Sustainability Science (2020) 15:1–10
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00772-y

SPECIAL FEATURE: EDITORIAL

Blue Degrowth and the Politics of the Sea: Rethinking the Blue Economy

Editorial: Blue degrowth and the politics of the sea: rethinking the blue economy

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Received: 11 November 2019 / Accepted: 11 December 2019 / Published online: 23 December 2019

Introduction

The ocean is currently a central element in discussions around sustainability, whether the locus of these discussions is its protection or its exploitation. This is also the case in the most recent climate change discussions, which, following the massive global mobilisations, have received particular media attention. For instance, the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) to the UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) has been named the 'Blue COP', whilst, in its run-up, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change adopted the 'Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate' highlighting "the urgency of prioritizing timely, ambitious and coordinated action to address unprecedented and enduring changes in the ocean and cryosphere" (IPCC 2019). In these public debates, climate activists like Greta Thunberg brought the growth illusion to the mainstream discussions, for instance, by criticizing the 'fairy tales of eternal economic growth' at the UN Climate Action Summit on the 23rd of September 2019. From the NGO side, big campaigns have over the years managed to draw attention to the oceans in discussions on human-made impacts on global ecosystems; Greenpeace, WWF, Oceana and the Bloom Association are some transnational and regional NGOs that specifically have focused on the seas and oceans and their conservation. Such discussions are running in parallel with other, more dominant ones regarding the role of the oceans in the economic life of humankind. Concepts such as the 'blue economy', 'blue capital', and 'blue growth' have emerged and become entrenched in policy discussions around the future of the oceans.

The ocean as a new economic and epistemological frontier calls for new discussions around the politics of the sea (Havice and Zalik 2019). New frontiers can be spaces of both openings as well as (en)closures allowing for the creation of new political organizations and institutions. At the moment, marine frontiers have only become evident through excitement or concerns over their exploitation and commodification opportunities, though possibilities for ethical innovations have also emerged (Steinberg 2018). Throughout history, the sea has been a space for politics in different ways. It has been a space dominated by maritime nations, and crossing it to other lands was a way to project and exercise the powers of strong maritime nations (Schmitt 1997). An account of the historical aspect of the use, regulations, and representation of ocean space is thoroughly presented by Steinberg (2001), from Micronesian societies to European explorers and States. Steinberg describes how the ocean space has been socially constructed and imagined in different historical periods and geographical regions. Nevertheless, it was with the institutionalization of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), through which a new ocean imaginary[1] began to be envisioned. Described by Buck (1998, 84) as a "classic case of enclosure", UNCLOS became the inauguration for the

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[1] Latouche (2015) comments on the understanding of the phrase 'decolonization of the imaginary' referencing the [philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis and his book *The Imaginary Institution of the Society* (1975) where a social reality is described as 'imaginary significations' meaning representations which mobilise feelings. In a social reality, therefore, in which (economic) growth has a strong imaginary signification, degrowth can only be realised once a growth-oriented imaginary is decolonized.

transformation of coastal space and the extension of a State's sovereignty/sovereign rights over marine waters up to 200 nautical miles where one's Exclusive Economic Zone ends, through the introduction of fisheries access regimes based on the logic of private property (Campling and Havice 2014). Since then, fisheries have been at the center of marine social sciences, and of course critical marine social sciences, offering strong foundations for extending this research on the wider ocean transformations accelerated through policies such as that of blue growth (Arbo et al. 2018).

The illusion(s) of blue growth

Different regional and international institutions have adopted the 'blue growth' and the 'blue economy' as archetypes in fostering and promoting their new blue economic policies. The debate around 'blue growth' has a resonance to that around green growth, a term which argues that the economy can expand without negatively impacting the planet's sustainability, as new technologies will allow the decoupling of GDP from resource use and carbon emissions. Though the term 'green growth' received critiques regarding the impossibility of bringing these two objectives together (for a discussion on the illusion of 'green growth' and its (im) possibility for combating climate change and ecological destruction, see Hickel and Kallis 2019), there are significant differences with the blue growth ideals. The latter is rather an economic strategy, which focuses on how to ensure growth in a space where great opportunities exist for exploitation by expanding industries. In the European Union, 'Blue Growth' is described as "the long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole" and the "seas and oceans as drivers for the European economy with great potential for innovation and growth" (European Commission 2019). Marine aquaculture, coastal (and marine) tourism, marine biotechnology, ocean energy, and seabed mining are the main five sectors this strategy calls for focusing upon. In a similar vein, the Australian Government has calculated that its marine industries will contribute around $100 billion each year to the economy, with oceans and coasts providing a further $25 billion worth of ecosystem services, such as carbon dioxide absorption, nutrient cycling, and coastal protection by 2025, whilst the marine economy is projected to grow three times faster than Australia's gross domestic product over the next decade (Coffin and National Marine Science Committee 2015).

