



Article Comparing Public Participation in Coastal and Marine Planning in the Arctic: Lessons from Iceland and Norway

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Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https:// creativecommons.org/licenses/by/ 4.0/). Department of Planning & Design, Landbúnaðarháskóli Íslands, 311 Borgarbyggð, Iceland; mariaw@lbhi.is

Abstract: Amid a changing global climate, Northern coastal communities face a variety of challenges to their livelihoods, which are dependent on marine resources. Marine spatial planning (MSP) provides opportunities for cooperation between authorities, stakeholders, and the public to ensure sustainable marine management. Public participation is a crucial element of coastal and marine planning for its long-term democratic legitimacy and sustainability. However, the process of MSP is often wrought with conflict and challenges of involving stakeholders and the public in decisions concerning an often-contested marine space. Whereas coastal zone planning (CZP) is well established in Norway and a reiteration of previous CZP was conducted 2020-23, MSP is new to Iceland, and has only recently been launched with its first pilot plans in 2019. This study investigates how participation in coastal and marine planning processes compare between Iceland and Norway and what lessons can be shared between them. Data were collected from two case studies in the Tromsø region in Norway and the Westfjords of Iceland through analysis of planning documentation, literature review, as well as participant observation in the Westfjords and 11 semi-structured interviews across both case studies. The results show that public participation is formally integral to both processes but, in practice, varies considerably. Both planning processes are driven by the expansion of the aquaculture industry, and a variety of issues faced during the planning process are similar. In Norway, public participation is politically desired and guided by a participation strategy emphasising synergies between expert and local knowledge. In the Tromsø region, meaningful public participation varied across municipalities and issues regarding Indigenous participation remain. In Iceland, there is little evident political expectation of public engagement, and the process is characterised by a passive approach to participation that aims to inform the public but does not include wider sharing of decision-making power. The findings do not only make clear that a revision of current public participation processes is needed in both case studies but also point towards wider issues in marine governance that have consequences for blue justice, such as the exclusion of groups in decisionmaking, lack of public discussion of marine issues and top-down governance supporting established power hierarchies.

Keywords: marine spatial planning; coastal zone planning; public participation; community engagement; marine governance; blue justice

1. Introduction

Marine spaces in the North have increasingly become places of interest for numerous activities: sheltered fjords provide excellent conditions to raise farmed fish, the cold waters provide many productive fishing grounds, and maritime tourism of the North is booming. The planning of marine spaces is used as a method to get experts, the public and stakeholders of different industries together around the table, discuss conflicts of interest and pave the way for a more sustainable future. However, rapid changes in climate and ecosystems bring challenges as well as opportunities. The rush to develop Northern fjords has accelerated, and long-avoided conflicts are coming to the surface that demand urgent action. Jentoft and Buanes [1] put it this way: "It is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot continue to use the ocean as both dumpsite and pantry" (p. 151). Marine spatial planning (MSP) is an ecosystem-based approach to planning marine areas that involves the allocation of ocean space. This often takes the shape of creating zones for different activities at sea, taking into account their impact on the environment [2]. While the outcome of this process often includes a map demarcating these zones of usage, MSP is also a process that can help foster cooperation across sectors and communities and may help to reduce conflicts.

Participation should make coastal and marine planning processes more effective, just and legitimate when it is started early in the process and engaging a wide variety of stakeholders and community members [3–7]. The communication between planners and participants must be characterised by shared norms, expectations, and trust [8,9], for participating at all is a largely voluntary activity for those involved [10]. While participation theories and strategies are intended to involve stakeholders and the public alike, they often prioritise stakeholders over the involvement of the public [11]. Stakeholders shall be defined as those groups and individuals that have a recognised interest, financial or otherwise, in the outcome of coastal and marine planning, whereas the public consists of local community members who might or might not be involved in marine affairs or have pre-existing knowledge about marine governance.

Participation processes always raise questions of power in decision-making, such as who is making decisions for whom and for whose benefit. Coastal and marine planning comes with inextricable links to questions of power and injustice. Thus, research needs to critically examine how such plans are conceived and what the social consequences of these processes are. This research helps fill the gaps in knowledge about the social process of planning marine spaces in the high North by asking the research question: How does participation in near-Arctic coastal and marine planning compare—what are the lessons that can be learned by comparing a newly launched process such as Icelandic MSP to a long established Norwegian CZP process? The study compares public participation in the respective marine and coastal planning processes in the Westfjords of Iceland and in the Tromsø region in Norway by reviewing the planning documents and through interviews with key informants who were involved in the planning processes. Iceland is only just beginning the journey of MSP, and the already established CZP process in the Tromsø region in Norway developed under similar pressures and conditions. It is assumed that, given the previous experience with CZP, the Norwegian process might include a more detailed public engagement strategy and higher public participation levels and may offer some best practice lessons for an emerging process such as the Icelandic MSP. However, this comparison was also undertaken to highlight common issues across coastal and marine planning practices beyond Norway and Iceland, and to examine wider questions of participation within planning. The results may help shed light on what needs to change in marine planning in order to foster more just and inclusive participation processes.

