Mariparks - Derisking Entrepreneurship and the Sustainable Blue Economy

Date: Tuesday, 26 November 2024
Theme: Offshore Wind & Multi-Use

Workshop Summary

The session focused on the concept of Mariparks, innovative spaces aiming to foster sustainable blue economy activities while addressing challenges such as spatial constraints, governance, and stakeholder collaboration. Experts discussed multi-use solutions for offshore wind and the broader marine environment, supported by findings from the eMSP project and related initiatives.

Part 1 – Welcome

Marijn Rabaut and Kinnie De Beule (Blauwe Cluster) & Marjoleine Nascimento da Silva-Karper (RVO) – Maripark: The Concept

The presentation introduced the **Maripark Concept**, developed through the eMSP project, and will be further explored by a new project under the GNSBI initiative, as a solution to the increasing competition for marine space caused by diverse activities like shipping, leisure, and offshore energy. The concept aims to foster a **sustainable blue economy** while adhering to EU and international marine protection goals.

The speakers emphasized that while the current focus is on multi-use applications in offshore wind, the broader goal of Mariparks is to integrate various activities, such as aquaculture, research, and renewable energy production.

Key aspects and needs of the concept include:

- **Ecosystem-based approaches** that prioritize nature as the foundation for Maripark development.
- A centralized **permit hub** to streamline approval processes and reduce administrative complexity.
- Collaborative frameworks to determine **governance structures**, including roles and responsibilities among stakeholders.
- Robust **data management and sharing** systems to support informed decision-making, with attention to challenges such as data security and funding.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of cumulative environmental impacts to ensure long-term sustainability and ecological balance.

Business Pitch 1 - Date Pijlman (EY Netherlands) - The Maripark Blueprint

The lecture highlighted the challenges and opportunities in transitioning from a predominantly single-use approach in marine spaces to the establishment of Mariparks. Despite the potential benefits, no Mariparks exist yet due to a lack of infrastructure and value chains, creating a "chicken-and-egg" dilemma. A comprehensive Blueprint has been developed, including a baseline assessment, a portfolio of 19 identified business opportunities (9 of which were deeply evaluated), and a transformation roadmap. The speaker emphasized that all stakeholders—states, sustainability councils, and industries—would benefit financially and strategically from Mariparks. The roadmap outlines a phased timeline, with development from 2024 to 2030 and scaling up beyond 2030. Establishing governance, defining roles, and fostering collaboration are key to unlocking the potential of Mariparks.

Business Pitch 2 – Jacob Brands (Zeevisserijbedrijf Brands) – Project Octopus

The lecture introduced Project Octopus, a concept for a multi-use-equipped ship designed to support diverse marine activities such as fishing, aquaculture, offshore maintenance, research, seaweed farming, and ROV operations. The ship embodies a multi-use approach with features like removable fish holds, modular survey equipment, and adaptable accommodations, enabling it to operate flexibly across different activities. Its vision includes demand-driven seasonal fishing, collaboration among multiple stakeholders, and a modular energy solution to support periodic operations.

Business Pitch 3 - Timothy Vanagt (ORG) - North-C-Neutral Toolkit

The lecture introduced the North C Neutralizer, a georeferenced optimization model designed to deliver the best possible outcomes for different stakeholder combinations in the Greater North Sea Basin. The model incorporates available environmental data (e.g., wind, wave, and currents), stakeholder input, and existing models to address marine activities such as fisheries and wind energy, multi-use activities, and nature-inclusive design. It also calculates emissions and other ecological factors, with climate change and ecology as key driving variables. The tool provides a roadmap and supports spatial design on both national and project levels, assessing the feasibility of Mariparks through visualization. Emphasizing co-creation, the process involves regional stakeholders to ensure collaborative and sustainable solutions.

Part 2 – Breakout Session (Roleplay)

The breakout session engaged participants in group discussions/a roleplay to explore four scenarios:

- **Scenario 1**: Repurposing Decommissioned Wind Farm Monopile for Maripark Infrastructure
- **Scenario 2**: Nature-Inclusive Design for Large-Scale Marine Restoration Projects
- **Scenario 3**: Integrated Renewable Energy and LTA Systems
- **Scenario 4**: Smart Blue Economy Hub

Discussions highlighted key challenges, particularly around **permitting**, including ownership, overlapping permits, and the need for a **harmonized system** to support multi-use solutions. Some participants emphasized that second-use applications must be economically viable and not overly dependent on primary infrastructure, advocating for the broader **Maripark model** to integrate diverse activities effectively.

Key insights included:

- **Synergies**: Renewable energy hubs can support shipping, fisheries, and nature-inclusive designs while generating funds for marine protection.
- **Governance and Collaboration**: Stakeholder communication and EU-wide coordination are critical to balance ecological restoration and infrastructure development.

Participants concluded that without synergies, marine spaces risk fragmented uses, missing the potential benefits of integrated, sustainable approaches like Mariparks.