In Africa, the blue economy is on the agenda, included as a key policy framework for the continent's future socio-economic development as mentioned in the African Union's 'Agenda 2063′ (African Union Commission 2015). Meanwhile, the UN Economic Commission for Africa developed in 2016 a 'policy handbook' describing maritime development as 'the new frontier of African Renaissance' (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2016). The 'Asia and the Pacific's Blue Growth Initiative' on the other hand, focuses on the sustainable use of fisheries and sustainable growth of regional aquaculture in an attempt "to enhance food and nutrition security through meeting increasing regional and world demand for fish, aid poverty alleviation and encourage economic development in the region" (FAO 2019). The World Bank (2017) has also picked up the term and defined it as "the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health". The FAO has put forward the blue growth initiative to emphasize "the need for growth in many Member States particularly in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors", with its goals being "to maximize economic and social benefits while minimizing environmental degradation from these sectors" also linking it to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14: 'Life Under Water' (FAO 2017). In general, untapping the hidden wealth locked in the oceans has become a goal for many countries across the globe that is being promoted by the most powerful institutions.

Despite the concepts being around for over a decade now, there is still no strict definition of blue growth or blue economy neither in policy (as shown in the previous paragraph), nor in academic circles, something which is a major constraint. Eikeset et al. (2018) discuss various definitions of the blue growth concept and highlight that for some, blue growth is about maximizing economic growth, whilst for others, the focus is on sustainability. Almost ignoring, therefore, that the concepts of 'blue economy' as well as 'blue growth' are economic ones, Burgess et al. (2018, 331) have described blue growth as "the newest of many recent calls for a more holistic management of complex marine socio-ecological systems", and "an ambitious framework for ocean management". During Rio + 20, blue economy was being invoked to connect oceans with "green economy"—both of which with their growth focus usually brought 'false solutions' (Gunderson et al. 2018; Kerschner et al. 2018; Norgard and Xue 2016)—whereby different actors worked to further define the term in ways that prioritized particular ocean problems and solutions, and left it unclear for whom and how the blue economy will eventually be a strategy (Silver et al. 2015, 135). Other scholars realized the limitations of current definitions and called for new ones, such as Spalding (2016, 14), who referred to a new blue economy "to promote economic benefits of "good for the ocean" industries and activities, while ensuring truly sustainable development". However, the lack of a common definition can be particularly problematic not only because of its incoherence, but also since it remains open for manipulation by different actors depending on their interests (Carver, this issue).

Alternative voices to the blue growth

Despite these recent trends, there has been limited critical discussion on 'blueing' the growth in the academic sphere, let alone in the wider societal—and political and economic—sphere(s). Nevertheless, some research and academic circles have brought forward the limitations and consequences of transposing an economic growth fixation on the ocean (Barbesgaard 2018; Hadjimichael 2018; TNI 2014). Winder and Le Heron (2017) and Morissey (2017) engaged in discussions bringing in the issue of blue economy in critical social science studies, whilst Hadjimichael (2018) has used the failure of the neoliberal EU fisheries policies to argue against blue growth. Eikeset et al. (2018) prepared a Special Issue which focused on the limitations and the potential of the blue growth strategy, without, however, sufficiently criticizing the idea of infinite growth and its socio-ecological consequences, whereas Childs and Hicks (2019) initiated a debate around issues of economic, ecological, and political 'security' of the blue growth agenda, and its effects across different temporal and spatial dimensions in Africa. European environmental NGOs published a Joint Communication titled 'Limits to Blue Growth' and expressed their concerns with regards to some of the priorities set in the EU's Blue Growth Communication in 2012 (EC 2012), and called "upon Ministers and policy-makers to fully enshrine Good Environmental Status by 2020 and the precautionary principle as prerequisites for the Integrated Maritime Policy and a blue growth agenda" (ESEC 2012). Still in most cases and criticisms, the political debates begin with a presumption and acceptance of the economic growth imperative, and the discussions continue on how growth should take place to limit its possible negative consequences. We, therefore, suggest that discussions over the future of the ocean are in need of a more radical and critical stance challenging the mainstream discussions fixed on the present growth-oriented imaginary.

