8 Blue Ethics and Ocean Values

Overcoming Sea Blindness toward a New Ethical Ocean Culture

Larelle Bossi

Introduction

We have long shared a relationship with our ocean, yet it continues to pose a challenge to the current marine governance paradigm. Even within the popular zeitgeist to protect and support SDG 14 'Life Below Water', our persistent vision of a vast US$6 trillion oceanic resource to exploit is a difficult one to change, especially when it defines our international law of the sea and motivates opportunity for exponential wealth creation. When laws are too slow to keep up with the impacts of climate change, enforcement is beyond our current capacity in practice, and impacts are ever-worsening, ethical frameworks are a useful way to overcome our sea blindness and guide human activity on the sea. Better understanding ocean values and developing a blue ethics encourages us to move beyond the guidance of mere baselines. In this chapter, I discuss five key ethical values which may support the development of such a blue ethics in the governance of our blue economies and 'Life Below Sea'. These ethical values reflect the character of our ocean place. These values also define the relationship we share personally and societally with our ocean as much as they are values that can be applied to guide a new governance paradigm and the expansion of commercial enterprises.

Understanding Sea Blindness

'Sea Blindness' is a term used by seafarers and the maritime sector to define a meteorological phenomenon that occurs when water vapour in the sea evaporates to form low clouds that reflect sunlight, blocking visibility of the horizon. This phenomenon can be dangerous for sailors as it can mask the approach to land or other obstacles. But figuratively, the term 'sea blindness' is used in marine governance to refer to the phenomenon in which decision-makers, including policymakers and stakeholders, overlook the complexities and interdependencies of marine environments and their socio-economic systems (Coulthard et al., 2011; Griffin, 2008; Lawlor & Depellegrin, 2023; Tickler et al., 2018). The governance challenges stemming from sea blindness manifest in various ways, including overfishing (Tickler et al., 2018), environmental degradation, inadequate or misplaced protections (Chang, 2023), and marginalizing diverse community voices (Griffin,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003598992-11

2008). This can be caused by negligence, ignorance, or lack of interest or resources to address these issues. But it can also be caused by an incomplete or misguided world view. In other words, sea blindness is our bounded perception, which ultimately limits our understanding of our relationship with the nature of our oceans. Sea blindness is characterized by an inadequate recognition of interconnected systems, leading to unsustainable practices.

Most recently in ocean governance literature, the term 'sea blindness' takes on a similar figurative definition, symbolizing the inadequate recognition and neglect of critical marine ecosystem aspects within current legal frameworks (Enyew et al., 2021; Khaskheli et al., 2023; Manea et al., 2021). This term illustrates a growing awareness of how traditional governance systems often overlook the essential connectivity and functioning of marine ecosystems, which hinders effective management and conservation efforts.

Since 2018, studies reference sea blindness through the disparities in global marine biodiversity protection efforts, pointing to a 'global mismatch' (Lindegren et al., 2018) in how marine biodiversity components are prioritized within these legal frameworks. Martin Lindegren et al. (2018) argue that the inadequacies in governance structures lead to considerable oversight in protecting vital ecosystem services provided by these marine areas. At the same time, there have been an increased number of scholars discussing the need for a more holistic approach to monitoring our ocean ecosystems (Khaskheli et al., 2023; Miloslavich et al., 2018; Moullec et al., 2021; Westholm, 2018) in order to overcome this kind of sea blindness. I further argue that this issue is also pronounced in Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), where the reliance on evidence-based decision-making can sometimes lead to further oversight due to significant knowledge gaps in marine environments.

While MSP and governance frameworks ideally promote the sustainable management of marine environments and can be an effective tool in doing so, they are often blinded by knowledge gaps and oversight. It has been argued that evidence-based management addresses these gaps through holistic incorporation of ecological connectivity and socio-economic considerations to ensure that legal frameworks are not merely reactive but adaptive to the complex realities of marine ecosystems.

One central criticism of current MSP practices is that they often prioritize the interests of stakeholders or economic pressures at the expense of comprehensive ecological understanding (Singh & Araujo, 2023). There is a fundamental incompatibility in the rhetoric of 'sustainable blue growth', particularly when we are already living and witnessing the devastating impacts of depleted fisheries, overfishing, pollution and plastics, agricultural runoff, oil spills, habitat loss, unsustainable aquaculture, ocean acidification, coral bleaching, ocean warming, and species migration. How can we possibly double our blue economy in five years while ensuring genuine sustainability – even with the promise of MSPs, international agreements, economic and investment incentives, and evolving policy frameworks?

I and other such scholars remain unconvinced that market-based mechanisms such as blue stocks and credits will effectively curb the exploitation of the sea – especially when legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention

on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) have explicitly encouraged resource extraction since the end of the last century. As Article 69 of UNCLOS (1982) states:

> *Land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states have the right to participate on an equitable basis in the exploitation of an appropriate part of the surplus of the living resources of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of coastal states . . .*

This provision, while addressing equity among nations, also institutionalizes a paradigm of resource exploitation consistent with a neoliberal ideology which prioritizes free markets, deregulation, privatization, and minimal state intervention in economic progress, rather than fostering an ethics of care for ocean ecosystems. Rooted in neoliberal economic principles, this framework reinforces a sea blindness – a failure to see the ocean beyond its economic value. By prioritizing markets, trade, and resource extraction over ecological integrity, the neoliberal paradigm perpetuates an exploitative relationship with the sea, where ocean governance is framed through competitive economic gain rather than long-term planetary stewardship.

This orientation is also evident in the evolution and appropriation of the term 'Blue Economy'. Originally coined by Belgian economist Gunter Pauli in his 1994 publication *The Blue Economy*, the concept emphasized marine innovation and job creation. Since then, it has been adopted more broadly to describe the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and employment, while ostensibly preserving the health of ocean ecosystems (Soukissian et al., 2017; Winder & Heron, 2017). Although the initial academic interest in the blue economy was motivated by genuine concern for ocean degradation and climate change, funding opportunities quickly expanded the framework to prioritize emerging sectors of ocean-based industry. These include renewable energy, marine biotechnology, deep-sea mining, aquaculture, and coastal tourism. The ocean is now projected to generate an estimated US$6 trillion in economic output over the next five years, reinforcing the economic motivations underlying blue economy discourse. Yet, despite its rhetorical commitment to sustainability, little effort has been directed towards fostering regenerative, restorative, circular, or customary economies that I argue below are more akin to the blue values of the ocean. Instead, conventional performance metrics and economic drivers persist, replicating dominant industrial paradigms without ushering in any meaningful cultural or structural transformation – nor delivering on the promise of a truly 'bluer' economy.

As Philippa Louey notes in her critique, *There's Something Fishy About 'Blue Economy' Proposals for Sustainable Marine Management (2025)*, a close examination of the concept's genealogy reveals its strategic deployment by the U.S. government and the European Commission as a post-crisis economic recovery tool. In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent Eurozone crisis, these actors sought new avenues for economic stimulation and identified the ocean as an 'untapped' resource ripe for exploitation and 'new business opportunities' (Louey, 2025). This historical framing highlights how the blue economy, rather

than advancing sustainability, has often functioned as a vehicle for intensified ocean industrialization and enclosure. A generous interpretation is another manifestation of sea blindness – not a total failure to engage with the socio-ecological dimensions of the ocean, but a selective engagement shaped primarily by the imperative to unlock its economic potential.

I argue that overcoming this requires a fundamental shift – a cultural reorientation that moves beyond extractive logics towards an ocean ethic grounded in interconnection, resilience, and care (discussed in the following sections). Singh and Araujo highlight how marine governance frameworks may be inadequately responsive to the dynamic nature of marine ecosystems, leading to misalignments between policy intentions and ecological realities. They argue that historical perspectives on fisheries, area-based management, and seabed resources showcase a fragmented approach that fails to integrate the interdependencies of marine systems effectively (Singh & Araujo, 2023). This fragmentation manifests in the neglect of critical ecological components, which is a hallmark of sea blindness (Miloslavich et al., 2018; Westholm, 2018).

Recent movements prioritizing climate justice, sustainable development, and decolonial governance are challenging the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm deeply embedded in global economic policies by advocating for more equitable, community-centred, and ecologically responsible approaches. Emma Mckinley (2023) suggests that the changing global context of ocean governance away from the status quo requires a shift towards recognizing the ocean as a 'peopled space', emphasizing the need for inclusivity in marine planning. But I think this requires more than just factoring in that we are managing people around complex and often compromising and conflicting values driven by economic goals (McKinley, 2023).

Consistent with the current zeitgeist towards holistic frameworks, the most current publications argue for a more integrated approach to ocean governance. There is a strong call for international cooperation and holistic governance frameworks that embrace the synergetic relationships between terrestrial and marine environments. This need is echoed in various studies advocating for collaborations that bridge the gaps in knowledge and management practices when discussing the role of natural capital in ecosystem service delivery, for example (Fairbrass et al., 2025). In their "integrated ocean management for a sustainable ocean economy", Winther et al. (2020) argue for the precautionary principle to be universally applied to ensure that ecological threats are proactively managed and that knowledge gaps do not hinder governance efforts. Singh and Araujo (2023) also indicate that ocean governance must evolve to include comprehensive regulatory frameworks that reflect the complex interplay between human activities and marine habitats, ensuring a multidimensional perspective. Macpherson et al. (2024) advocate for the adoption of ecosystem-based management strategies that integrate social, economic, and environmental dimensions, which are suggested as a means of overcoming these governance challenges – overcoming sea blindness. But in each of these case, terrestrial humans still stand at the centre of governance, clasping at multidimensional considerations, and without a clear set of values to guide their activities upon and within a vast and complex ocean ecosystem, to which they

have inadequate datasets, and all the while motivated by market-based mechanisms like blue carbon credits, fisheries quotas, and financial incentives for conservation, and where corporate interests play a key role in managing marine spaces – enabling large-scale industrial activities such as deep-sea mining, offshore oil and gas, industrial fishing, exploitative aquaculture and weakened environmental policies under the justification of economic development or technological progress.

Scholars have certainly identified and used the term 'sea blindness' to encapsulate the failures of current marine governance frameworks to acknowledge and address the interconnectedness of marine ecosystems – even MSP tools that have held so much promise. Whilst the neoliberal economic and political ideology marginalizes alternative approaches like First Nations governance models, community-led conservation, or ethics-based frameworks, such scholars have often led the push to prioritize ecological integrity over profits. Whilst I agree that the misalignment of conservation and economic goals perpetuates sea blindness, as critical ecological insights may be overlooked due to the prevailing operational frameworks that prioritize short-term benefits or stakeholder agendas, I think it is because we are not seeing an ocean at all. Rather, we are merely supplanting terrestrial operations and mechanisms of governance upon an ocean space. Sea blindness in this ontological sense is a pervasive and oftentimes elusive lens where decision-makers, the public, and even researchers fail to see the ocean as a living, interconnected system beyond its economic utility.

Overcoming Sea Blindness through a Paradigm Shift

Our traditional, land-based notions of ownership and wilderness have shaped how we govern the ocean, despite its fundamental differences from terrestrial environments. This terrestrial lens has led to the division of our seas through Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and international waters governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), while MSP attempts to manage congestion in economically significant areas. Our governance frameworks often fail to reflect the true nature of our planet as an oceanic world. The Spilhaus projection, developed by Athelstan Spilhaus in 1979, depicts the world's oceans as a single, continuous body of water bounded by continental landmasses, with Antarctica at its centre (Chen et al., 2023; Renier, 2019). This more thalassocentric view of the world offers a perspective less bound by terrestrial borders and as experienced by migratory species such as the short-tailed shearwater (also known by Palawa First Peoples as muttonbird) (Bool et al., 2024). This species perceives the ocean as a connected ecosystem of currents, swells, winds, fish, birds, and human activity as it navigates its epic journey from Bruny Island in Tasmania to Japan, Siberia, Alaska, and back again. While ocean literacy offers a valuable evidence-based foundation for knowing our oceans, it often abstracts the ocean into measurable principles, leaving underexplored the relational, cultural, and phenomenological dimensions through which we and other species experience and understand the sea. It is misleading and inadequate to define our ocean place as a human place or an economic resource. Instead, as Indigenous knowledge has long recognized, and as

our ancient stories remind us, the ocean is the source of life on this planet, and we are an intrinsic part of its bio-cultural web and narrative. Overcoming sea blindness, therefore, is not merely about increasing ocean literacy but about fostering a deeper cultural shift – one that prioritizes remembering, recognizing, adapting, and cultivating ocean cultures.

This view is not unique to Indigenous cosmologies. Across a range of ancient cultural traditions – and affirmed by contemporary scientific understandings of Earth's evolution – the ocean is often regarded as the planet's primordial womb. I have often argued that it is not simply a site of biodiversity but the very origin and sustainer of life on Earth.

> *All of life came from the amniotic waters of Gaia's womb, and for hundreds of millions of years we lived within its realm . . . until we didn't.*

The womb of life – we were born of the ocean and for hundreds of millions of years lived within its realm – until we didn't. Everything in existence was birthed from, and ultimately returns to, the metaphoric 'waters of chaos' through the substance of water (Marrin, 2005). In many ancient cultures, our Ocean was the ultimate maternal figure insofar as she was symbolic of the amniotic fluid of life. When returning to the womb, we are weightless, unbound by the gravitational forces of our terrestrial bodies, reminiscent of our vestigial selves, floating, and we are free. Cradled by her completely, she welcomes us back, but lunged; our bodied selves are cognizant of the limitation of our aquatic life. Our omnipotent Ocean is thus equally a giver of life as much as she is a taker of it. With the rise of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, our Ocean was stripped of its deity, but its baptismal power as a symbol of rebirth and the monsters it harboured certainly inspired a fear to be conquered.

