'Namibia's 5th National Development Plan (NDP5): Working Together Towards Prosperity'. Report. Windhoek: National Planning Commission, Republic of Namibia. www.gov.na/documents/10181/14226/NDP+5/

Rist, G. (2008) *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (3rd edn). London and New York: Zed Books.

Roszko, E. (2015) 'Maritime Territorialization as Performance of Sovereignty and Nationhood in the South China Sea', *Nations and Nationalism* 21(2): 230–49.

Ryan, B. (2015) 'Security Spheres: A Phenomenology of Maritime Spatial Practices', *Security Dialogue* 46(6): 568–84.

Sachs, W. (ed.) (1992) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Sardar, Z. (1999) 'Development and the Locations of Eurocentrism', in R. Munck and D. O'Hearn (eds) *Critical Development Theory*, pp. 44–62. London: Zed Books.

Satizabal, P. and S. Batterbury (2018) 'Fluid Geographies: Marine Territorialization and the Scaling Up of Local Aquatic Epistemologies on the Pacific Coast of Colombia', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 43(1): 61–78.

Shields, R. (1991) *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. New York: Routledge.

Silver, J.J. (2014) 'From Fishing to Farming: Shellfish Aquaculture Expansion and the Complexities of Ocean Space on Canada's West Coast', *Applied Geography* 54: 110–17.

Silver, J.J. and L.M. Campbell (2018) 'Conservation, Development and the Blue Frontier: The Republic of Seychelles' Debt Restructuring for Marine Conservation and Climate Adaptation Program', *International Social Science Journal* 68(229–230): 241–56.

Silver, J.J., N.J. Gray, L.M. Campbell, L.W. Fairbanks and R.L. Gruby (2015) 'Blue Economy and Competing Discourses in International Oceans Governance', *The Journal of Environment and Development* 24(2): 135–60.

Singh, G.G. et al. (2018) 'A Rapid Assessment of Co-benefits and Trade-offs among Sustainable Development Goals', *Marine Policy* 93: 223–31.

Steinberg, P.E. (1999) 'The Maritime Mystique: Sustainable Development, Capital Mobility, and Nostalgia in the World Ocean', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 17(4): 403–26.

Steinberg, P.E. (2001) *The Social Construction of the Ocean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Steinberg, P.E. (2009) 'Sovereignty, Territory, and the Mapping of Mobility: A View from the Outside', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99(3): 467–95.

Steinberg, P. and B. Kristoffersen (2018) 'Building a Blue Economy in the Arctic Ocean: Sustaining the Sea or Sustaining the State?', in U. Pram Gad and J. Strandsbjerg (eds) *The Politics of Sustainability in the Arctic: Reconfiguring Identity, Space, and Time*, pp. 136–48. London: Routledge.

Steinberg, P. and K. Peters (2015) 'Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving Depth to Volume through Oceanic Thinking', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33(2): 247–64.

Stoms, D.M. et al. (2005) 'Integrated Coastal Reserve Planning: Making the Land–Sea Connection', *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 3(8): 429–36.

Suárez-de Vivero, J.L. and J.C. Rodríguez Mateos (2014) 'Changing Maritime Scenarios. The Geopolitical Dimension of the EU Atlantic Strategy', *Marine Policy* 48: 59–72.

Sustainability Science (2020) 'Special Issue. Blue Degrowth and the Politics of the Sea: Rethinking the Blue Economy', *Sustainability Science* 15(1).

Tuan, Y.F. (1974) *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Tuan, Y.F. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

UNCSD (2012) 'Blue Economy Concept Paper'. Paper presented at the Blue Economy Summit, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Abu Dhabi (19–20 January). https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2978BEconcept.pdf

UNCTAD (2014) 'The Oceans Economy: Opportunities and Challenges for Small Island Developing States'. Geneva: United Nations Conference of Trade and Development.

UNECA (2016) *Africa's Blue Economy: A Policy Handbook*. Addis Ababa: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Voyer, M., G. Quirk, A. McIlgorm and K. Azmi (2018) 'Shades of Blue: What Do Competing Interpretations of the Blue Economy Mean for Oceans Governance?', *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning* 20(5): 595–616.

Winder, G.M. and R. Le Heron (2017) 'Assembling a Blue Economy Moment? Geographic Engagement with Globalizing Biological–Economic Relations in Multi-use Marine Environments', *Dialogues in Human Geography* 7(1): 3–26.

World Bank (2017) 'The Potential of the Blue Economy: Increasing Long-term Benefits of the Sustainable Use of Marine Resources for Small Island Developing States and Coastal Least Developed Countries'. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) 'Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future'. New York: United Nations. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf

van Wyk, J-A. (2015) 'Defining the Blue Economy as a South African Strategic Priority: Toward a Sustainable 10th Province?', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 11(2): 153–69.

Young, Z. (2002) *A New Green Order? The World Bank and the Politics of the Global Environment Facility*. London: Pluto Press.

Celine Germond-Duret (C.V.GermondDuret@ljmu.ac.uk) is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK. Her current research examines the interplay between the sea and sense of place, with the aim of deconstructing the narratives and representations of the sea and resulting power structures.