

● Pathways to supporting sustainable development in the Pacific Ocean

Alexandre Ganachaud,
UMR Legos,
IRD, Toulouse, France
Elisabeth Holland,
University of the South Pacific, Fidji

Background

Exploring the link between researchers and stakeholders is a major challenge in sustainability science. To be able to make informed decisions at the right time, on the right scale and in the right time frame, policymaker and other stakeholders urgently need interfaces that provide easy access to reliable information and data. These tools need to be co-constructed with the people living in this region, as part of a transdisciplinary approach. Designing such an approach is the goal of the PACPATH project, funded under the Belmont Forum Pathways to Sustainability Collaborative Research Action (CRA), which aims to develop pathways to transforming socio-ecological systems for sustainable development in the South Pacific.

Contact

alexandre.ganachaud@ird.fr

Further reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4cbvbAAcmU>

The ocean and global challenges

The oceans fulfil many vital functions for the Earth system and human societies. Combining conservation and sustainable use of ocean spaces and resources is an urgent challenge. The ocean is the focus of one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – SDG 14. The challenge is to transform the way we think about and use the ocean by recognising and involving all relevant knowledge, stakeholders, authorities and institutions. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) was created to foster participatory and transformative processes for scientists, policymakers, managers and users to work together to increase understanding and improve governance of ocean spaces and ecosystems. Good management of the oceans is essential for the health of the planet, the well-being of societies (especially in the South Pacific) and for achieving SDG 14 and the other SDGs. The quality of the ocean environment is very closely linked to climate change, making it one of the priorities of the next UN Oceans Conference (2022).

PACPATH's goals

PACPATH aims to establish a network of stakeholders from South Pacific island countries and territories to strengthen a common understanding of the ocean. The goal is to co-design a robust and shared ocean governance strategy based on innovative initiatives and pathways to sustainability. To achieve

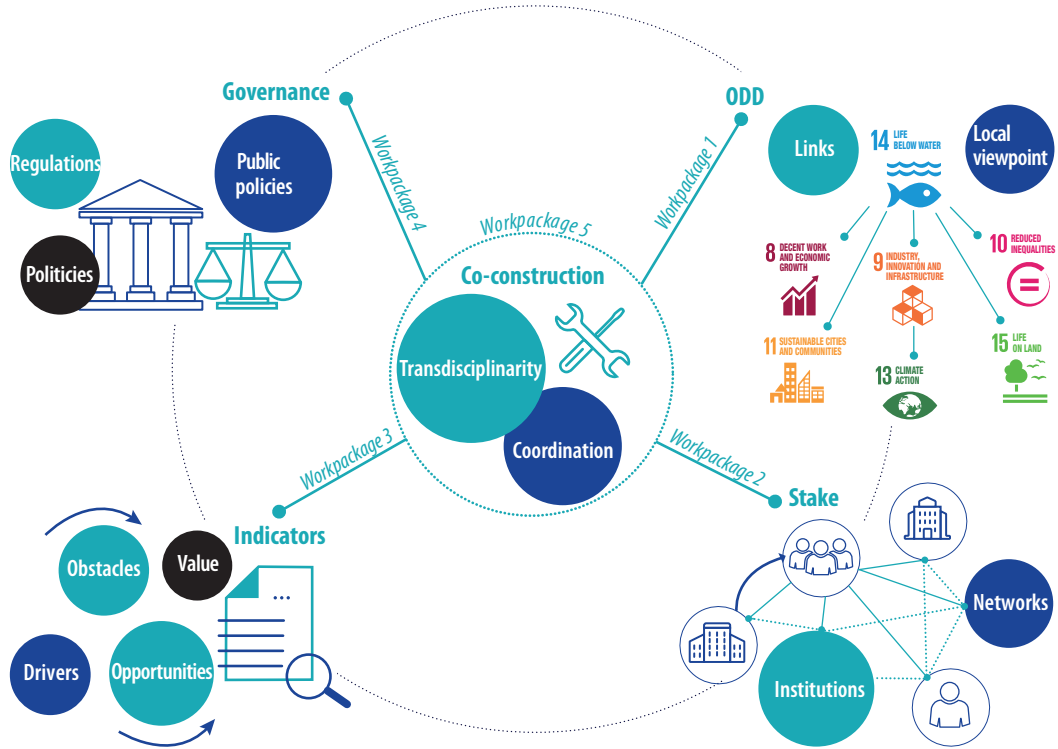
this, it is assembling an interdisciplinary consortium and targeting pilot sites, including Fiji and New Caledonia. These sites will be used to design the framework and methodology for building a common space for scientists, local socioeconomic stakeholders, civil society organisations, customary authorities and policymakers to co-construct the knowledge and responsibilities needed for decision-making in response to SDG 14. To have the best chance to be translated into effective actions, the development of ocean science and services will be based on a transdisciplinary approach involving regional and local stakeholders. To strengthen the effectiveness of policies and the creation of appropriate indicators, PACPATH will adopt a co-constructed scientific approach, at an appropriately early stage, and will build a knowledge base that includes non-academic and local knowledge. The expectations of the project are: (i) a better shared understanding of the state, variability and change of marine environments; (ii) robust strategies for ocean governance and management in the South Pacific; and (iii) innovative initiatives to protect coastal environments.

Project organisation

PACPATH is divided into 5 interconnected work packages (WPs). WP 1 will identify how data, science and information can best support sustainable development on regional and local scales (“the ocean’s influence on you, and your influence on the ocean”). WP 2 will develop a

mapping of the various networks, stakeholders and relationships related to SDG 14 and other related SDGs, through the use of institutional and governance assessment tools. WP 3 will identify key values, levers, obstacles and opportunities around both the local translation of the SDGs and the feedback of local views, with the aim of improving ownership and integration of relevant information and

indicators. Work package 4 will focus on policy making and governance arrangements for the SDGs at regional and national levels. WP 5 will provide all WPs with methods to support the effective participation of all stakeholders in the co-construction of knowledge and actions, and to assess whether key issues, such as social inclusion, equity and gender balance, have been taken into account.



PACPATH's 5 work packages.

PACPATH consortium

The PACPATH consortium brings together 14 organisations: 10 universities and institutes from France, Germany, the United States and the Pacific region: New Caledonia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, a regional organisation (the Pacific Community – PC), a private sector company (Mercator Ocean International) and a government department (DIMENC/Coastal Observatory of New

Caledonia). PACPATH members are experts in the relationship between ocean, climate and societies, adopting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. Their areas of interest and expertise include sea level rise adaptation and resilience (two experts are lead authors of the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean), analysis of the social and economic impacts of climate change, and governance of resources and infrastructure for sustainable development. They also draw on disciplinary approaches such as marine ecology, socio-ecology, anthropology and geography.

KEY POINTS

PACPATH hopes that its pilot sites will reveal how to co-construct interfaces between interdisciplinary and local scientific knowledge, on local and regional scales, to transform the ways in which the ocean's resources are used and looked after (SDG 14 and other related SDGs). For PACPATH, sustainability science and its priority research questions are designed as a network and are deployed in a transdisciplinary manner. This co-construction process aims to develop sustainable development pathways with a wide range of academic and non-academic stakeholders in South Pacific island countries.

SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE

UNDERSTAND, CO-CONSTRUCT, TRANSFORM

Collective thinking coordinated
by Olivier Dangles and Claire Fréour

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