With our shift in world views, the post-Renaissance view of water differed in many respects from ancient views, but water and its recognizable flow forms remained symbols of power, beauty, wisdom, and the essence of the natural world (Marrin, 2005). In our postmodern world, our Ocean and that which it contains most commonly symbolizes an economic commodity, which is bought, sold, collected, and distributed according to various market forces. In English, she was neutered, and her reverence as the *source* of life was reduced to but one of a mere resource – a drawn stock, asset, material, or supply of money bartered, traded, abused, and plundered in order to maintain efficiency. Even the more recent, contemporary recognition of the ocean's ecosystem services, including those that provide human amenity, such as surfing, diving, sailing, art, fishing, walking along the beach, or the restorative value of open horizons and natural beauty (Bossi, 2019; Nichols, 2014), has not meaningfully disrupted this dominant neoliberal framing. The paradigm to which we are pledged continues to prioritize economic growth over human well-being or ecological integrity.

While evidence-based decision-making is often seen as a cornerstone of effective governance, it can be limiting within MSP and broader ocean governance, particularly when reliant on incomplete datasets. As described earlier, the concept of

'sea blindness' has emerged as a critical challenge, highlighting the failure of legal frameworks to fully address the complexity of marine ecosystems. Grip (2016) highlights that global and regional marine governance operates within a patchwork of legal frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The resulting siloed approaches often create fragmented governance structures, reinforcing sea blindness by neglecting ecological interconnectivity and prioritizing specific economic interests over holistic ecosystem management.

The reliance on evidence-based decision-making in MSP can exacerbate sea blindness when relevant knowledge is incomplete or fails to integrate cultural and socio-economic dimensions. Moullec et al. (2021) stress the importance of recognizing anthropogenic drivers of change and the need for integrated management strategies that reflect the complexity of marine ecosystems. When MSP frameworks rely solely on traditional scientific datasets, they risk overlooking essential ecological and social dynamics, perpetuating governance gaps. Addressing this issue requires a paradigm shift towards recognizing marine ecological connectivity, incorporating diverse perspectives, and enhancing governance resilience through innovative approaches.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of marine ecosystems is essential to overcoming sea blindness. McKinley (2023) highlights the importance of integrating ecological connectivity into governance frameworks, while Bennett (2019) critiques traditional marine planning for often neglecting human dimensions crucial to sustainable governance. Coastal communities, First Nations peoples, small-scale fishers, and the tourism sector all depend on the ocean for their livelihoods. Understanding these socio-economic dynamics is crucial for developing MSP and governance frameworks that are both ecologically and socially responsive. Franke et al. (2022) advocate for transdisciplinary research and real-world laboratories to integrate diverse perspectives and resolve conflicting societal interests in ocean governance. Such collaborative approaches ensure that scientists, policymakers, and local communities co-produce knowledge that is contextually relevant and practically applicable.

Integrating traditional knowledge into marine governance – such as through developing a Cultural Licence to Operate as described in Chapter 4 – is a crucial step in addressing sea blindness. First Nations knowledge systems provide insights into long-standing ecosystem connections and governance practices, countering the limitations of Western scientific models. García (2024) calls for ocean justice through the recognition of coastal communities' and Indigenous groups' rights in governance frameworks. Her work, *The Sea Unites Us but It Is Governed to Keep Us Apart*, argues that effective governance must acknowledge the cultural and historical dimensions of marine mobilities. Without these perspectives, governance models risk deepening inequities and exacerbating ecological mismanagement.

Overcoming sea blindness requires a multifaceted approach that integrates ecological, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions into decision-making. Strengthening MSP and ocean governance frameworks necessitates acknowledging marine system interdependencies and fostering inclusive stakeholder engagement. Noella

Gray (2018) complicates the governance narrative further by critiquing global conservation strategies that prioritize Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) without fully understanding the ecosystems they aim to protect. Without adequate consideration of climate pressures, species migrations, and cumulative impacts, MPAs risk reinforcing sea blindness by marginalizing critical habitat types and connectivity pathways.

Addressing sea blindness necessitates raising public awareness, implementing effective policies, and fostering international cooperation. However, with cumulative impacts, numerous competing priorities, knowledge gaps, species on the move, and a system under pressure from climate change, ocean governance must transition towards a values-led framework. This emerging blue ethic will require key principles that emphasize ecological integrity, social equity, and long-term sustainability, ensuring that marine governance moves beyond fragmented approaches towards holistic, adaptive strategies that honour the ocean's complexity and resilience.

A Paradigm Shift in Ocean Governance Requires Blue Ethics

A growing body of scholarship has highlighted the importance of decolonizing ocean governance by recognizing and embracing First Nations' visions of marine stewardship. Enyew et al. (2021) and their colleagues advocate for a polycentric and fluid system of governance, one grounded in the value of connectivity – a perspective that fundamentally challenges rigid, sectoral approaches to marine management. Similarly, media coverage of the blue economy has highlighted the implications of sea blindness for sustainable development and fostered a broader recognition of marine environments as integral to global well-being (Germond-Duret & Germond, 2022). Meanwhile, discussions around the rule of law in governing emerging marine frontiers – including issues such as plastic pollution, blue carbon, and biodiversity conservation – have reinforced the urgency of ethical considerations in ocean governance (Chang, 2023). Such scholarship collectively calls for a paradigm shift: overcoming sea blindness is not merely a technical or regulatory challenge but an ethical imperative that demands inclusive governance frameworks, diverse perspectives, and a commitment to sustainability.

Effective governance frameworks ought to move beyond siloed approaches and regulatory mechanisms; they must also be grounded in a deeper understanding of our historical narrative with the ocean – how we humans relate to the ocean. This vast body of water does not behave like land, nor does it accommodate the same rigid structures of ownership, governance, and economic expansion. The ocean-place demands a distinct way of being with nature, which coastal communities have long reflected in their cultural practices, activities, and governance systems. This human-ocean bond is inherently ethical – an understanding shaped by the ocean's own nature and the ways in which those who live with and by it have learned to navigate its vastness, unpredictability, and generosity. To create an ethical foundation for ocean governance, I have looked to the character of the ocean-human relationship to identify and guide appropriate values and principles. The ethical dimensions of ocean governance should not be imposed externally but

should instead emerge from the ocean itself – its movement, its mutual dependency, and the ways it has shaped human lives for millennia.

The ocean possesses a distinct character that shapes how humans relate to it – markedly different from our relationship with land. Coastal communities have long embodied this unique connection through their cultural practices, livelihoods, and governance systems. This human–ocean relationship is inherently ethical, informed both by the ocean's own dynamic nature and by the experiential knowledge of those who live with and by it – navigating its vastness, unpredictability, and abundance.

Moving beyond the classical imagery of Poseidon and Neptune, the feminization of the ocean is inescapable. Across cultures, the ocean is associated with maternal forces – nurturing yet formidable, abundant yet capricious. Many First Nations communities acknowledge the ocean as women's country, where fishing, trade, and resource management are guided by women's leadership. It is no coincidence that the values drawn from the ocean – interconnection, dynamism, transparency, vulnerability, and diversity – have traditionally been coded as feminine. Just as telling is the way their masculine opposites – individualism, permanence, opacity, dominance, and centralization – have been enshrined as pillars of neoliberal economic systems. Thus, an ocean ethic is not just about governing marine spaces but about reimagining our values in ways that align with the rhythms and realities of the ocean itself.

The five principles/values of an ethical ocean governance include:

Interconnectivity: The ocean is a web of currents, species, and relationships. From fishers and surfers to marine industries and coastal towns, no one interacts with the ocean in isolation. The safety and resilience of coastal communities are built on shared knowledge and mutual reliance, reflecting an ethic of interdependence rather than individualism.

Dynamism: The ocean is ever-changing – its flux is fundamental to its function. Unlike rigid, land-based governance systems, ocean governance must embrace adaptability and responsiveness rather than striving for artificial permanence or stability.

Transparency: The ocean is a place of depth and revelation. Sustainable governance demands openness, clarity, and the free exchange of knowledge, standing in contrast to opaque and muddy decision-making structures that conceal environmental risks and power imbalances.

Vulnerability: To be with the ocean is to accept risk – fishers, divers, and sailors know this intuitively. Yet, vulnerability is not weakness; it is an acknowledgement of interdependence. Whether at the level of individuals, communities, or emerging blue industries, recognizing vulnerability fosters resilience and collective support.

Diversity: The ocean is an ecosystem of multiplicity – of species, cultures, livelihoods, and ways of knowing. Governance structures must reflect this diversity, within, above, and along our oceans, resisting homogenous models that favour economic imperialism and monopolies over ecological and cultural plurality.

Each of these values can be embodied by individuals, communities, and the broader ecosystems within which they function. Fishers, divers, surfers, and sailors experience vulnerability in the ever-changing and forceful conditions of the ocean. They rarely perform their activities alone, relying on spotters, friends, and colleagues to ensure safety. This shared vulnerability extends to coastal communities and emerging blue industries alike. The resilience of these communities, operating within an interconnected and constantly shifting ocean-place, depends on the transparency they maintain and the interconnections they foster.

This ocean community is not defined by subsistence alone but is inclusive of individuals, families, schools, businesses, political decision-making bodies, tourists, industries, and other communities engaged in trade and exchange. By adopting these values, ocean governance can foster systems that acknowledge and uphold the interconnected nature of marine life, human societies, and the planetary systems that sustain them. By contrast, the prevailing neoliberal framework has long upheld opposing values that serve to reinforce individualism and economic control over ocean space. The transition to a blue ethic demands an intentional departure from entrenched neoliberal paradigms that prioritize control, extraction, and exclusivity.

Table 8.1 contrasts the values derived from the ocean with those that have dominated economic and political systems.

The ocean, long regarded as a symbol of life, mystery, and transformation, embodies qualities often associated with the traditionally feminine: interconnection, dynamism, transparency, diversity, and vulnerability. It is a fluid, relational system, shaped by cycles, tides, and interdependencies that resists fixed boundaries and linear control. These characteristics are reflected in the knowledge systems and cultural practices of coastal communities who live in close relation to the sea and who have developed governance models grounded in responsiveness, reciprocity, and collective stewardship. The ocean's transparency and vulnerability, its exposure to both natural forces and human interference, underscore the ethical

Table 8.1 A Shift from Neoliberal to Oceanic Values

Blue Ethics (traditionally feminine values)	*Traditionally masculine and Neoliberal Opposites*
Interconnection (mutual dependency)	**Individuality** (independence, self-reliance)
Dynamism (flux, fluidity, change, adaptation)	**Control** (predictability, standardization, rigidity, stability)
Transparency (openness, shared knowledge)	**Opacity** (ambiguity, secrecy)
Diversity (complexity, co-existence)	**Empire of the Self** (homogeneity, monoculture, centralization)
Vulnerability (shared risk, adaptability)	**Strength** (dominance, control)

Source: Author

imperative to treat it not as a mere resource, but as a living system requiring protection and respect.

In sharp contrast, neoliberal ocean governance reflects a traditionally masculine ethic structured around individuality, control, and dominance. Here, the sea is rendered as a site for extraction and enclosure, governed through regimes that prize self-reliance, rigidity, and standardization. Ocean space is increasingly mapped, divided, and instrumentalized in service of the 'empire of the self' (Plumwood, 1993, p. 170), promoting monocultures of industry, market-driven efficiency, and sovereign power. Opacity – through technical ambiguity, bureaucratic complexity, and proprietary secrecy – reinforces exclusion and undermines accountability. The ocean's living diversity is thus reduced to economic units, its dynamism seen not as a value but as a risk to be managed. In this tension between fluid relationality and structured domination lies a central ethical challenge for contemporary marine governance.

To foster a true paradigm shift in ocean governance, we must move away from frameworks that prioritize stability, control, and individualism, and instead embrace values that align with the ocean's own nature. Rather than imposing rigid structures onto a dynamic system, governance frameworks must be fluid, participatory, and values led. By reorienting ocean governance towards blue ethics, we create the opportunity for a more just, sustainable, and adaptive approach to managing our shared ocean spaces. It is in this paradigm shift that we will find the pathway to sustainable, ethical ocean stewardship.

The five principles in Table 8.2 are fundamental to shaping an ethical and effective framework for ocean governance. These values not only reflect the complexity and interrelated nature of ocean ecosystems but also call for a transformation in how governance systems approach environmental management. By embracing these values, governance can become more adaptable, collaborative, and resilient – capable of addressing the evolving challenges of the ocean while ensuring equitable outcomes for all stakeholders involved. These values demand a shift from traditional, static approaches to a more integrated and dynamic system that incorporates transdisciplinary research, continuous monitoring, and a commitment to transparency and justice. Ultimately, this approach will foster sustainable, innovative, and resilient ocean management practices that reflect the true essence of the ocean as a living, interconnected force.

The values of *interconnection, dynamism, transparency, diversity,* and *vulnerability* reflect not only the distinctive characteristics of marine environments but also the multifaceted relationships – personal, cultural, and societal – that shape human interactions with the ocean. These values are fundamental to shaping an ethical and effective framework for ocean governance. These values not only reflect the complexity and interrelated nature of ocean ecosystems but also call for a transformation in how governance systems approach environmental management. By embracing these values, governance can become more adaptable, collaborative, and resilient – capable of addressing the evolving challenges of the ocean while ensuring equitable outcomes for all stakeholders involved. A more in-depth analysis reflecting Table 8.2 follows.