The article will first describe the theoretical background for public participation in coastal and marine planning (Section 1.1) before contextualising the marine planning processes in the two case studies in Iceland (Section 1.2.1) and Norway (Section 1.2.2). The research methods will be detailed (Section 2), and the results of both case studies will be presented, compared (Section 3) and discussed (Section 4) before conclusions are drawn (Section 5).

1.1. Theoretical Background

For a participation strategy to work effectively, successfully engaging a variety of interest groups, stakeholders and community members, a number of complex issues need to be taken into account. Barriers to participation are numerous and need to be addressed by the planning process [8,12–14]: Although the value of participation is widely acknowledged, in practice, limitations on resources available to the planning actors often result in inadequate participation opportunities for communities. This could, for example, include insufficient financing, staffing or time allocated for participation activities. Top–down processes of consultation are more common than the more desirable two-way communica-

tion [8]. On the other hand, participants can disengage when they feel like they lack the capacity or resources to effectively contribute to the process [12], when they lose trust in the governance system, when they perceive themselves at a disadvantage in underlying power inequalities when they cannot perceive any benefit from their participation and when they are personally stressed by the demands of the participation process [7,13,14]. Effective coastal and marine planning must therefore take into account these potential barriers, and work towards reducing them to facilitate participation of a wide variety of stakeholders and citizens.

Participation can happen on different levels of empowerment and give the participants more or less decision-making power in the process. Arnstein [15] originally modelled a ladder of citizen participation in policy (see Figure 1), which ranges from "non-participation" (manipulation and therapy) over "tokenism" (information, consultation and placation) to "citizen control" (including partnership, delegation and finally citizen control) (p. 217). For successful coastal or marine planning, the goal should be to raise the levels of participation into the realm of the upper ladder rungs of citizen control. The more recent split ladder of participation [16], specifically for environmental issues, postulates that different types of problems necessitate a different approach to participation in terms of how much involvement there should be and what kind of learning needs to take place (see Figure 2). The model also illustrates that increased levels of participation necessitate a higher level of trust than processes with only low levels of participation. In this case, their model for unstructured problems that combine great uncertainties in knowledge and values, that are influenced by societal and political factors and that generate high debate and low trust necessitates a high level of participation. "Such problems require triple loop learning through high participation, dialogue, trust building and discourse by exposing context, power dynamics and underlying values" [16] (p. 105). Triple-loop learning deconstructs how knowledge is created in the first place and questions the values and norms as well as how problems and solutions are linked. It creates new insights beyond the current context and is described as transformational learning. Hurlbert and Gupta [16] emphasise that triple-loop learning is necessary to tackle so-called wicked problems, such as climate change, that are elusive and difficult to frame, as well as not having a linear, single solution.



Figure 1. Ladder of citizen participation (after Arnstein [15] (p. 217)).



Figure 2. Split ladder of participation (after Hurlbert and Gupta [16] (p. 104)).

Coastal and marine management science has established that learning networks are vital for managing ocean resources in a sustainable way and can foster greater ecosystem resilience. Fauville et al. [17] describe Ocean Literacy as an "understanding of the ocean's influence on us and our influence on the ocean". An ocean literate person is "someone who understands the essential principles and fundamental concepts about the functioning of the ocean, is able to communicate about the ocean in meaningful ways and is able to make informed and responsible decisions regarding the ocean and its resources" (p. 239). Then, they can accept stewardship of the oceans and coasts [18,19]. Education is fundamental to changing behaviours [20]. However, knowledge alone is not enough to cause behavioural change. Attitudes and values need to be emphasised to inspire action [21,22]. Thus, values and attitudes towards the ocean and its resources should be explored with coastal communities before and throughout coastal and marine planning processes. New norms with more desirable outcomes can then be created as a consequence of this public discussion. McKinley and Fletcher [23] call this concept "marine citizenship" (p. 839), and they argue that through this collective responsibility for the oceans, individual people can make a positive difference to the environment. Education pertaining to ocean issues should be widely available so that marine stewardship can be effectively implemented and community members can be empowered to take part in decision-making about their local coastal and marine resources and spaces [5,7,24,25].