Following the aims and scope of the journal Sustainability Science, this Special Feature offers an interdisciplinary debate on issues linked with sustainability, ocean governance, and the blue economy. It aims to bring a rather unconventional spin to the discussions around the mainstream understandings of the blue economy/growth. With ocean-based economies reflecting a new and exciting element (Silver et al. 2015) to the illusion of economic growth, there is an urgent need to critically discuss and reflect on the impacts of this new shift towards the exploration of new markets via the oceans, seas, and coasts, unpacking the approach towards oceans as a new commodity frontier for further capital accumulation (Campling 2012; Saguin 2016; Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà 2019). We aim to achieve this through exploring new dimensions of the theoretical framework on sustainable [blue] degrowth (D'Alisa et al. 2015a), whilst addressing the roots of the problems embedded in unsustainable and unequal societal relations linked to the marine and ocean spaces. Thus, we attempt to establish a link with current and future ambitions around the use of marine commons (spaces and resources).

Mobilizing blue degrowth for critical marine social sciences

Learning from existing degrowth debates

Since the first international conference on Degrowth in 2008 in Paris (see Degrowth Declaration of Paris 2008 Conference published by the Research and Degrowth in 2010), degrowth proponents have been organized in different social, political, and academic circles discussing the term, the possibilities of its application in practice, and the links with local projects focusing on agroecology, care[2] and education, as well as broader political—and institutional—strategies, among others (for a historical account of the evolution of the concept and the political and academic debates around it, see Demaria et al. 2019; Kallis et al. 2018). In 2018, an open letter put together by more than 200 scientists and signed by approximately 90,000 people[3] addressed the European Parliament and institutions and asserted that "Europe, It's Time to End the Growth Dependency" (Research and Degrowth 2018; The Guardian 2018; Demaria et al. 2019). This letter put forward demands to end the growth dependence in Europe with some concrete policy proposals, linking them to the climate crisis and to the need of prioritizing human and ecological well-being.

These concrete policy proposals have been developed as a response to the critiques of degrowth, which have mostly argued that degrowth is a utopian project based on a negative-sounding slogan[4] (Fotopoulos 2010; van den Bergh 2011; Drews and Antal 2016). On one hand, degrowth proponents still preserve the view that imagining and striving for utopian futures, in which different epistemologies exist in conviviality, are the foundation for the materialization of

[2] The term 'care' is used in this article with feminist lenses and refers both to carework for reproductive activities and putting care to the center of relations within commmunities, not only focusing on caring between humans, but also between humans and the non-human environment [see Akbulut (2017) and D'Alisa et al. (2015a)].

[3] See the petition here: https://you.wemove.eu/campaigns/europe-its-time-to-end-the-growth-dependency

[4] It was discussed whether similar ideas should be named as a-growth, de-growth, steady state, or sustainable growth, among others. The degrowth proponents and practitioners usually claimed for maintaining the name, since it was provocative, straightforward, and politically necessary in terms of global material and energy use (Van den Bergh and Kallis 2014).

more just and sustainable social and ecological imaginaries (Kallis and March 2015). At the same time, concrete political demands and actions are being put forward— the macro-demands mostly linked with the economic organization of life such as those included in the open letter, as well as the ones mostly linked with the socio-political organization of life, such as striving for autonomy, creativity, simplicity, and conviviality for a broader, more radical socio-ecological transformation; an indication of the maturity the degrowth discussions have reached (Kallis et al. 2018; D'Alisa et al. 2015a).