Table 8.2 Ocean Values

Value	*Ocean*	*Personal*	*Governance*
Interconnection	• Unbound ecosystems • System migration	• Families, communities ecosystem	• Stakeholders • Transdisciplinarity
Dynamism	• Ebb and flow of the currents + tides • Species migration • Climate change • Ecosystems • Seasonal changes	• Commitments • Life's seasons • Climate changes + seasons • Hormonal • Wealth + well-being • Personal relationships • Economic, social + external pressures • Heraclitus "*no man ever steps in the same river twice*"	• Shifting baselines • Dynamic management, monitoring and review processes/systems • Dynamic management + governance • Spirit of the last exceeds letter of the law • Live + open access data
Transparency	• Property of water • Darkness in depth	• Openness • Accountability + responsibility	• Procedural + distributive justice • Database + knowledge sharing • Disclosure reporting
Diversity	• Ecosystems in balance	• Identity • Values • Knowledge + experiences • History • Aspirations + expectations	• Above + below the surface • In development types + distributive systems • Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) • Best fit for purpose (place based)
Vulnerability	• Omnipotence	• Honesty + trust • Meaningful connections • Building empathy • Sharing + forgiveness	• Knowledge gaps • Meaningful connections + collaborations • Building relationships • Uncertainty • Courageous leadership

Source: Author

Interconnection

The concept of interconnection underscores the ocean as an unbound, integrated ecosystem where natural and human systems are deeply intertwined. Unlike terrestrial boundaries, which are often defined by political or physical structures, the ocean flows across geographical and political borders. This interconnectedness extends beyond environmental systems to include human communities, industries, and stakeholders who rely on the ocean for livelihood and sustainability.

- ***Personal:*** In a personal sense, this value highlights our shared responsibility and interconnectedness with the ocean and with each other. It emphasizes the idea that no individual operates in isolation, and we all contribute to and are affected by the health of the ocean.
- ***Community and Governance:*** Communities that depend on the ocean for their livelihoods, like fishing communities, operate within systems of mutual support and interdependence. These industries do not function in silos but interact with other stakeholders and ecosystems. From a governance standpoint, the interconnectedness of stakeholders – from local to global levels – requires coordinated, transdisciplinary approaches to management. Effective governance must integrate diverse knowledge systems and stakeholder interests, recognizing that the ocean's boundaries are fluid and often undefined. This calls for collaborative management practices that transcend political borders and are adaptable to the ocean's dynamic nature.

Interconnection reinforces the understanding that the ocean and its stakeholders are deeply interconnected, with a need for collaborative, multi-disciplinary governance and mutual support systems.

Dynamism

Dynamism refers to the continuous state of flux in oceanic ecosystems, influenced by natural cycles like tides and migrations, as well as human-induced changes such as climate change. The concept of dynamism challenges the static nature of traditional governance structures, which often fail to account for the shifting baselines of ecosystems.

- ***Personal:*** This reflects the personal nature of change, where individuals experience transitions in their lives, health, relationships, and external circumstances. Just as the ocean's state is never static, our personal lives are also subject to continuous change, influenced by internal and external forces. The dynamic nature of personal life can mirror the fluidity of the ocean, requiring resilience and adaptation.
- ***Governance:*** Governance systems, too, must become dynamic, with adaptive management processes that respond to changing environmental conditions. Static laws and policies are insufficient in managing the ocean's complexities.

Instead, governance should prioritize dynamic monitoring, shifting baselines, and continuous data review. The example of shifting baselines in ocean management, where historical conditions are constantly reassessed in light of new data, reflects a need for governance that evolves as the ocean's environment evolves. Dynamic systems of governance are vital for ensuring that policies remain relevant and effective over time.

Dynamism acknowledges the ongoing and dynamic changes in the ocean environment and emphasizes that both personal lives and governance systems must adapt to such fluidity.

Transparency

Transparency in ocean governance is vital for building trust and ensuring accountability in decision-making. Just as water is clear at the surface but may hide dangers beneath, governance must ensure that all actions, decisions, and data are accessible, honest, and open to scrutiny.

- ***Personal:*** At the personal level, transparency relates to openness in relationships and personal actions. It fosters accountability and builds trust among individuals and communities. In the context of ocean management, the openness of decision-making processes, live data sharing, and knowledge sharing can directly influence public support and the effectiveness of policies.
- ***Governance:*** Effective governance requires transparency at all levels – whether in the management of marine resources, the allocation of quotas, or the implementation of conservation measures. The example of Morro Bay, California, where live reporting of fishing quotas enables better management and more transparent interactions with stakeholders, illustrates the potential benefits of transparency in fostering sustainable practices (Molteni, 2013). This also includes procedural justice, where stakeholders are kept informed about the decisions that affect their livelihoods, and distributive justice, ensuring fair outcomes for all communities involved.

Transparency is a core value that fosters trust and accountability, especially in governance systems that manage the ocean, as seen in live data and transparent reporting.

Diversity

Diversity, within both ocean ecosystems and human systems, is essential for maintaining resilience. Diverse ecosystems, with a balance of species, tend to be more stable and adaptive to environmental changes. This concept also applies to human industries and governance, where a variety of perspectives, technologies, and practices can lead to more effective and innovative solutions.

- ***Personal:*** On a personal level, diversity speaks to the importance of different experiences, backgrounds, and identities in shaping individual lives. It

highlights the value of personal growth through exposure to diverse knowledge, experiences, and cultures.
- ***Governance:*** In governance, diversity ensures that different stakeholders, industries, and technological approaches are represented in decision-making. A single approach or monopolistic structure often leads to inefficiency and a lack of innovation. In the context of the blue economy, having a diverse set of companies, place-based technologies, and methodologies allows for more flexible, regionally appropriate solutions that cater to the varying needs of coastal ecosystems. MSP is a practical example of how governance systems incorporate diversity by considering various uses of marine space, from fisheries to renewable energy projects.

Maintaining diversity is essential for the health of the ocean ecosystem and for ensuring that governance structures represent diverse perspectives and practices.

Vulnerability

The ocean's omnipotence, coupled with the vulnerabilities it creates for humanity, highlights the precarious relationship between people and the ocean. Human vulnerability to the ocean's power is undeniable, as seen in the unpredictability of storms, tsunamis, or drowning. The ocean is a life-giving force, but it is also one that can be dangerous and unpredictable.

- ***Personal:*** Vulnerability at the personal level is about recognizing our fragility, accepting uncertainty, and fostering trust and empathy in our relationships. By acknowledging our vulnerabilities, we open the door for deeper connections and collaborative problem-solving.
- ***Governance:*** For governance, vulnerability requires a willingness to embrace uncertainty and recognize the gaps in knowledge. Vulnerability is not a sign of weakness, but an opportunity for growth through collaboration and courage. Building resilience in ocean governance means acknowledging our lack of a complete knowledge of marine ecosystems (we know only 5% of the ocean) and addressing these gaps through collaborative and innovative leadership. Courageous leadership, informed by empathy and a willingness to share knowledge, can help build meaningful connections among stakeholders and lead to more effective, inclusive, and adaptive ocean management.

Recognizing vulnerability, both in the ocean's power and in human connections, is key to fostering trust, humility, and collaboration in governance systems.

These five principles demand a shift from traditional, static approaches to a more integrated and dynamic system that incorporates transdisciplinary research, continuous monitoring, and a commitment to transparency and justice. These values guide how governance should evolve to meet the challenges of managing the ocean, advocating for transparency, flexibility, diversity, and collaboration across various levels of personal and governance interactions. Ultimately, this approach ought to foster sustainable, innovative, and resilient ocean management practices that reflect the true essence of the ocean as a living, interconnected force.

Conclusion

This analysis reveals that the principles characterized from the ocean and our relationship with her – interconnection, dynamism, transparency, diversity, and vulnerability – are not merely theoretical concepts but integral to a profound cultural shift in how we approach ocean governance. Traditional notions of ocean literacy, often centred on evidence-based science and technical knowledge, are increasingly inadequate to address the multifaceted challenges of the contemporary ocean environment. These frameworks, while valuable, fail to recognize the complexity of the human-ocean relationship and overlook the deeper cultural, ethical, and relational dimensions that govern our interactions with the sea. As our oceans begin to adapt to the pressures of climate change and the increased demands of a growing blue economy, we need a more expansive and integrated understanding that transcends simple knowledge acquisition and engages with the very essence of how we coexist with the ocean and live on an ocean planet.

This is not a merely theoretical shift but a cultural one that demands a transformation in our values, our governance practices, and our approach to decision-making. This shift requires us to recognize that the ocean is not a bounded, static entity but a dynamic, ever-changing force. Just as the ocean is influenced by tides, seasons, and climate change, our governance structures must be responsive, adaptive, and constantly in motion to keep pace with these changes. Dynamic management systems, transparency in decision-making, and an inclusive approach to governance are all essential components of this cultural evolution. This means that the governance of our oceans cannot be approached with fixed, siloed strategies but must be characterized by flexibility, openness, and continuous learning.

Central to this cultural adaptation is the recognition of interconnection – both within the ocean itself and between human communities and ocean ecosystems. We are not isolated in our interactions with the ocean, and our fates are tied to the health and well-being of ocean systems. From fishing communities to blue energy industries, coastal ecotourism to seafaring and maritime expeditions, we share the same space and the same challenges. The success of any one industry or community depends on the others, as well as on the health of the ecosystems that support them. This interconnectedness calls for transdisciplinary research, diverse collaboration, and a governance approach that integrates multiple knowledge systems, from scientific data to traditional ecological knowledge, and from global policies to local community practices. In this way, the future of ocean governance must reflect the reality that not one of us is separate from the whole, and no one stakeholder can effectively manage the ocean alone.

The values I have discussed – interconnection, dynamism, transparency, diversity, and vulnerability – serve as the building blocks of a new 'ocean culture'. This culture is not just about prescribing rigid guidelines or following what has come before; rather, it is about cultivating a deep, empathetic, and sustainable relationship with the ocean that acknowledges both our dependence on it and our responsibility to protect it. It demands of us to swim with her, change with her, and thrive with her. This ocean culture ought to guide and inspire a new paradigm

of governance – one that is fluid, inclusive, and capable of responding to the ever-changing conditions of the ocean. By embracing this shift in values and perception, we begin to directly confront the root causes of sea blindness. We move beyond fragmented, anthropocentric, and market-driven frameworks that obscure the ocean's complexity towards a governance ethic grounded in ecological consciousness and care. In doing so, we remove our foggy lenses and transform how we see, value, and act in relation to the ocean. Only then can we begin to undo the structural and cultural blindness that has long hindered just, sustainable, and responsive ocean governance. By reorienting our governance towards ocean values, we can move beyond the limitations of traditional approaches and develop a more holistic, ethical, and effective way of managing our oceans, ensuring they remain a source of life, abundance, and inspiration for generations to come.

Reference List

Bennett, N. (2019). Marine social science for the peopled seas. *Coastal Management*, *47*(2), 244–252. https://doi.org/10.1080/08920753.2019.1564958

Bool, N., Sumner, M. D., Lea, M.-A., McMahon, C. R., & Hindell, M. A. (2024). Hierarchical foraging strategies of migratory short-tailed shearwaters during the non-breeding stage. *Marine Biology*, *171*(5), 104. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00227-023-04370-6

Bossi, L. (2019). *A first cast at a philosophy of fishing* [Thesis, University of Tasmania]. https://doi.org/10.25959/23237921.v1.