1.2. Contexts of the Case Study Areas

1.2.1. Marine Spatial Planning in Iceland

MSP is new to Iceland, where the National Planning Agency (Skipulagstofnun) has recently completed the first two regional plans in the Westfjords (see Figure 3) and Eastfjords of the country. In Iceland, planning is traditionally a terrestrial, often urban exercise that is largely undertaken by municipalities. In launching MSP, Iceland has entered a new sphere of planning that has complex characteristics, including its intricate and shifting ecosystems, the three-dimensionality of marine spaces, and the spaces in question being a common good rather than subject to land ownership.

The Westfjords region is one of the two first areas where marine spatial planning has taken place in Iceland between 2019 and 2023 [26]. They are characterised by mountain plateaus that drop steeply into fjords and are sparsely populated with smaller towns and villages. The Westfjords are ideal for the recently established aquaculture industry as the fjords provide shelter for the open sea pens wherein farmed fish can be raised away from the rough conditions in the open sea. The exponential growth of this industry [27]

specifically is one of the main contention points that were identified by Sullivan [28] and Lehwald [29] as driving the need for and the emergence of MSP in Iceland and in the Westfjords. There have even been attempts from municipal actors to start planning their local fjords in 2013 before the practice of MSP was taken up nationally. However, municipal jurisdiction only reaches out to 115 m from shore as defined in the Law on the planning of coastal and marine areas 2018 [30], so that municipal authorities are not officially allowed to plan for marine spaces beyond these limits. Without a regional government in place, this responsibility fell to the National Planning Agency (Skipulagstofnun) [31]. The area planned in MSP extends from the 115 m line measured from the shore to the mouth of the fjords at the outermost points of the peninsulas [26,29,30].



Figure 3. Case study areas. (A) Westfjords region in Iceland. (B) Tromsø region in Norway with its three municipalities Tromsø, Karlsøy, and Balsfjord.

A regional council consisting of eight members was designated in November 2019 by various ministries. Their main task was to formulate the marine plan by utilising data collected from different research institutes and agencies, such as the Marine Research Institute, the Land Conservation Agency, the Meteorological Institute, and the Road Administration. Moreover, a consultative group composed of representatives from local industries and sectors was tasked to support the regional council in their duties [26,29].

However, there were limited opportunities for both stakeholder engagement and public participation, with only three stakeholder meetings held in separate sectors and an online mapping tool available for the public in the data-gathering stage. One reason for the limited engagement opportunities was the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the process by delaying the publication of planning proposals and causing changes in personnel and direction. The planning proposal was published in the summer of 2022, along with three public hearings, but with little prior announcement and still limited public awareness [32]. After this hearing stage and a revision of the plans by the Planning Agency, the plans were signed by the Minister for Infrastructure in March 2023.

1.2.2. Coastal Zone Planning in Norway

Coastal zone planning (CZP), on the other hand, is well established in Norway, having undergone multiple changes and shifts to adapt to new situations. CZP aims to formulate policy that balances out different objectives of interest groups in the coastal zone and its resources to further sustainable use of the coast. Traditionally led by municipalities, there has recently been a shift towards regional planning to improve governance coordination [33–35]. However, county councils the regional government, lack the same

planning authority as local municipalities. Therefore, regional coastal zone plans are nonbinding and serve as guidance for municipal planning [33]. Some counties have initiated inter-municipal CZP to enhance integration across municipalities, but most municipalities retain significant planning authority [35]. CZP in Norway extends to 1 nautical mile out to sea from the baseline as set out in the *Planning and Building Act 2008* [36]. In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) [37], Norway has defined a straight baseline along the outermost islands and skerries for most of its coastline [38]. This delimitation gives municipalities direct authority for planning over much more marine space in Norway than in Iceland.