One of the strongest critiques to the degrowth term has come from the Global South. Having emerged mainly from and targeting the Global North, and calling for different paths than global capitalist growth for the Global South (D'Alisa et al. 2015a; Schmelzer 2019; for a historical account of the evolution of the concept and political debates around it see Demaria et al. 2019), the initial degrowth debates have been missing the link with the rich variety of world visions and epistemologies of the Global South. The cultural and historical differences—especially the colonial past and striking inequalities—between the two create tensions and put obstacles to possible alliances. However, with the criticism coming from the Global South, further dialog has recently been initiated—as in the first North–South Degrowth Conference in Mexico in September 2018—which opens up the space to different conceptualizations of socio-ecological struggles and to the idea of living well[5] with shared common ideals (for an in-depth examination of these tensions between Global North–South alliances, see Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019; and for a call for feminist decolonial degrowth approach, see Dengler and Seebacher 2019). Further constructive critiques on degrowth made a call for "bringing class analysis back in" (Leonardi 2019; for a comprehensive discussion, see also Vergara-Camus 2017; Andreucci and Engel-DiMauro 2017; Barca 2017). Agreeably, it is merely impossible for a single concept to be able to incorporate the perspectives and demands of all socio-ecological struggles. The degrowth scholarship, nevertheless, through engagement with different terms, concepts, and movements (from both academia and activism) attempts to be an umbrella term for those who link their own definitions with a critique to the infinite growth paradigm, without attempting to overrule those. Such concepts include: (i) environmental justice (Akbulut et al. 2019), (ii) climate justice (Demaria et al. 2013), (iii) aviation justice and degrowth in aviation (see the Stay Grounded[6] network whose first conference has taken place in Barcelona in July 2019), and (iv) agroecology and urban gardening (Sekulova et al. 2017; Boillat et al. 2012; Cattaneo and Gavalda 2010). At the same time, its limitations have been discussed and debated with its opponents and among its supporters (see Kallis 2017, In defense of degrowth). Meanwhile, many local, regional, or global movements striving for social and ecological justice in cities and in rural areas have incorporated the claim that infinite economic growth is neither possible, nor desirable for achieving societal objectives for sustainable and just futures.

The seas and oceans have been absent in these debates. This is despite the fact that there is a strong link between these spaces and socio-ecological struggles taking place at local, regional, national, and global levels, a case which must be placed within the framework of the current infinite growth ideals and accumulation strategies. In the following section, we engage with the blue degrowth concept and attempt to define and frame it.

Blue degrowth concept

Blue degrowth concept emerges from (i) the need of confronting the new—but becoming rapidly dominant—blue growth imperative, and (ii) the quest for an alternative imaginary for the use of, access to, and relations with the seas and oceans by the society. The term was first introduced by Hadjimichael (2018) in her paper, in which she discussed alternatives to the growth-driven policies of the EU, in general, and of its maritime and fisheries policies, in particular. As a starting point, here, we want to highlight that (sustainable) blue degrowth does not intend to offer a panacea to analyze the entire politics of the sea, nor a single operational criterion, but rather 'a multifaceted framework' linked with a political vision that can be socially and ecologically transformative (Kallis 2011; Hadjimichael 2018).

Building on the terminology and theoretical discussions on sustainable economic 'degrowth', blue degrowth aims at framing and implementing degrowth thinking and practices in several spaces of individual and collective life,

[5] The idea of living well instead of accumulating wealth is found in different epistemologies from Global South with different terms but with parallel ideas; see the indigenous concepts like Buen Vivir or Sumak Kawsay, or Ecological Swaraj (Acosta 2013, Guardiola and García-Quero 2014; Escobar 2015; Kothari et al. 2015; Gallardo Fiero 2017), among others. This has been another important debate among sympathizers of degrowth criticizing a Eurocentric approach and a focus on Global North, as well as claiming that the degrowth term does not completely fit to the Global South. Therefore, some of the socio-ecological or indigenous movements have been against the dominant use of the term 'degrowth' in their struggles and social movements, since they have already been using similar but different terms emerging from their understandings of the societies' relation with nature. This has led to the first North–South Conference in Mexico in September 2018, where academics and movement representatives aimed to initiate further dialogue.

[6] Website of the Stay Grounded Network struggling for the reduction of aviation: https://stay-grounded.org/about/.

decision-making, and politics. Therefore, departing from the understanding that "the economy is a social and political construct with a specific history" (Schmelzer 2019, 379) and that economic growth is the imperative under a capitalist system and capitalist (production and human) relations, we share Kallis' (2018) nine principles of degrowth, i.e., an end to exploitation, direct democracy, localized production, sharing and reclaiming the commons, a focus on relationships, dépense,[7] care, diversity, and finally the decommodification of land—and seas—labor and value while thinking about a (blue) degrowth society. Moreover, like other degrowth proponents, we also call for the "decolonization of the imaginary (Latouche 2009 in Demaria et al. 2019), and the dismantling the ideological primacy of growth-based development. The goal is not a better (variously defined as more inclusive or greener) growth, but another kind of society altogether, in which growth and development are not central metrics or signifiers" (Demaria et al. 2019, 432).