Chang, Y.-C. (2023). Editorial: Rule of law in the governance of new frontiers of the marine environment. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, *10*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2023.1277409

Chen, J., Zhang, T., Tominaga, M., Escartin, J., & Kang, R. (2023). Ocean sciences with the Spilhaus projection: A seamless ocean map for spatial data recognition. *Scientific Data*, *10*(1), 410. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-023-02309-6

Coulthard, S., Johnson, D., & McGregor, J. A. (2011). Poverty, sustainability and human wellbeing: A social wellbeing approach to the global fisheries crisis. *Global Environmental Change*, *21*(2), 453–463. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.01.003

Enyew, E. L., Poto, M. P., & Tsiouvalas, A. (2021). Beyond borders and states: Modelling ocean connectivity according to indigenous cosmovisions. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, *12*, 207–221. https://doi.org/10.23865/arctic.v12.3290

Fairbrass, A., Fradera, K., Shucksmith, R., Greenhill, L., Acott, T., & Ekins, P. (2025). Revealing gaps in marine evidence with a natural capital lens. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B Biological Sciences*, *380*(1917). https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2023.0214

Franke, A., Peters, K., Hinkel, J., Hornidge, A. K., Schlüter, A., Wiltshire, K. H., . . . & Hillebrand, H. (2022). Making the ocean decade work? The potential for, and challenges of, transdisciplinary research and real-world laboratories for building towards ocean solutions. *People and Nature*, *5*(1), 21–33. https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10412

García, M. C. (2024). The sea unites us but it is governed to keep us apart: Restoring the creole afro-indigenous sea mobilities in the Southwestern Caribbean. *Island Studies Journal*, *19*(2). https://doi.org/10.24043/001c.92749

Germond-Duret, C., & Germond, B. (2022). Media coverage of the blue economy in British newspapers: Sea blindness and sustainable development. *Geographical Journal*, *189*(2), 193–203. https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12433

Gray, N. J. (2018). Charted waters? Tracking the production of conservation territories on the high seas. *International Social Science Journal*, *68*(229–230), 257–272. https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12158

Griffin, L. (2008). The North Sea fisheries crisis and good governance. *Geography Compass*, *2*(2), 452–475. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00097.x

Grip, K. (2016). International marine environmental governance: A review. *Ambio*, *46*(4), 413–427. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-016-0847-9

Khaskheli, M. B., Wang, S., Zhang, X., Shamsi, I. H., Shen, C., Rasheed, S., Ibrahim, Z., & Baloch, D. M. (2023). Technology advancement and international law in marine policy, challenges, solutions and future prospective. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, *10*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2023.1258924

Lawlor, P., & Depellegrin, D. (2023). Managing land sea interactions: Case studies of coastal governance in four EU member states. In S. Partelow, M. Hadjimichael, & A. K. Hornidge (Eds.), *Ocean governance*. MARE publication series. Springer (Vol. 25, pp. 209–230). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20740-2_9

Lindegren, M., Holt, B. G., MacKenzie, B. R., & Rahbek, C. (2018). A global mismatch in the protection of multiple marine biodiversity components and ecosystem services. *Scientific Reports*, *8*(1), 4099. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-22419-1

Louey, P. (2025, May 9). There's something fishy about 'blue economy' proposals for sustainable marine management. *Mongabay*. https://news.mongabay.com/2025/05/theres-something-fishy-about-blue-economy-proposals-for-sustainable-marine-management-commentary/

Manea, E., Bergami, C., Bongiorni, L., Capotondi, L., Maio, E. D., Oggioni, A., & Pugnetti, A. (2021). A transnational marine ecological observatory in the Adriatic sea to harmonize a fragmented approach to monitoring and conservation. *Advances in Oceanography and Limnology*, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.4081/aiol.2021.9811

Marrin, D. L. (2005). Water symbolism. In J. H. L. a. J. Keeley (Ed.), *Water encyclopedia* (Vol. 1–5). John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/047147844X.wh100

Macpherson, E., Mortiaux, R., & Jorgensen, E. (2024). Scale-sensitive marine law and policy design: Towards ecosystem-based management across spatial and temporal scales. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews Energy and Environment*, *13*(5). https://doi.org/10.1002/wene.537

McKinley, E. (2023). Ocean literacy for an ocean constitution. *Global Constitutionalism*, *13*(1), 25–28. https://doi.org/10.1017/s204538172300014x

Miloslavich, P., Bax, N. J., Simmons, S. E., Klein, E., Appeltans, W., Aburto-Oropeza, O., Garcia, M. A., Batten, S., Benedetti-Cecchi, L., Checkley, D. M., Chiba, S., Duffy, J. E., Dunn, D. C., Fischer, A., Gunn, J., Kudela, R. M., Marsac, F., Müller-Karger, F., Obura, D., & Shin, Y. J. (2018). Essential ocean variables for global sustained observations of biodiversity and ecosystem changes. *Global Change Biology*, *24*(6), 2416–2433. https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.14108

Molteni, M. (2013). The good catch: Hope for the world's devastated oceans rests on a change in the hearts of the fishermen that know them best [3,500 work article]. *Aeon*. http://aeon.co/magazine/science/a-radical-model-for-saving-californias-ocean-fisheries/

Moullec, F., Asselot, R., Auch, D., Blöcker, A. M., Börner, G., Färber, L., Ofelio, C., Petzold, J., Santelia, M. E., Schwermer, H., Sguotti, C., Steidle, L., Tams, V., & Pellerin, F. (2021). Identifying and addressing the anthropogenic drivers of global change in the North Sea: A systematic map protocol. *Environmental Evidence*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13750-021-00234-y

Nichols, W. J. (2014). *Blue mind: How water makes you happier, more connected and better at what you do*. Abacus.

Plumwood, V. (1993). *Feminism and the mastery of nature*. Routledge.

Renier, N. (2019). Ocean and climate. *Oceanus the Journal of Our Ocean Planet*, *54*(2), 3.

Singh, P., & Araujo, F. C. B. (2023). The past, present and future of ocean governance: Snapshots from fisheries, area-based management tools and international seabed mineral resources. In S. Partelow, M. Hadjimichael, & A. K. Hornidge (Eds.) *Ocean*

governance. MARE Publication series (Vol. 25, pp. 113–135). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20740-2_6

Soukissian, T. H., Denaxa, D., Karathanasi, F., Prospathopoulos, A., Sarantakos, K., Iona, A., Georgantas, K., & Mavrakos, S. A. (2017). Marine renewable energy in the Mediterranean Sea: Status and perspectives. *Energies*, *10*(10), 1512. https://doi.org/10.3390/en10101512

Tickler, D., Meeuwig, J. J., Bryant, K., David, F., Forrest, J. A. H., Gordon, E., Larsen, J. J., Oh, B., Pauly, D., Sumaila, U. R., & Zeller, D. (2018). Modern slavery and the race to fish. *Nature Communications*, *9*(1), 4643. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-07118-9

Westholm, A. (2018). Appropriate scale and level in marine spatial planning – Management perspectives in the Baltic Sea. *Marine Policy*, *98*, 264–270. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2018.09.021

Winder, G. M., & Heron, R. L. (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. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820617691643

Winther, J. G., Dai, M., Rist, T., Hoel, A. H., Li, Y., Trice, A., & Whitehouse, S. (2020). Integrated ocean management for a sustainable ocean economy. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, *4*(11), 1451–1458. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-020-1259-6

9 Not Just for and Against

Engaging with the Ethical Complexity of Stakeholders' Attitudes to Offshore Wind Developments

Hugh Breakey, Larelle Bossi, Charles Sampford, Michael Mehmet, Jennifer Algie, Freya Croft and Michelle Voyer

Introduction

Offshore wind development engenders a broad range of stakeholder perspectives – many of which are deeply personal, place-based, and morally charged. Yet all too often, public discourse and formal engagement processes collapse these perspectives into simplistic binaries: for or against, support or objection. This framing not only distorts the richness and diversity of community responses but also reinforces a model of governance that privileges efficiency and consensus over deliberation and understanding. Stakeholder views are not fixed positions on a spectrum but evolving ethical orientations shaped by values, identities, histories, and relationships to place. People may simultaneously recognise the need for renewable energy and mourn the loss of access, kinship, or identity associated with a particular coastline or seascape. They may hold hope and concern in tension or find themselves ambivalent and uncertain. To meaningfully engage with this complexity requires more than improved consultation; it demands an approach capable of navigating moral plurality, relational entanglement, and contested values.

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which ethics – understood as a practice of responsiveness to difference and relational responsibility – can serve as a critical method for stakeholder engagement. Rather than resolving conflict through consensus or compliance, ethics offers a generative way to hold complexity, attend to competing truths, and co-create more just and inclusive governance processes in marine renewable energy development. Ethics is a well-honed tool for navigating the complexity, conflict, and uncertainty that characterise real-world decision-making. In the context of marine governance, particularly the rollout of offshore renewable energy developments, ethical deliberation is no longer a peripheral concern – it is central.

As the global push for decarbonisation intensifies, Australia's offshore spaces have become a new frontier for energy infrastructure. Yet these developments have quickly become politicised, generating public concern, media attention, and community mobilisation. Opposition and support rarely fall along predictable

DOI: 10.4324/9781003598992-12

ideological lines. Instead, they emerge from a web of concerns about climate justice, energy security, ecological integrity, local livelihoods, cultural heritage, and democratic process. These issues raise deep moral questions about what kind of energy future we want and who gets to shape it.

This chapter proceeds as follows. The Method section describes the two distinct research stages: social listening and community engagement. It then outlines the Results for the social listening media analysis, followed by the Results from the community engagement activity. The Discussion section reflects on the combined results.

Method

The research's first stage involved developing the personas via social listening, a process of monitoring, analysing, and interpreting online conversations and public commentary to uncover insights into people's attitudes, emotions, and behaviours towards a topic.[1] This method was applied to over 4,000 social media posts (including on Facebook and Reddit) and 3,000 public submissions related to offshore wind development. The analysis drew on discourse analysis techniques, guided by a cognitive biases framework and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Eggins, 2004; Mehmet et al., 2015; Wang & Ma, 2023), to explore how meaning, opinions, and biases are expressed and shaped in community discourse. From this, a set of eight data-driven personas was developed, each reflecting a distinct position or perspective on offshore wind farms.

In the research's second stage, the researchers ran two community workshops in the Illawarra, bringing in community members from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are broadly supportive of the proposed wind farm sites in the region. The workshops, titled *Coastal Connections: Community Priorities for Offshore Wind*, were designed to provide community members with an opportunity to engage in discussions about the future of offshore wind and associated benefit sharing in the Illawarra region. In addition, the workshops sought to gather insights into the accuracy of the personas, based on participants' lived experience, and to evaluate the effectiveness of using the personas as a tool for encouraging reflection. The workshop aims were to explore and critically reflect on different viewpoints (using the personas) and to identify areas of common ground across diverse perspectives. The workshops took place in February 2025, with 11 participants at the first workshop and 14 at the second workshop.

In the workshop's first hour, the personas were explained to the participants, and they were asked to discuss if the findings matched their experience. In the second hour, the participants were asked to role-play as a selection of the personas and to consider what their priorities would be for a community benefit sharing scheme attached to local wind farm development. Community benefit sharing is common for many wind farms overseas, often instituted to improve fairness, compensation, and community acceptance (Breakey et al., 2025), and it is likely that Australia will follow this practice.

The workshops highlighted both the divergences and shared priorities among different community personas when it comes to natural resource management, renewable energy, and ocean governance. While each group approaches these challenges through distinct ethical lenses, their common values created an opportunity for collaborative, solutions-focused engagement.

Results: Social Listening and the Eight Personas

The data analysis created eight distinct personas, delineating them in terms of their key values and concerns and in terms of their communication style (which included factors such as how they tend to argue, explain, and engage with others). This section describes the eight personas and offers a morally philosophically informed exploration of the ethical approach (or approaches) each exemplifies.

These eight personas not only reflect different positionalities within marine policy debates but also illustrate the deeper philosophical currents shaping their world views and moral commitments. Developed through empirical engagement and typological synthesis, they are grounded in how people actually respond, feel, argue, and act in response to marine policy challenges.

These personas reflect more than just policy positions; they embody different symbolic imaginaries (e.g., the ocean as sacred, economic resource, climate solution, or cultural space) (McLachlan, 2009), epistemic tendencies (scientific, sceptical, and relational), and moral orientations (optimism, realism, care, and resistance). Local attachments to coastlines, fishing grounds, ancestral Country, or communities can cut across traditional ideologies, intensifying moral commitments in ways that make public discourse more emotionally charged and less easily resolved.

What becomes clear is that ethical conflict in this space is not simply a matter of 'pro' versus 'anti'. It is a matter of fundamentally different views about what matters, who or what should be prioritised, and how decisions should be made. These tensions are not necessarily resolvable through more data or consultation. They require ethical literacy, cross-paradigm dialogue, and the political will to mediate between incommensurable values.

From a philosophical perspective, the following ethical analysis aims to understand the personas from a moral and epistemic perspective. Contemporary moral philosophy involves an array of ethical approaches which prioritise different dimensions of ethical action and thereby help capture the moral diversity of actual human communities (Breakey, 2018).

Our purpose in the ethical analysis was not to reduce or 'pigeon-hole' the personas – and indeed it can be misleading to assert that certain people have a specific ethical perspective when (a) their real position might be much richer, more multidimensional and pluralistic than the theory allows (Breakey, 2012), and also (b) the moral theoretical approach, including its sophisticated philosophical nuances, justifications, and challenges, might be quite unknown to them. Nevertheless, observing the parallels and overlaps between a persona and a specific ethical approach can be fruitful. Many of the personas appear to foreground one ethical

approach (or sometimes an interrelated group of ethical approaches), mirroring its priorities and way of thinking ethically about controversial issues. Appreciating this can help justify or legitimise each of the diverse perspectives, at least in the minimal sense of recognising that there is a coherent, well-reasoned ethical approach that taps into each persona's core values.

This ethical analysis can also help us better understand positions foreign to our own. For example, a person who focuses on rules and rights (an action-based 'deontological' ethical perspective) might be tempted to think that others who think differently are morally ignorant, confused, or otherwise wrongheaded. But understanding that this other person might instead be morally focusing on consequences, and that there are good and bad reasons for picturing the ethical world this way (just as there are for deontological views) might enhance their understanding of the other person's perspective. They are not ignorant, confused, or wrongheaded, but simply approach ethical questions in a different way. Finally, the ethical analysis can help us discern areas of concordance between different personas. While two personas might have opposite views about offshore wind, they may nevertheless share key assumptions that make compromise, or constructive deliberation, possible (e.g., perhaps they both focus on expected consequences for human well-being and use reason and scientific evidence to develop the policies that can achieve this).

On a different philosophic dimension, the personas can differ *epistemically* – that is, in terms of what types of evidence and knowledge they value and how they allocate trust.

Community Guardian

The data analysis formulated the persona of the 'Community Guardian' with the following core concerns and values:

- Deeply values local community, aesthetics, and economic sustainability. Worries about offshore wind farms altering the area's cultural and natural character.
- Prioritises local voices in development decisions.
- Opposes changes that might deter visitors and tourists.

In terms of their communication style, the Community Guardian tends to be emotional and anecdotal, focusing on locals' lived experiences. They may also amplify worst-case scenarios to stress potential risks.