The link of these debates with marine areas and the marine commons has not been well established yet, and the need for a blue degrowth conceptualization regarding our use of and relations with the seas and oceans has not appeared either in the degrowth literature, nor in maritime socio-political circles, including a range of social actors such as NGO representatives, policy-makers, practitioners, and social movements. The need for a reduction in the material and energy throughput[8] originating from the seas has not found any appeal in the academic or political discussions, either. Therefore, instead of considering seas and oceans as a new commodity frontier for further capital accumulation (Campling 2012; Saguin 2016; Ertör and Ortega-Cerdà 2019), with the blue degrowth concept, we call for socially and ecologically just blue futures with minimized and fairly distributed energy and material use from the seas. Meanwhile, the blue degrowth term aims to show the injustices and inequalities taking place in marine/blue spaces such as the displacement of coastal and fisher communities (Mills 2018; Pictou 2018), grabbing of their aquatic resources (Barbesgaard 2018), and privatizations of the seas and coastlines (Clausen and Clark 2005) limiting or preventing public use of a range of once common marine areas (for a collection of socio-ecological conflicts on marine spaces, see the 'Aquaculture and fisheries' category in the Environmental Justice Atlas[9]). Therefore, the blue degrowth framework makes a quest for a common participatory societal vision towards the seas, emphasizing a relationship that strives for the rights of coastal communities, small-scale production, local consumption, and fishing as well as consumption cooperatives, and (participative) common management of marine areas, instead of a capitalist increase of exploitation, extraction, production, and consumption enabled by neoliberal (nationalist) marine policies.

Blue degrowth is thus a multifaceted concept, offering both a criticism to the blue growth imperative, and an umbrella concept to bring together the struggles of communities against blue growth projects on the ground. It aims to guide the political discussions around the seas and oceans to uncover and contest the failures, injustices, and negative impacts of this imperative, at different ecological, political, and social levels. While blue growth is at the center of most current strategic and political marine discussions, the blue degrowth term intends to deconstruct the win–win argument of this imperative. It does so by building on degrowth debates and linking them with the seas for an integrated understanding of the sea and land, and by highlighting a range of socio-ecological struggles standing against the (blue) growth imperative and striving for social and ecological justice around the world.

Exploring the different dimensions of blue degrowth

This Special Feature is a collection of articles written by scholars from different fields who saw the potential in exploring the way the degrowth literature(s) speaks to their research. Therefore, it is a first attempt to initiate a dialog between blue degrowth and its theoretical underpinnings and critical marine social sciences. Examples of blue degrowth being put forward in this Special Feature bring together several dimensions which have similarities to the existing degrowth discussions, whilst at the same time highlighting the importance of also having a 'blue' perspective.

Initiating this dialog, Nogué-Algueró (this issue) and Brent et al. (this issue) take a macro-approach to explore the ways in which the illusion of blue growth links with the circulation of global capital and the deepening of inequalities. Nogué-Algueró (this issue) adopts ecological economics and political ecology perspectives to analyze port activities. By examining the case of the Port of Barcelona, Nogué-Algueró critically analyzes the role of ports in the global economy and the global circulation of energy and

[7] Dépense has been defined as "the social and ritual destruction of accumulated surplus" and unproductive (including reproduction) use of energy that should be socialized in a degrowth society (D'Alisa et al. 2015b). For a more detailed discussion, see Romano (2015).

[8] Throughput is the flow of energy and materials for the production of a product or for the maintenance of a system (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl 1993). Both biological and socio-economic systems depend on continuous throughput of energy and materials (EJOLT Glossary 2012. See http://www.ejolt.org/2012/11/social-metabolism-and-accounting-tools/).

[9] https://www.ejatlas.org.

materials by uncovering power relations and inequalities and how they manifest in socio-ecological burdens and benefits at multiple scales. Brent et al. (this issue) scrutinize the politics behind the promise of blue growth and offer their 'blue fix' framework to understand the main components of this capital accumulation strategy, focusing on what they call conservation, protein, and energy fixes. Building on David Harvey's conceptualization of 'spatial fix' (Harvey 2006), the authors unpack the blue growth discourses as well as the political agenda and the economic interests and mechanisms of capital accumulation embedded in them. They analyze these three fixes by especially focusing on the politics of marine protected areas, intensive aquaculture production, and the relationship between wind and solar energy investments taking place on one hand and deep-sea mining and oil and gas exploration on the other.

As expected, examples from fisheries form a majority of the articles in the Special Feature. The long history of the fisheries sector allows for the exploration of multiple dimensions. Ertör-Akyazı (this issue) problematizes the ever-expanding boundaries of industrial fishing and discusses the way that small-scale fishers in Turkey are organizing against growth policies leading to overfishing, and what kind of blue degrowth practices are employed by them, highlighting the importance of a local narrative which can be appealing as well as coherent to the small-scale fishers. The threats posed to the identities and way of life of small-scale fishers in Turkey have politicized them further and allowed for spaces for new collaborations, and demands for environmental, social, and economic justice. Arias Schreiber et al. (this issue) initiate a theoretical debate on the link of blue degrowth and diverse economies and community economies through their analysis of a municipal initiative in Simrishamn, Sweden, which aims to protect the coastal fisheries sector and help in the rebuilding of fishing communities. The authors use the theoretical framework of 'diverse economies' and particularly that of community economies, "to bring marginalized, hidden, and alternative economic activities to light to make them more real and more credible as objects of policy and activism" (Gibson-Graham 2008, 613). Parallel to the article of Ertör-Akyazı, they discuss how local initiatives of small-scale fisher people might become a force of confronting blue growth proposals/ideals, and create different understandings of socio-ecological systems and economic and cultural activities to break down the rules of growth imperative. Thus, both papers use the concept of blue degrowth to frame ways in which small-scale fishers in two very different parts of the world resist against top-down policies that threaten their identities and way of life.

Andriamahefazafy et al. (this issue), using the case study of tuna fisheries in the Western Indian Ocean, highlight the impossibility of sustainability claims in a growth-oriented economy. The article engages with issues around geopolitics, ontological discussions regarding what constitutes a crisis, as well as scalar mismatches of dominant (national and global) discourses around sustainability vis-a-vis local knowledge and experience. Using the three 'analytical windows' of the mainstream blue economy discourse: geopolitics, crisis management, and local perspectives, the authors expose challenges or contradictions and indicate the way in which the power of dominant economic and political actors acts through multiple scalar moments,[10] disrupting the simplified win–win stories which frame the main discourse of sustainability. Said and Macmillan (this issue) discuss and criticize neoliberal policies promoted as part of a national blue growth strategy in fisheries in Malta and their effects towards the marginalization of small-scale fishing communities. They also discuss how this creates a shift from the traditional marine sectors such as small-scale fishing, to aquaculture and coastal tourism, sectors linked and promoted through the blue growth ideals. Linking the fisheries discussions with aquaculture production, i.e., one of the main blue growth sectors, Bogadottir (this issue) uses the case of the Faroe Islands to think about the increasing 'social metabolism'[11] (Scheidel et al. 2018) with the expansion of intensive marine aquaculture—especially salmon farming. She identifies the dominant blue growth strategies on the island and provides an analysis of the metabolic flows in fish farming based on fish in/fish out ratios on the island. Finally, Bogadottir establishes the link between increasing social metabolism in food production with ecological distribution conflicts and environmental justice demands that arise on the island juxtaposed with strategies of continuous growth of marine spaces.

Articles in this Special Feature have also engaged with the rather recent sector of seabed mining. Childs (this issue) explores local resistance to deep-sea mining in the Duke of York Islands in Papua New Guinea and shows how creative practice can emerge as a counter-narrative to a deep-sea mining industry depicted as a 'sustainable' version of blue growth. Creative practice is thus presented as a form of political intervention which can both give voice to marginalized

[10] Scale suggesting the means through which the management of the resource or the environment becomes political across space and time.