A range of different ethical perspectives could undergird the Community Guardian's values and core concerns. However, the ethic that best fits across their priorities is a 'biocultural ethic' (Rozzi, 2013) or a 'place-based ethic' (Bossi, 2023). This is an ethic that has a communitarian dimension in the sense of valuing local ways of life, cultural traditions and social practices (MacIntyre, 1981). To this communitarian base it adds an environmental ethical dimension (Leopold, 1949), taking the view that local practices and ecologies develop together and that both must be valued and protected. This ethic flows through to the Community Guardian's

epistemic approach, which prioritises lived experiences and local knowledge that are formed within and by their biocultural niche.

Environmental Sceptic

In terms of their core concerns and values, the Environmental Sceptic is:

- Concerned about greenwashing and energy efficacy: Believes wind farm projects are about corporate profit and questions the reliability of offshore wind farms and large-scale industrial solutions.
- Advocates for diversified renewable energy sources.

In their communication style, the Environmental Sceptic tends to challenge claims of sustainability with detailed counterarguments, aiming to cite independent studies and expose inconsistencies.

The Environmental Sceptic could be motivated by a range of ethical values. They might be resistant to large-scale change based on economic or cultural conservative commitments, perhaps through biocultural values on the importance of preserving their community's existing way of life. However, their larger *political*-level values provide their key point of distinction from the other personas. They may be what is sometimes termed 'populist', in that they are distrustful of established elites and experts. They look cynically and sceptically at government, NGO and corporate agendas, meaning they can have a base-level disagreement about the need for renewable energy (as they are sceptical of climate change). Epistemically, they have suspicion about government leaders', corporate executives', or scientific experts' claims of knowledge and risk, preferring to do their own research.

Eco-Advocate

The Eco-Advocate has the following core concerns and values:

- Strong commitment to combat climate change through clean energy, balanced with the need for environmental protection
- Advocates for minimal disruption to marine and avian ecosystems, seeking to preserve wildlife
- Supports renewable energy but worries about the visual/aesthetic and environmental impact.

In terms of communication style, the Eco-Advocate uses logical and evidence-based arguments, referencing scientific studies, and appreciates transparency in environmental assessments.

Ethically, the Eco-Advocate might be motivated by the biocultural ethic mentioned earlier. They may also have an ethical perspective that focuses on consequences and wanting to make the world a better place. The best-known

consequentialist ethic is utilitarianism, which says that the right action is the one that maximises expected happiness for all sentient animals, both human and non-human (Singer, 1993). The Eco-Advocate's main point of difference to the preceding approaches is their concern for climate change and the need for striking a balance between their immediate concerns for wildlife and local well-being with the longer-term threat posed by global warming. This concern matches up with their epistemic practices: they take seriously scientific studies and evidence that undergird their thinking about policies that will create the long-run good consequences prized by utilitarianism (Breakey, 2009).

Pragmatic Optimist

The Pragmatic Optimist has the following core concerns and values:

- Supports managed risks to counteract the threat of global warming through a renewable energy transition
- Focuses pragmatically on long-term benefits but acknowledges challenges and the potential need for short-term sacrifices.

The Pragmatic Optimist's communication style tends to be rational and data-driven, open to trade-offs that balance personal concerns with global priorities.

Ethically, like the Eco-Advocate, the Pragmatic Optimist appears straightforwardly utilitarian, focusing pragmatically on solutions that deliver the best long-run consequences, though not without attention to local and near-term costs. This cost-benefit thinking is reflected in their epistemic approach, which is rational and scientific.

Economic Realist

The Economic Realist:

- Strongly values cost-effectiveness and economic sustainability and viability, perhaps questioning financial costs of installation and maintenance
- Supports projects demonstrating direct and measurable benefits, including tangible job creation for locals.

In terms of communication style, the Economic Realist focuses on concrete evidence and quantitative arguments, such as cost-benefit analyses.

Like the Pragmatic Optimist, the Economic Realist reasons from a predominantly utilitarian ethical basis, looking for policies that have demonstrable good effects. The main difference is the Economic Realist's more reductive focus on economic factors and (perhaps relatedly) their diminished concern with climate change compared to the Eco-Advocate and Pragmatic Optimist. Perhaps epistemically suspicious of the uncertainty of long-term policy pursuits like climate policy (policy outcomes that are harder to make tangible and quantify), the Economic

Realist is drawn to highlighting the importance of economic sustainability and immediate benefits like local employment.

Energy Visionary

The Energy Visionary's core concerns and values focus on:

- Energy Innovation: Supports wind farms as a step towards smart grids and other ways of leveraging technology to address climate change
- Progress: Values bold, innovative projects that push boundaries.

The Energy Visionary's communication style tends to be optimistic and future-focused, using visionary language to engage with policymakers and thought leaders.

The Energy Visionary's ethic is likely to be utilitarian. However, it could also be grounded in a type of character-based ('virtue') ethics (Hursthouse, 1999) that celebrates humanity's productive, innovative, and technological prowess (Rand, 1964). However, where the Economic Realist is epistemically wary of longer-term and more speculative goals, the Energy Visionary looks to the opportunities of a step-change in what a technologically advanced future can offer. This technocratic view of the world may also reflect Thorstein Veblen's socialism, whereby engineers would best manage society based on scientific knowledge and technological efficiency (Veblen, 1921). This may reflect a difference in what McLachlan calls a 'symbolic imaginary' (McLachlan, 2009) – where the Community Guardian and Environmental Sceptic see the industrialisation of the natural ocean, the Energy Visionary sees technology as epitomising progress and human triumph through inventiveness. Each sees the same wind turbines (and the same proposals for wind farms) but interprets them very differently.

Ocean Enthusiast

The Ocean Enthusiast's core concerns and values surround:

- Marine Recreation: Opposes structures that may interfere with activities
- Visual Pollution: Views turbines as detrimental to the beauty of the open sea
- Preserving the ocean's natural state as a duty to future generations.

In terms of their communication style, the Ocean Enthusiast leverages emotive, personal experiences, and imagery, often speaking at local forums or community gatherings.

The Ocean Enthusiast may ethically be grounded in the place-based, biocultural ethic discussed earlier for the Community Guardian, wanting to ensure their ongoing relationship and social identity as it relates to their local coastline and ocean. Equally though, their position might be informed by an 'ethics of care'. This ethic has a variety of core commitments that concern the attitudes and

activities of care (Gilligan, 2003), but one of its signature insights is the understanding of people as situated in complex webs of relationships and the responsibilities this engenders (Collins, 2017). The Ocean Enthusiast seeks to protect their communal group, recreational practices, and the set of relationships these practices and groups support. Importantly, it may be that the Ocean Enthusiast has different ethical approaches and epistemic practices that inform their ethical or political thinking in *other* areas and with respect to *other* policies. However, in this one area that impacts so directly on something they care about deeply (their recreational, relational, and well-being interactions with the ocean, and the opportunities this provides for like-minded locals and their families), these commitments move centre stage.

Cultural Steward

The Cultural Steward's core concerns and values focus on:

- Indigenous Rights: Advocates for consultation with Indigenous communities
- Cultural value: Strongly respects cultural traditions and heritage sites
- Social justice: Views environmental justice as intertwined with cultural preservation.

In terms of their communication style, the Cultural Steward emphasises equity and justice, referencing historical examples, and uses stories to connect cultural and environmental concerns.

The Cultural Steward is likely to have the communitarian and biocultural ethics discussed earlier, which bulwark their concern for culture and heritage, especially in the context of First Nations peoples. At the political level, the Cultural Steward might also be motivated by a social justice progressive perspective wanting to protect and promote marginalised peoples who have endured a legacy of harm.

Results: Community Engagement

In the community engagement workshop, the participants were asked to identify the four personas which they felt would have the greatest influence over the decision-making process of community benefit sharing. The participants were then asked to answer the following questions from the perspective of their nominated personas about benefit-sharing schemes:

- What should be the role of government? Should it recommend, require, design, and/or administer benefit sharing?
- What type of benefits should be granted? Cash funds for projects? In-kind benefits?
- Should the priority be compensation for impacts or fair sharing of benefits?
- Should there be mediating organisations that decide how to allocate funds?

Critical Commonalities and Overlaps

The first workshop identified the Economic Realist, Ocean Enthusiast, Cultural Steward, and Community Guardian as the groups most likely to influence the decision-making process. The second workshop identified the Economic Realist, Ocean Enthusiast, Energy Visionary, and Pragmatic Optimist.

The two workshops highlighted both the divergences and shared priorities among different community personas when it comes to natural resource management, renewable energy, and ocean governance. While each group approaches these challenges through distinct ethical lenses, their common values created an opportunity for collaborative, solutions-focused engagement.

Role-playing across these selected personas, key differences in perspectives emerged on the topic of community benefit sharing:

1. Economic Realists prioritise job creation, supply chain benefits, and cost reduction, advocating for financial feasibility and compensation models that keep projects viable.
2. Cultural Stewards emphasise First Nations governance, cultural site protection, and long-term engagement, advocating for partial ownership of sea country and submerged lands.
3. Community Guardians focus on financial equity, training, and transparency, particularly regarding grant distribution, while being wary of corporate or governmental incentives perceived as bribes.
4. Ocean Enthusiasts champion marine conservation, research funding, and independent governance, advocating for nature-positive solutions that ensure ocean ecosystems' long-term health.
5. Energy Visionaries and Pragmatic Optimists take a policy-driven approach, favouring government incentives, investment in research and development, and statutory bodies to oversee fair resource distribution.

Despite their differences, the groups shared fundamental values around ocean stewardship, equity, and sustainable development. The workshop findings reveal several points of alignment:

- *A desire for local community benefit*, particularly through energy cost reductions, in-kind follow-ons (like job creation), and training opportunities
- *Support for independent governance*, whether through statutory authorities or community-led panels, ensuring transparent and fair decision-making
- *Scepticism towards unchecked corporate influence*, with a shared concern about who controls funding and compensation models
- *A deep connection to coastal livelihoods*, whether from an economic, cultural, or environmental perspective, reinforcing the need for place-based, community-driven solutions.

When role-playing as different personas, the group showed the ability to find overlap across personas and agreement on ways forward despite differences (see Figures 9.1 and 9.2). For example, the participants suggested projects that had specific initiatives to protect, support, and bring on board specific groups like surfers and fishers, which might lead to broader acceptance. This opens the possibility of what Cass Sunstein (1995) terms 'Incompletely Theorised Agreements' where different groups are able to agree on policies despite all having different value-based reasons for doing so.

Facades, Bad Faith and Misinformation Raised as Concerns

The Environmental Sceptic attracted a lot of discussion among participants and within the exit surveys. Many workshop participants assumed that environmental sceptics were either victims of misinformation or 'bad faith actors' (Participant #10), wilfully misrepresenting the truth.

Concerns with misinformation did have some basis in fact, as the region had seen false information and even conspiracy theories shared. There was fear that some activists might have been manipulated by deliberately deceptive messaging or online sources of wrongful claims.

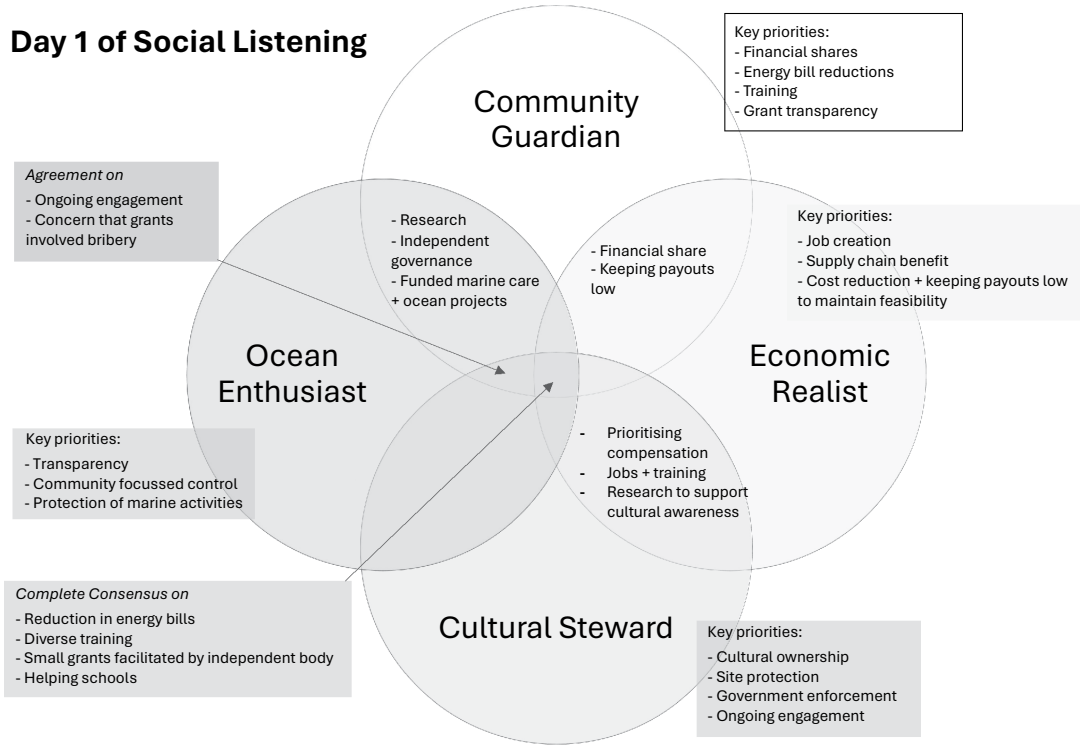

Figure 9.1 Workshop 1 persona priorities and overlaps.