[11] Social metabolism refers to "the interactions and the material and energy exchange processes of socio-economic systems with the environment and its biogeochemical cycles" (Scheidel et al. 2018, 587). It defines the society like a human body, which needs continuous throughput of energy and materials for its functions and organization. Therefore, the metabolism of a society is also shaped by its political, economic, and social organization, which "govern the modes of appropriation, distribution and disposal of materials and energy" (ibid.). For detailed discussions on the social metabolism concept, see EJOLT Glossary (2012) and the Special Feature on "Ecological distribution conflicts as forces for sustainability" by Scheidel et al. (2018).

communities and provide an alternative vocabulary for human encounters with environments considered by Western societies to be beyond the human 'cosmos', whilst showing how the sector is a continuation of the violence of colonial relations in the region and a new threat to indigenous thought and ontologies concerning the ocean. This concept of 'performing (blue) degrowth' put forward by Childs opens up a new space for discussion and research in the wider Degrowth community. Carver (this issue) follows discussions around Namibia's blue economy agenda, and draws upon debates surrounding the potential extraction of marine phosphate to show the embedded unsustainable and unequal relations that must be considered in discussions of (blue) degrowth. The analyzed inherent and continued structural effects become of particular importance when considering whose voices are represented or excluded by such agendas, a research theme running in parallel with the article by Andriamahefazafy et al. (this issue), with Carver highlighting how this issue becomes complicated by the (geo)physical characteristics of the marine space. Finally, Kaşdoğan contributes to the Special Feature by bringing Science and Technology Studies' perspective to the blue degrowth discussion through her analysis of how offshore algal biofuel production systems, integrated with wastewater treatment and carbon dioxide absorption processes, are used to revitalize faith in biofuels in the blue economy. The author uses a critical textual analysis, including close readings of scientific articles, legal documents, reports on algae and algal biofuels, bioeconomies, and the blue economy, as well as web-based archival research on a specific U.S. based algal biofuel project to examine how practitioners talk about and design this project, as well as the metaphors, concepts, knowledges, materials, techniques, and technologies which they use and build. Kaşdoğan argues that such projects enforce specific sustainability understandings that are limiting the conceptualizations of the relationship between the human and the more-than-human to economism.

The amalgamation of the articles which shapes this Special Feature builds on various theoretical frameworks and political debates. They range from political economy and political ecology (Andriamahefazafy et al. this issue; Noguéi-Algueró, this issue) as well as ecological economics and social metabolism analyses (Bogadottir, this issue; Noguéi-Algueró, this issue) to links with colonial studies and discussions with critical geography literature (Carver, this issue; Childs, this issue; Andriamahefazafy et al. this issue). Environmental justice, resistances, and struggles against blue growth politics/policies also form an essential part of the discussions taking place (Childs, this issue; Ertör-Akyazı, this issue; Said and Macmillan, this issue). Alternative economies (Arias Schreiber et al. this issue), cooperatives and food sovereignty (Ertör-Akyazı, this issue) linked with small-scale fishers, in particular, establish bridges across fields focusing on the socio-political and socio-ecological themes on marine environments. At the same time, the various articles make direct or indirect links with different social movements such as, for example, food justice/food sovereignty (Ertör-Akyazı, this issue), ocean grabbing (Andriamahefazafy et al., this issue; Said and Macmillan, this issue), and anti-mining (Childs, this issue).

We, therefore, argue that blue degrowth has the potential to initiate a conversation and to embrace many of the critical debates, which are currently taking place in the critical marine social sciences as it has recently tried to expand through a range of other critical debates (see Dengler and Seebacher 2019; Leonardi 2019; Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019; Andreucci and Engel-DiMauro 2017). This does not mean that the authors suggest that blue degrowth becomes a term to replace those debates, but, rather, it highlights the fact that one needs to position such debates with links to broader discussions of the capitalist growth imperative, and put forward new radical proposals for sustainable futures contra to the illusion of blue growth. The macro- and the micro-components are important. For ocean and marine issues, there are various elements which make them both interesting and important to explore from different perspectives ranging from a geopolitical perspective to colonial relations, analyzing the issues of unequal distribution, ownership and justice, as well as the commons. The physicality (and liquidity) of the ocean and the politics of the sea might bring key insights to the degrowth discussion through different theoretical and empirical lenses. Some new perspectives have been, indeed, identified throughout this special feature, adding to the existing attempts to highlight the importance of understanding the specificities of the seas and ocean (such as, for example, the discussions on 'wet ontologies' by Steinberg and Peters (2015) as well as Childs' (2018) discussion on the four dimensions of deep-sea mining extraction.

Repoliticizing the seas and oceans; bringing back politics into blue economies

> "It is a curious situation that the sea, from which life first arose should now be threatened by the activities of one form of that life. But the sea, though changed in a sinister way, will continue to exist; the threat is rather to life itself."
>
> –Rachel Carson, The Sea Around Us (1951)

Though maybe not as famous as her book 'Silent Spring', Carson's book 'The Sea Around Us' published almost 70 years ago, manifests, on one hand, the history of the ocean through science and poetry, and on the other hand, in a way the inauguration of a nervous discussion over the future of the ocean. Following the rise of industrial fishing,

as well as the oil industry, and the designation of sovereign rights over the sea to coastal states who can economically exploit the sea and its resources, and more recently the designation of the ocean as a new commodity frontier, Carson's quote resonates powerfully to today's situation. This calls for a radical stance over the future of the seas and oceans, a task particularly urgent within the critical marine social sciences. This Special Feature brought together a collection of articles that discuss through various lenses the concept of blue degrowth. It first aims at highlighting the multi-dimensional problematics of the growth imperative in relation with the ocean commons, and the consequences which it has on the human as well as the other than human beings. On the other hand, it explores ways in which reactions to the growth imperative and to its impacts are manifested at different scales and geographic spaces, as well as in different cosmologies.

Going back to the way that the blue degrowth concept was defined in the beginning of this Editorial, we identify specific themes that emerge out of this Special Feature. A theme which can be put forward is that of 'resistances' to blue growth projects. Under this theme, we locate cases in which different actors, whether these are small-scale fishers, local communities or NGOs, and Environmental Justice Organisations (EJOs), challenge the blue economy/blue growth paradigm. Another theme identified has to do with the importance of understanding, analyzing, and henceforth giving exposure to different knowledges, epistemologies, and cosmologies that are shaping the alternative imaginaries when studying the impacts of western ideas/paradigms imposed across the world, independently of whether these are about growth or blue growth imperatives. Finally (though not conclusively), a theme linked to environmental and social justice emerges, where different case studies explore the impacts, the blue growth strategy has on a range of different social actors. This way, the Special Feature intends to respond to fundamental quests raised in the conceptualization of blue degrowth, with these ten articles focusing on different geographies and employing different theoretical frameworks, through which we aimed to contribute to the dialog between degrowth and (critical) marine social science literatures. This is, of course, a non-exhaustive collection, and the authors hope that this collection will trigger serious discussions over the future of the oceans in academia and in policy, as well as in political and activist circles.

With putting forward a call for a 'blue degrowth' discussion, the authors do not mean to indoctrinate further the binary between the land and the sea, the green and the blue, but rather, to attempt to come up with a more holistic approach for conducting research regarding social struggles and political debates linked to confronting the growth imperative and capitalist accumulation. Given the lack of marine debates within this field, it was necessary to highlight the interlinked features of coastal and marine spaces with those on land, linked to each of their historical and structural characteristics and politics. It goes without saying that such a confrontation would need to collaborate with other movements for sovereignty such as food and energy sovereignty as well as open up the political space to different knowledges and epistemologies (Childs, this issue) without sticking to a unique word or terminology, but politically mobilizing some conceptualizations and multi-dimensional frameworks such as blue degrowth while reclaiming the seas and people's rights to the seas. To engage with the term 'growth' as such is useful and crucial, both in terms of the analytical value added to the discussion as well as the possibility it gives for this discussion to become explicit and relevant within policy, NGO, and civil society sectors. As seen by the different articles in this Special Feature, 'blue degrowth' has the possibility of confronting the blue growth imperative by uncovering its (latent and observed) negative social, ecological, and political impacts on the ecosystems and societies, whilst acting as a call for alternative socio-economic and socio-ecological models that would lead to more sustainable and just societal relations.

With this purpose, we hope that blue degrowth framework and this Special Feature will initiate further discussions both in degrowth circles and in critical marine social sciences. We aimed to open up a space that will allow the repoliticization of discussions around the seas and oceans with contributions from different theoretical frameworks and key empirical studies linked to current politics of the blue economy.

Acknowledgements The editors of the Special Feature would like to thank the editors as well as the editorial office of the journal Sustainability Science for all the assistance in the preparation of the feature. We are grateful to the participants of the blue degrowth panel in the POLLEN18 Conference, the authors of the articles, all the reviewers, as well as Giorgos Kallis for his constructive comments on an earlier draft of the Editorial. Funding for the cooperation amongst co-authors was enabled through the COST Action (www.cost.eu) on "Ocean Governance for Sustainability—challenges, options and the role of science" (CA15217), which we would like to particularly acknowledge.

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