(*Source*: Authors)

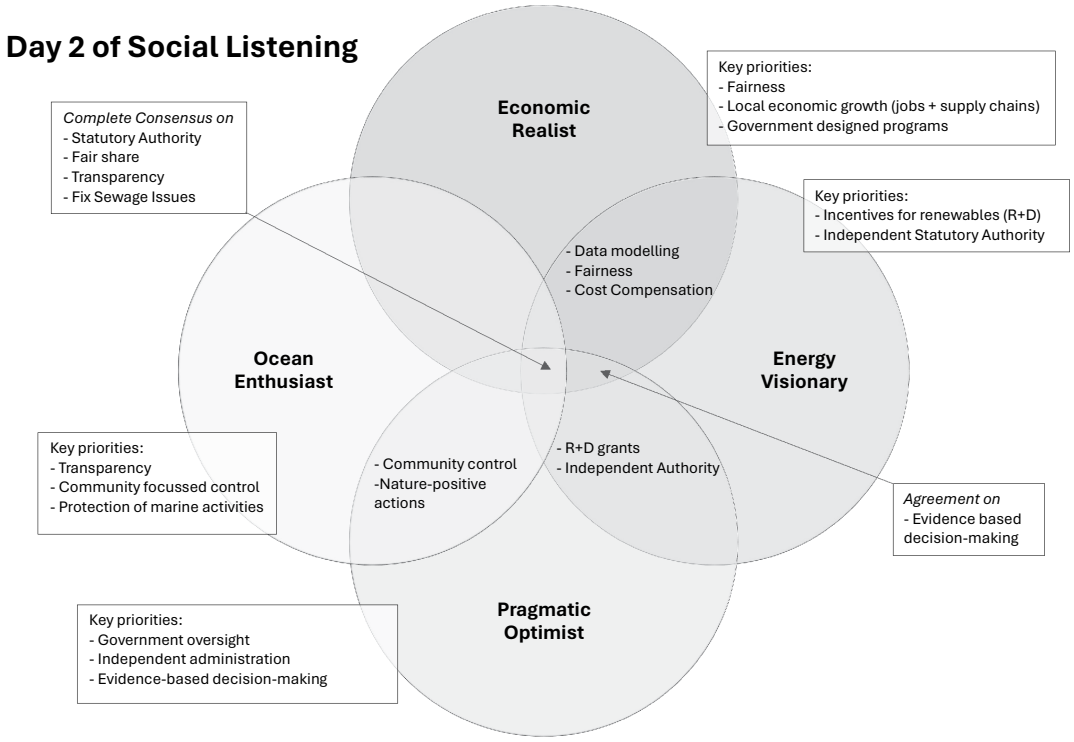

Figure 9.2 Workshop 2 persona priorities and overlaps.
(*Source*: Authors)

That said, while fossil fuel interests undoubtedly play a role in shaping scepticism, treating the Environmental Sceptic purely as a victim of misinformation risks oversimplifying their concerns. Instead, their position can be seen as a response to:

- *Economic insecurity* – A fear of losing livelihoods linked to traditional industries.
- *Distrust in government and environmental policy* – A perception that green transitions are imposed from the top down, without genuine community engagement. Ironically, their scepticism about climate policy being dictated by external forces mirrors concerns raised by other groups about corporate control over energy transitions – opposing sides in the offshore wind debate could both harbour suspicion of nefarious external actors.
- *Cultural identity and status quo attachment* – A strong connection to existing ways of life, making change feel like an existential threat rather than an opportunity. The Environmental Sceptics can share an attachment to their environment, which can serve as a starting point for discussions around conservation and stewardship.
- Questioning (or even denying) large-scale concerns like climate change, the Environmental Sceptic might adopt an attitude of: *if it's not broken, why fix it?*

Several participants raised the concern that some of the personas might be facades. That is, a party is engaging in a bad faith presentation of a coherent values-based

position while actually operating from a 'hidden agenda' (#10). This concern was specifically raised in the context of the Environmental Sceptic, where there was suspicion that industries with a strong interest in preserving the status quo (e.g., fossil fuel companies) hid behind the façade of a principled, concerned citizen. Alternatively, it's possible that a local community member might be primarily motivated by self-interest, such as a 'Not In My Back Yard' (NIMBY) concerned about the impact on local property prices, or even a 'Yes In My Back Yard' (YIMBY) influenced by the promise of generous community benefit sharing (Breakey et al., 2025). This party might hide their real agenda because it is unlikely to be met with widespread support or even acknowledged as a legitimate stance. Such a party might therefore present themselves as one of the personas as a way of persuading others.

A slightly different concern was that the Environmental Sceptic, while recognised as a genuine values-based persona, was seen as having an outsize influence due to their voice allegedly being amplified by those with different agendas (e.g., corporate or ideological agendas), leading to funded 'megaphone propaganda influencers' (#13). However, this concern may have reflected the NGO member's own tension with the values expressed by the Environmental Sceptic.

There is likely some truth, in some cases, for all these potential concerns, and they do show information on the personas, while revealing, should be treated carefully. Some parties might be misrepresenting their positions, and others might be led to their positions not out of a principled stance but because of others' malicious manipulations.

That said, the claims of facades, misinformation, and manipulation are themselves cause for worry. A key part of any ethical deliberation requires treating interlocutors with respect (Breakey, 2023). Instead of framing sceptics as obstacles, the key is to reframe the conversation in terms of values they already hold – autonomy, fairness, and protecting their local way of life. The challenge is not just countering misinformation but creating a space where all citizens feel heard and see a future for themselves in a changing landscape.

It is extremely difficult to engage deliberatively with opponents when one suspects that they are not operating in good faith and do not actually hold the positions they are presenting. Equally, the view that another party is hopelessly gulled by misinformation prevents enquiring into the actual concerns that they have and can function as a peremptory way of dismissing them (Goldenberg, 2016). Confirmation bias and other cognitive biases can also lead people to too quickly believe that their opponents are misinformed or wrong-headed. This in turn can have a toxic effect on deliberation and argument (Breakey, 2021). Thus, concerns about bad faith and manipulation can undermine deliberation both when they are true and when they are false.

Enhanced Understanding, Informed Persuasion?

Given their involvement in the debate and as part of a community group, workshop participants lauded the personas to help improve their understanding of others' different positions, especially through the role-playing activity. Participants said that

it was "very helpful to think and discuss how other people might form their views" (#1) and that "ethical aspects and personality difference was something I haven't considered" (#23).

They also described their desire to use the personas to help them better persuade those who think differently, observing that knowing where others were coming from could help tailor arguments to 'locate the commonalities' (#15) and find 'common ground' (#13, #24, #25). This makes sense. Because the personas provide coherent, principled models of different parties' world views, they can help parties perceive those on the other side not as caricatures or enemies, but as legitimate, good-faith fellow citizens, improving the chances of constructive dialogue. Moreover, having insight into an opponent's concerns and values can help interlocutors better frame and present their arguments and may even lead them to find areas of mutual overlap on values or epistemic approaches. Alternatively, if the interlocutor suspects there will be little chance of mutually accepted values, then they might instead tack away from attempted persuasion and towards finding a compromise or mutually tolerable solution.

At the same time, entering public engagement with the primary intent to persuade, rather than to listen, share, or reflect, can risk reinforcing division rather than building mutual understanding. In contentious debates, persuasion as a goal can be met with resistance, defensiveness, or outright backlash and thereby escalate conflicts. Still, it is worth observing there is a difference between 'winning' arguments and persuading opponents. 'Winning', especially in a public and social media context, is often interpreted as 'owning' your opponents, destroying their positions, and reducing them to impotent silence or confusion. In contrast to this 'point-scoring' approach, genuinely trying to persuade someone who thinks differently necessarily requires understanding their position and listening hard to their reasons. To the extent the personas assist this objective (persuasion rather than rhetorical triumph), they may provide a way of improving public deliberations.

Discussion: Broad Reflections and Cross-cutting Concerns

The above analysis highlighted several features worth stressing.

The Consequence-Focused Cohort

All ethical perspectives care to some degree about consequences; creating good outcomes in the world, and avoiding harms, are ubiquitous ethical concerns. However, we saw above that three of the personas (the Pragmatic Optimist, the Energy Visionary, and the Economic Realist – and perhaps to some extent the Eco-Advocate) are directly consequentialist. These groups have a similar approach to ethics, with utilitarianism often possessing an instrumental, problem-solving aspect that sees ethical issues as problems to be solved through cost-benefit analysis and pragmatic solutions. While they all put their trust in reason and scientific evidence and the technologies, organisations, and processes that surround these,

there were some differences, as the different personas used different methods and focused on different disciplines and lenses (e.g., economics, technology-based) to guide their positions.

Understandably, given the topic of renewable energy development, one consequential concern loomed large: the question of global warming and responses to it. This concern was a central priority of the Energy Visionary, the Eco-Advocate, and the Pragmatic Optimist. The latter two also presented as the most ambivalent personas, with each allowing that compromise, sacrifices, and trade-offs might be necessary (though the Economic Realist also allowed cost-benefit considerations a key role, necessitating trade-offs and compromises).

The Local Culture-Focused Cohort

In many areas of decision-making, other ethical perspectives (like those foregrounding rights and rules) might predominate. But because of the space wind farms (especially when near-shore) take up and their impact on the local environment, and therefore on existing local practices and place-based identities, biocultural and communitarian commitments moved to the foreground. These more holistic and relational ethical perspectives were present in the Community Guardian, the Cultural Steward and the Ocean Enthusiast, and perhaps the Environmental Sceptic. As opposed to the consequence-focused cohort, these personas were more likely to value situated knowledge, emerging from community dialogue, cultural memory, and direct experience of land and sea. Rather than abstract policy instruments or 'best practice' evidence and policy, they employ the slow, reflexive, and place-based work of ethical relationship-building.

These personas' shared communitarian concerns highlight why local communities with their specific knowledge and practices should be involved in decision-making about wind farm development. Community engagement aligns substantively and procedurally with their communitarian and care-based values.

Recognising the significance of place is essential when considering community responses to change. As discussed in Chapter 6, concepts such as Place Attachment, along with place identity and place sensitivity, are critical in understanding how individuals and communities experience and respond to change, as well as in shaping levels of social acceptance (Devine-Wright, 2009). Local communities are not just emotionally connected to their place; some scholars have argued that places define us – our values, our beliefs, our language, and our identity (Bossi, 2023; Loften & Emmanuel, 2018; Malpas, 1999; Wawaite & Pyne, 2010). It is unsurprising that the Ocean Enthusiast, Community Guardian, and Eco-Advocate each raised concerns about the aesthetic impacts offshore wind developments would have upon the beauty of their open horizon – this is both an aesthetic intrusion *and* a symbolic one. Wind developments can present as a symbolic intrusion that disrupts the very character of place and the deep connection between local communities and their experience of and relationship to their seascape. In this sense, it is an experience of loss and dislocation, ultimately challenging their collective memory and belonging.

Two Opposed Camps?

While the above analysis might seem to cleave the personas into two opposed camps, this dichotomy should be resisted (see Figure 9.3). Indeed, the different personas could be distinguished upon multiple dimensions (reductive vs holistic ethics, stable vs transformational goals, technocratic vs holistic world views), which would result in different groupings.

Moreover, these two groupings do not necessarily determine support for, or resistance to, wind farms. The consequences-focused Economic Realist might have concerns about the economic case for the renewable energy transition in general or the financial viability of a particular wind farm specifically. Equally, an Ocean Enthusiast might be open to certain plans for developing wind farms (where they are largely out of sight more than 20 kilometres from the coastline, for example), where the Environmental Sceptic will remain steadfastly opposed.

The complexities across these different and cross-cutting dimensions might prove helpful in building strategic alliances across different groups based on their shared values and approaches.

Cross-cutting Concerns: Governance, Fair and Inclusive Processes and the Importance of Place

One cross-cutting commitment worth highlighting was a concern with governance that appeared in many personas. The Eco-Advocate valued transparency,

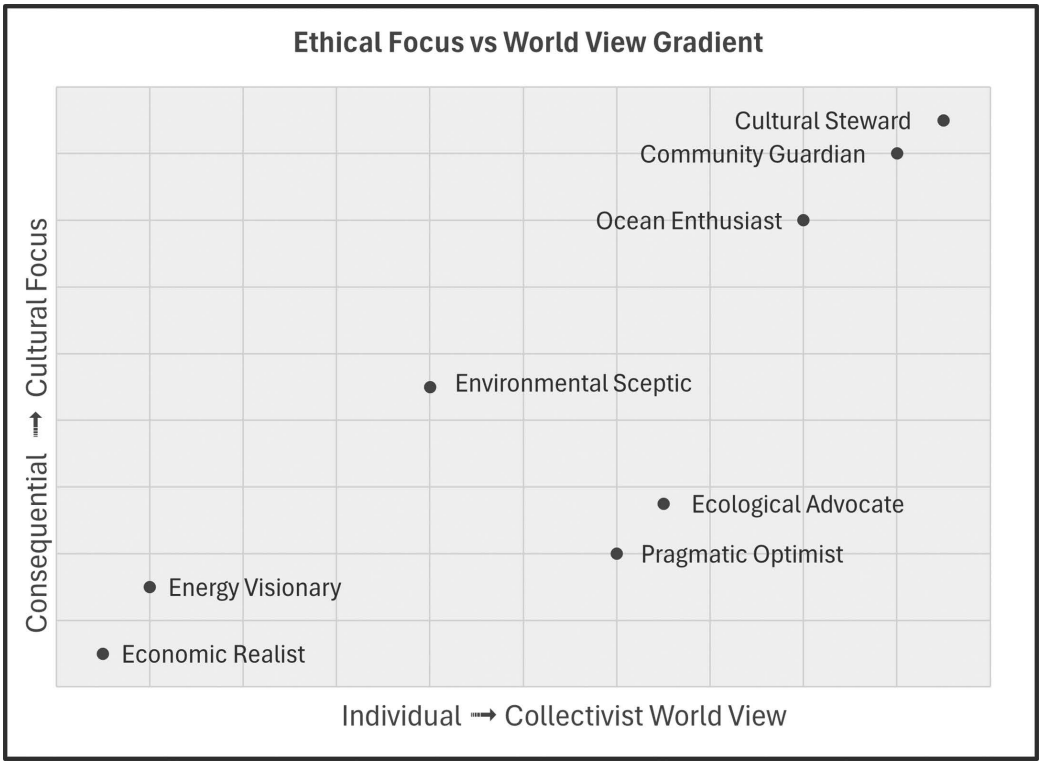

Figure 9.3 Ethical Focus versus Worldview Gradient.

(*Source*: Authors)

the Environmental Sceptic prized independent information and evidence, and the Community Guardian and Ocean Enthusiast both emphasised the importance of local voices and their roles in local dialogues. This is promising, because it may mean that some cohorts can be drawn in by being respected through *fair processes*, even if, in terms of substantive outcomes, not everyone can get the result they want.

Another cross-cutting concern highlights the critical role of place. Even when approaching ocean governance, resource management, or energy transitions from vastly different perspectives (whether economic, cultural, pragmatic, or conservation-driven), the workshop process highlighted that what binds many personas together is their shared experience of place. Coastal communities are deeply shaped by their interactions with the ocean. Their dependence on it (economically, culturally, or ecologically) creates a common ontology, a way of being in the world that transcends political affiliations and theoretical divides. There is little surprise that there is so much passion and reactionary emotion around the development, industrialisation, and arguably even colonisation of their coastal place. The types of emotive words that have been used to describe the proposed offshore wind energy developments reflect the disruption to place that local communities can experience – even if only still in the proposal and imaginary phase – or when there are no turbines upon the horizon at all.

Implications for Marine Governance

This kind of typological ethics analysis not only clarifies moral differences but also offers a path towards more ethically literate marine governance capable of navigating complexity with humility, responsiveness, and care. Mapping ethical personas enables decision-makers to move beyond simplistic stakeholder categories and instead appreciate the moral architectures underpinning stakeholder positions. It calls for governance models that:

- Recognise epistemic pluralism (different types of knowledge claims and approaches to evidence) as a precondition for legitimacy
- Provide accessible information resources that cater to the breadth of citizens' concerns
- Embed relational and procedural justice alongside efficiency and accountability
- Foster ethical reflexivity within institutions (not just compliance)
- Support leadership and processes capable of mediating across moral paradigms (e.g., between technocratic planning and cultural stewardship)
- Treat ethics not as a hurdle or afterthought, but as infrastructure for sustainable ocean governance.

Silent Voices, Ambivalent Positions

The mapped ethical personas are grounded in the expressions of *those actively engaged in the offshore wind debate* – stakeholders who write, speak, protest, publish, or influence public discourse. But in any social listening exercise, it is

essential to acknowledge that visibility is not the whole story. Public conversations, especially around politicised issues like offshore renewables, are shaped by a vocal minority, while many remain silent, ambivalent, or disengaged.

This raises several questions:

- Do these personas reflect distinct moral types, or do they function more like overlapping orientations, like Venn diagrams rather than silos?
- How dynamic are people's positions? Do they shift across different personas over time or in different contexts?
- Can we meaningfully position those who are silent or subdued within this typology?
- What ethical insight is lost when we overlook the disengaged?

These concerns reflect the limitations of persona modelling in social listening activities but also its usefulness when framed carefully. The personas are not deterministic or exhaustive. They are interpretive tools, helping us bring moral complexity into view, not by simplifying it, but by rendering its contours more accessible.

For instance, many people may identify partially with more than one persona. A Pragmatic Optimist might share the scepticism of an Environmental Sceptic under specific conditions. Likewise, the Cultural Steward may share overlapping commitments with the Community Guardian, but differ in authority, world view, or epistemic base. This crosscutting moral logic helps explain why public opinion often appears internally conflicted or ambivalent. Not because people are inconsistent, but because real ethical life doesn't fit neatly into typological boxes.

Rather than treating the disengaged as ethically inert, we can ask: What might their silence reveal? Even in the absence of public expression, these individuals still hold world views, act on ethical intuitions, and are guided by lived priorities – family, work, housing, security, place, and stability. In other words, their disengagement is not value-neutral but is more likely shaped by ethical and political circumstances.

Further research and alternative methodologies might shed light on this important cohort. There are many reasons why people might choose not to publicly engage on a topic. They might simply be time-poor given their current or usual situation or non-confrontational by nature and therefore resistant to wading publicly into a contentious debate, given the fractious state of online discourse (Robertson et al., 2024). They might also feel like they are not sufficiently informed on the issue or in a position to judge between the different claims, evidence and experts offered by opposing sides.

Another possibility is that the person might be ambivalent, in the sense of seeing the attractions of both sides of the issue and not favouring one side over the other. Above we saw that some of the personas reflect the idea that there are benefits and costs to different policy options, leading to the need for compromises and trade-offs. Yet ambivalence could also arise from *mixtures* between the personas. For example, a person might (like the Eco-Advocate or Energy Visionary) have a strong personal commitment to responding to global warming through supporting the development of renewable energies. At the same time, a large part of their life

(like the Ocean Enthusiast) might be involved in coastal activities and recreations like fishing or surfing, and they are worried about wind farm impacts on these prized practices and cherished friend groups. Such a person might feel genuinely torn and unsure about the issue and therefore avoid engaging with others publicly about it. Further research might be able to explore the possibilities presented by those with 'mixed' personas, as they might be able to serve as a helpful social bridge between otherwise opposing parties.

It should also be stressed that there is nothing wrong or inconsistent about those blending the different persona values. Real ethical life is complex and rarely fits neatly into typological boxes. Ambivalence to a given policy might stem from a pluralistic recognition that both climate action and ecological protection matter – both progress and justice – both sovereignty and inclusion. Understanding that ethical complexity lives in contradiction helps avoid the reduction of public opinion into binary camps.

Thus, the silent majority should not be mistaken for moral absence; rather, they reflect moral latency. They may be composed of ethical positions formed through everyday experience rather than formal debate, shaped by lived attachments to place, family, and stability, and by epistemic mistrust or exhaustion. Their absence from social media or public forums does not preclude their influence; in fact, their values may quietly shape electoral outcomes, policy resistance, or community sentiment in powerful ways.

Social listening and persona modelling must therefore attend not only to what is said, but also to who is not speaking and why. This includes asking how structural factors (time, access, education, risk, trauma, and social capital) may shape participation in ethical discourse. In doing so, we avoid equating silence with apathy and instead treat it as a field of ethical meaning yet to be voiced.

Moral Complexity, Misinformation, and the Ethics of Engagement

Ethical personas, whether vocal or silent, do not emerge in a vacuum. They are shaped by access to knowledge, the framing of public narratives, and the symbolic tensions embedded in the politics of offshore renewables. In this sense, ethical reasoning is inseparable from the informational and epistemic conditions in which it takes shape. Misinformation and knowledge gaps don't just cloud debate; they alter the formation, articulation, and expression of ethical commitments. This creates a governance challenge: how to cultivate spaces where more people, and not just the loudest, can form and voice ethically grounded positions, even in the face of uncertainty, complexity, and conflicting values.

Misinformation and knowledge gaps can inflame symbolic conflict. Competing narratives about progress, sovereignty, protection, or sacrifice trigger deeply held values:

- The Energy Visionary may embrace techno-optimistic visions, amplifying narratives of heroic innovation
- The Environmental Sceptic may be drawn into populist or conspiracy theories that reinforce fear and distrust

- The Ocean Enthusiast may be mobilised by emotive but unverifiable claims of ecological damage
- Even the Ecological Advocate or Economic Realist may interpret risk or opportunity through distorted or selectively curated data.

This symbolic amplification reshapes public moral discourse, polarising it in ways that obscure shared concerns and frustrate deliberative engagement. At the same time, structural knowledge gaps contribute to representational injustice. Individuals and communities with limited access to technical, legal, or institutional knowledge, particularly Indigenous custodians, low-income residents, or culturally diverse groups, may find their world views misrepresented, dismissed, or completely excluded from governance processes. This marginalisation is not just political; it is epistemic and ethical, diminishing the moral agency of those whose knowledge does not fit dominant policy logics.

In addition to public misinformation and unequal access to information, scientific knowledge gaps themselves contribute to ethical ambiguity and symbolic conflict. In the context of offshore renewable energy, many ecological and socio-cultural impacts remain poorly understood, under-researched, or contested. Long-term data on underwater noise, migratory species, climate change, and cumulative impacts to changing ecosystems are often incomplete or inconclusive. Such data as is available might have come from other places with different temperatures and underwater ecologies, or the at-scale deployment of a renewable energy technology may not be easily extrapolated from initial testing. Meanwhile, traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous science or cultural heritage may be undervalued or excluded from formal assessments, further narrowing the evidence base. These uncertainties don't just create confusion; they shape the moral terrain, forcing stakeholders to interpret risk, responsibility, and legitimacy through partial knowledge and feeling like they must make a decision despite their lack of knowledge.

In the absence of definitive science, value-based judgements often rely on symbolic associations ('clean energy', 'marine degradation'), precautionary reasoning, or community-based intuitions. For some personas, like the Ecological Advocate or Energy Visionary, uncertainty can intensify urgency or optimism. For others, like the Environmental Sceptic (and perhaps some of the silent majority), the lack of clear science fuels doubt, caution, or distrust. Importantly, scientific uncertainty does not diminish the need for ethical engagement but amplifies it. Where facts are incomplete, inclusive deliberation, epistemic humility, and plural forms of knowledge become ever critical. A just marine governance system must therefore treat uncertainty not as a technical gap to be overcome, but as an ethical condition to be navigated with care, transparency, and respect.

Conclusion

The eight personas constructed by the data provide an insightful – if non-comprehensive – window into the complexity of human values, communication styles, and epistemic approaches as they play out in contentious Blue Economy

debates. Ethical analysis shows commonalities across the personas but also differences in the types of moral reasoning being brought to bear. The two community workshops showed the utility of the personas for assisting mutual understanding and suggested ways forward for creating constructive dialogues, whether to persuade, to find shared ground, or to identify a workable compromise.

Note

1 Thanks to the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre for funding the social listening analysis and the community workshops through the project 'Pre-conditions for the Development of Offshore Wind Energy in Australia' (5.22.001).

Reference List

Bossi, L. (2023). How a sense of place may return the social license to operate concept back to an ethics of responsibility within a neoliberal framework – Tasmanian Salmon Story. *Research in Ethical Issues in Organisations*, *27*, 25–46. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1529-209620230000027004

Breakey, H. (2009). The epistemic and informational requirements of utilitarianism. *Utilitas*, *21*(1), 72–99. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0953820808003373

Breakey, H. (2012). Moral pluralist theories. In P. Bowden (Ed.), *Applied ethics: Strengthening ethical practices* (pp. 17–29). Tilde University Press.

Breakey, H. (2018). Same duties, different motives: Ethical theory and the phenomenon of moral motive pluralism. *Philosophical Studies*, *175*(2), 531–552. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-017-0881-x

Breakey, H. (2021). "That's unhelpful, harmful and offensive!" Epistemic and ethical concerns with meta-argument allegations. *Argumentation*, *35*(3), 389–408. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-020-09538-8

Breakey, H. (2023). The ethics of arguing. *Inquiry*, *66*(4), 589–613. https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2019.1637776 (Taylor & Francis Online)

Breakey, H., Bossi, L., Marshallsay, R., & Sampford, C. (2025). Benefits or bribes? Ethical concerns with the potential corruption of civic obligations through community benefits schemes for wind farms. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *127*, 104154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2025.104154

Collins, S. (2017). Care ethics: The four key claims. In D. R. Morrow (Ed.), *Moral reasoning: A text and reader on ethics and contemporary moral issues* (pp. 192–204). Oxford University Press.

Devine-Wright, P. (2009). Rethinking Nimbyism: The role of place attachment and place identity in explaining place-protective action. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 19*(6), 426–441. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.1004.

Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics* (2nd ed.). Pinter.

Gilligan, C. (2003). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press. (1982).

Goldenberg, M. J. (2016). Public misunderstanding of science? Reframing the problem of vaccine hesitancy. *Perspectives on Science*, *24*(5), 552–581. https://doi.org/10.1162/POSC_a_00223

Hursthouse, R. (1999). *On virtue ethics*. Oxford University Press.

Leopold, A. (1949). *A sand county almanac: With sketches here and there*. Oxford University Press.

Loften, A., & Emmanuel, V.-L. (2018). *Native cartography: A bold mapmaking project that challenges western notions of place*. https://aeon.co/videos/native-cartography-a-bold-mapmaking-project-that-challenges-western-notions-of-place

MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue: A study in moral theory*. Duckworth.
Malpas, J. (1999). *Place and experience: A philosophical topography*. Routledge.
McLachlan, C. (2009). 'You don't do a chemistry experiment in your best China': Symbolic interpretations of place and technology in a wave energy case. *Energy Policy*, *37*(12), 5342–5350. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2009.07.057
Mehmet, M., Clarke, R., & Kautz, K. (2015). Social media semantics: Analysing meanings in multimodal online conversations. In *International conference on information systems (ICIS 2014): Building a better world through information systems*. University of Auckland.
Rand, A. (1964). *The virtue of selfishness: A new concept of egoism*. New American Library.
Robertson, C. E., Shariff, A., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2024). Morality in the Anthropocene: The perversion of compassion and punishment in the online world. *PNAS Nexus*, *3*(6). https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgae193
Rozzi, R. (2013). Biocultural ethics. In R. Rozzi, S. T. A. Pickett, C. Palmer, J. J. Armesto, & J. B. Callicott (Eds.), *Linking ecology and ethics for a changing world: Values, philosophy & action* (pp. 9–32). Springer Science+Business Media.
Singer, P. (1993). *Practical ethics* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
Sunstein, C. R. (1995). Incompletely theorized agreements. *Harvard Law Review*, *108*(7), 1733–1772. https://doi.org/10.2307/1341816
Veblen, T. (1921). *The engineers and the price system*. B.W. Huebsch.
Wang, B., & Ma, Y. (Eds.). (2023). *Theorizing and applying systemic functional linguistics: Developments by Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003041238.
Wawaite, J., & Pyne, S. (2010). Tracking in pursuit of knowledge: Teachings of an Algonquin Anishinabe Bush hunter. In N. Kowalsky (Ed.), *Hunting philosophy for everyone*. Blackwell Publishing.

Conclusion

Building Authentic SLO for the Blue Economy

Hugh Breakey and Charles Sampford

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, we consider the book's practical takeaways. We consider what Blue Economy industries – including company owners, leaders and employees – should be doing to improve their ethics and social licence (including a discussion of how practical and realistic the eight ethical principles are). We then argue that a sustainable and equitable Blue Economy is not only a responsibility of industry but of all other actors in the integrity system, including government, NGOs and researchers.

What Should Blue Economy Industries Be Doing to Improve Their Ethics and Social Licence?

If industries want to be part of a sustainable and equitable Blue Economy, then they have some work to do. With eight distinct Blue Economy ethical principles to implement, this prospect might appear daunting. Achieving ethical standing and Chapter 4's Authentic SLO requires proactive strategising and whole-of-business practices, including making a real effort to engage with stakeholders, understand their concerns and think through what might be done to ameliorate those concerns.

Yet at the same time, the ethical principles do not unrealistically require companies to be altruistic charities or to forgo growth, economic sustainability, and profitability (see the critique of moralism in Sandberg & Walsh, 2026). Indeed, following the principles will often have straightforward long-term prudential benefits for the company and industry. This is not to assert an 'ethical egoist' position. Ethical egoism holds that ethics is ultimately in one's (long-term, all things considered) self-interest (e.g., Gauthier, 1987). However, in most people's experience, there are routinely times when doing the right thing clashes with acting in their narrow self-interest. Rather, the point here is that instead of requiring Blue Economy companies to forgo doing business, following the eight ethical principles largely concerns *doing business well*. There are many ways in which following the principles dovetails with an industry's long-term operational sustainability. As such,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003598992-13

when a company's leaders choose to prioritise developing an Authentic SLO, they are rightly acting in the company's long-term best interests and taking control over the risk environment it faces (see Chapters 4 and 7).

Five of the ethical principles will be secured simply by being a constructive, productive and cooperative market actor:

- *Beneficence* focuses on the good that the company will naturally do if it is productive and well-run. It does not require universal benevolence but simply the creation of genuine goods (food, energy, transportation and tourism) that fulfil people's needs and wants, especially when they do so in a way that helps overall economic development, improves knowledge and know-how and creates employment.
- *Integrity* requires telling the truth, keeping promises and being accountable. These are everyday moral obligations – and they are ones that make the company trustworthy, which is a crucial source of valuable social capital, especially when challenges arise.
- *Care* focuses on the company's interactions with consumers, partners like contractors, suppliers and distributors, neighbours (and other nearby stakeholders who regularly interact with the company) and employees. Care thus involves role-appropriate ways of respecting those who depend on the company and interact with it regularly. For this reason, Care delivers the valuable quality of nurturing constructive and productive long-term relationships. The company shows through its actions that it is a dependable, trustworthy partner that cooperates well with others.
- *Harm Prevention* and *Environmental Protection* involve very standard and high-priority moral obligations that are baseline expectations of communities. While these are primarily 'negative duties' (i.e., they require *avoiding* doing harmful actions), they will typically require positive activities like monitoring environmental impacts, developing technologies that reduce impacts (e.g., on sea wildlife) and so on.

Fulfilling these five principles is therefore a matter of being a high-quality business operator that others (including prospective employees, government regulators, distributors, suppliers and neighbours) see as trustworthy and cooperative.

The remaining principles are a little different. Many requirements of *Fairness* – that is, the fair distribution of benefits and imposts, opportunities and risks (Croft et al., 2024) – are out of a given company's hands, as they usually depend on larger policy settings controlled by government. Companies normally contribute to Fairness simply by paying appropriate taxes that contribute to the public purse, which allows the government to implement Fairness through initiatives like social safety nets. (Fairness also overlaps with Care in treating employees appropriately and paying them fairly.) However, there are times when companies need to proactively pursue Fairness. Most commonly, Fairness will involve attending to other users of the ocean space and considering their needs; for example, are there ways that commercial and recreational fishers can accommodate each other's needs (and

can these be resolved through mutual agreement or more formally through Marine Spatial Planning processes)? Are there ways of reducing an aquaculture operation's night-time noise and lights to lessen the imposition on its neighbours? There are also some cases where, because the company is creating local impacts, more direct mechanisms to ensure Fairness are required, such as through the community benefit sharing schemes that are common in offshore renewable energy contexts in some jurisdictions (Breakey et al., 2025).

Stakeholder Participation is perhaps the most demanding of the Blue Economy ethical principles, as it requires proactive engagement with many diverse stakeholders. Such inclusive engagement is easier said than done, and it involves potentially unfamiliar tasks and expertise. Yet in the context of SLO, Stakeholder Participation is not just ethically desirable but practically necessary. While all the Blue Economy ethical principles will help deliver SLO (especially the *Authentic SLO* described in Chapter 4), Stakeholder Participation is the principle most directly focused on building community acceptance. This is because it requires the company to hear directly about specific community concerns (and potentially work out ways to accommodate those concerns), and also because the engagement processes can reassure stakeholders that they are informed, have a voice and are being treated respectfully. Stakeholder Participation thus improves equity in terms of both fair outcomes and fair processes (Croft et al., 2024). As Chapter 6 argued, Blue Economy operations, by their very nature (operating on public resources, developing technologies and expanding their size and scale, with environmental and social impacts), almost always need to possess SLO. A company working in the marine environment that avoids Stakeholder Participation – usually through adopting a 'Default SLO' or 'Tick-Box SLO' approach – is inviting serious ethical and operational risk, as Chapter 4 argued.

Place Attachment links closely with Stakeholder Participation. Putting in place robust measures for Stakeholder Participation (especially those focusing on locals) will provide a process through which these values can be articulated and, ideally, accommodated. Fairness is also relevant because Place Attachment values will help frame what locals see as imposts and impacts. For example, if coastal landowners' Place Attachment values greatly prioritise the views of their open horizon, then Fairness may require ways of accommodating this through the design and placement of offshore wind turbines.

As such, pursuing the eight Blue Economy ethical principles will not involve foregoing economic sustainability and profitability but instead will proactively address many of the issues that lead to operational risk. That said, Fairness, Stakeholder Participation and Place Attachment will have stronger and more demanding ethical requirements when engaging with First Nations peoples, as Chapter 5 argued.

Small-scale and large-scale companies will have different capabilities and opportunities when it comes to operationalising the eight principles. Small-scale local enterprises are more likely to come from within the community and share (or at least understand and be able to accommodate) its values and practices;

long-standing artisanal fishing traditions in coastal towns and Indigenous communities are obvious examples. This local knowledge and community membership can improve a small company's capacity for delivering on Care, Fairness, and Place Attachment, and allow its operators to use informal connections and interactions to succeed in Stakeholder Participation. As well, smaller companies will typically have more limited social and environmental footprints, making Harm Prevention and Environmental Protection easier.

Larger companies will have fewer natural advantages in terms of small social and environmental footprints, and the owners (and especially shareholders) may be quite removed from the local community, though employees will usually be locals. Despite these limitations, larger companies will often have greater resources to engage in systematic Stakeholder Participation activities or develop community benefit sharing schemes to answer concerns with Fairness or Harm Prevention (Breakey et al., 2025). Large companies can also develop official internal roles (including leadership roles) that allow dedicated attention to ethical concerns like Environmental Protection and Integrity and to handle community complaints or environmental issues more generally.

It is not only company owners, directors and managers who have a role in delivering ethical outcomes and an Authentic SLO. Individual employees can play a pivotal role. Chapter 6's practitioner interviews underscored the prevalence of love of the ocean and the desire to protect and nurture the marine environment in marine industry operators. To be sure, such individuals remain part of an organisation, owing legal and contractual duties to their employers. Yet ordinary employees often have opportunities to appropriately and constructively influence their organisation's goals, methods (including the use of technology and gear) and culture, and to proactively buy-in to the company's policies and processes like its environmental, social and governance (ESG) accounting or commitments to lower the carbon footprint of its supply chain.

In summary, owners, managers and operators of marine industry companies – both small and large – all have a role to play in delivering ethical outcomes and achieving an Authentic SLO for their operations. The task is not an easy one and is unlikely to emerge naturally from business-as-usual practices. Equally though, the task is not an insurmountable or unprofitable one but simply requires living up to the promise of private enterprises operating in the Blue Economy: to deliver economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Not Only Industry: The Critical Role of Other Parties in the Blue Economy Integrity System

The eight ethical principles apply to *all* Blue Economy actors and stakeholders. Creating desirable outcomes and ensuring good practices can rarely be achieved by a company – or even an industry – acting in isolation. Instead, it is the overall integrity system (discussed in Chapters 6 and 7) that must deliver on the ethical principles.

Government, including policymakers and regulators, has a crucial role. They must put in place policies, laws, regulations and official processes (such as Marine Spatial Planning and similar initiatives) that help realise the eight principles. Often this involves creating a minimum-standards baseline or 'floor' for each of these distinct ethical priorities. For example, the government's environmental policies and regulations create legal requirements for Environmental Protection, their food safety and employee safety rules ensure a baseline level of Care and Harm Prevention and so on. Government can also use its licensing processes and other policy levers to facilitate and incentivise industry delivery of desired outcomes, such as developing requirements for community engagement (to facilitate Stakeholder Participation) or setting down recommendations for community benefits sharing schemes (to improve Fairness). In all these activities, Integrity is paramount. While governments will often rightly wish to support Blue Economy economic development, they must remain a fair broker for information and a fiercely independent regulator.

The eight principles also apply to NGOs, activists and advocates. Many civil society organisations and public figures will have an explicit moral purpose that directly focuses on one of the ethical principles, such as an ecological focus on Environmental Protection, or an animal welfare ambition to ensure Harm Prevention for seabirds and marine animals. Through this sustained focus and ongoing monitoring, such organisations make the world a better place. They play a crucial role in the integrity system by shining a spotlight on particular ethical concerns and keeping government and industry accountable.

Despite having an explicitly moral purpose, civil society organisations can still behave wrongly, as a morally laudable end does not justify employing unethical means. Indeed, NGOs need to negotiate their *own type* of social licence. To be sure, an NGO's scandals or ethically poor practices are unlikely to drive community and government actors to actively thwart its operations. Nevertheless, civil society organisations can lose their credibility and legitimacy, condemning them to irrelevance, when they lose the wider community's trust. As with government, Integrity is crucial in this context.

A similar story is true for scientists and independent researchers, as well as other third-party governance actors, like certifiers. These parties' activities help keep stakeholders informed and companies accountable – but at the same time, their own Integrity must be preserved and defended to ensure they remain, and can be demonstrated to remain, honest brokers of information and evidence.

Summing up, achieving an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable Blue Economy will take the conscientious activity of many different parties. Industry will need to work to achieve an Authentic SLO. The government must shoulder the challenging tasks of planning and managing marine environments as precious ecosystems, places of economic production and overlapping sites of social and cultural practice and restoration. And civil society, NGOs and scientists need to play crucial roles as watchdogs and independent knowledge brokers. Only then can the promise of the Blue Economy be realised.

Reference List

Breakey, H., Bossi, L., Marshallsay, R., & Sampford, C. (2025). Benefits or bribes? Ethical concerns with the potential corruption of civic obligations through community benefits schemes for wind farms. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *127*, 104154. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2025.104154

Croft, F., Breakey, H., Voyer, M., Cisneros-Montemayor, A., Issifu, I., Solitei, M., Moyle, C., Campbell, B., Barclay, K., Benzaken, D., Bodwitch, H., Fusco, L., Lozano, A. G., Ota, Y., Pauwelussen, A., Schutter, M., Singh, G., & Pouponneau, A. (2024). Rethinking blue economy governance – A blue economy equity model as an approach to operationalise equity. *Environmental Science & Policy*, *155*, 103710. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2024.103710

Gauthier, P. (1987). *Morals by agreement*. Clarendon Press.

Sandberg, J., & Walsh, A. (2026). *Between ethics and economics: A moral leeway approach to business ethics.* Cambridge University Press.

Index

Note: numbers in **bold** indicate a table on the corresponding page.