The Tromsø region in Northwestern Norway (see Figure 3) is characterised by a deeply indented coastline including many fjords, islands, and bays. One of the main drivers in the CZP process here is the need to balance the interest of the growing aquaculture industry with those of other coastal users [33,35]. Previous municipal coastal zone plans in the Tromsø region, developed in the late 1980s, could not keep pace with rapid developments, particularly in aquaculture [39,40]. New coastal plans were commissioned in the 1990s, outsourced to consultation companies and created quickly without public hearings. A comprehensive revision of these municipal plans took place in 2015, initially involving five municipalities in the first intermunicipal plans [41,42]. In 2018, updates were again necessary due to ever-evolving coastal conditions and usage [42]. From 2020 to 2023, the municipalities of Tromsø, Karlsøy, and Balsfjord collaborated on a shared intermunicipal plan. The rapidly expanding aquaculture industry in the region faces space constraints, potentially requiring changes to the coastal planning system or increased revenue-sharing with municipalities to retain its legitimacy [43]. In the 2015 plans, a county-level project manager coordinated the process [40]. However, in the recent revision, each municipality managed its plan with regional coordination and national guidance through the Planning and Building Act [36]. These instances of shifting policies and responsibilities complicate the dynamics of participation.

In terms of public participation, the Norwegian intermunicipal CZP sets out four participation stages in the plan programme: (i) planning programme phase, (ii) planning phase, (iii) consultation phase, and (iv) feedback phase [42]. During the planning programme phase, the framework is set, and a draft plan is open for public feedback for six weeks, with a focus on written and dialogue-based input from stakeholders [42]. In the planning phase, public meetings and various participation avenues are provided for citizens, regional authorities, interest groups, businesses, and academia, utilizing existing community platforms. Meetings are held in Tromsø and other municipalities for broad accessibility, with specifics determined by local planners and planning goals. In the consultation phase, the public has six weeks to provide input through dialogue, written comments, and other methods, including topic-specific meetings with experts and stakeholders [42]. Following the consultation, planners review comments, make adjustments, and submit the plan to the three municipalities for approval. The feedback phase includes publishing a report on how comments were used to modify the plan proposal on the project website for public review.

2. Materials and Methods

Both case studies were undertaken using qualitative methods, starting with a literature review. The types of documents reviewed included academic articles about the processes, mainly in Norway, where CZP has been established and studied for much longer than in Iceland. Both case studies further yielded documents relating to the planning processes, including reports published by the planning agencies and municipalities as well as their websites with public announcements, minutes and recordings of meetings, and other information provided to the public.

In the Westfjords of Iceland, the study included participant observation, 10 semistructured interviews and a workshop with key informants. The participant observation portion of the research served to situate the ongoing process in the local context as well as to identify individuals for the interviews. The workshop was held as part of the larger research project COAST as an information and discussion event aimed at the public. However, some key informants involved in the MSP process attended it and thus, their answers are included in the present analysis (the workshop is further discussed in Wilke [32]). A non-probability sampling method was used to choose interview informants [44]. The key informants of the Westfjords case study consisted of ten individuals (six male and four female) who were directly involved in the ongoing planning process on different levels. They included individuals from the National Planning Agency (two interviewees), from the regional council (3), the official consultative group (2), as well as stakeholders who took part in the official stakeholder meetings or were consulted as part of their role in the region (3). Their views, therefore, represent the planners' perspectives on the process and participation. The fieldwork in the Westfjords was conducted from October 2020 to May 2021.

For the Tromsø case study, an interview was conducted with a key informant who has long been actively and officially engaged in various municipal and intermunicipal coastal zone planning projects in the region. This Norwegian part of the fieldwork was conducted in December 2021 in Norway while on a research exchange. However, the data collection ran into limitations. There is only one interview in the Norwegian case study because COVID-19 restrictions prevented a field trip to Tromsø at the time of research. However, Norwegian CZP is much better documented in academic and grey literature, so the interview served mainly to confirm and elaborate on the findings from the document analysis. Although not representative of all involved parties in CZP in the Tromsø region, the interview does shed light on some similar and some uniquely contextual issues encountered during the process that are worth discussing.

All interviews were conducted in person where possible, but some had to be conducted online due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In total, this study includes accounts of 11 informants who reported their experience either in casual conversation, in scheduled individual interviews or in group interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for a predetermined direction of the conversation, giving it structure while allowing both interviewer and interviewee to add any thoughts and topics that arise as important during the interview itself [44]. The interview participants were asked about their knowledge and involvement in the ongoing MSP/CZP processes. They were asked to provide details about the process, public participation as they perceived it and their own role in it with variations of these questions: Could you explain the MSP/CZP process and talk about your/your organisation's role in it? Can you tell me about public participation in this process? How was it envisaged, and how did it go? Following that, depending on the interviewee's background, expertise, and willingness, they were encouraged to share their insights on current issues and debates related to the marine areas under consideration, as well as their experience with participating in planning. As the interview progressed, the conversations became predominantly led by the interviewees themselves, with little steering from the interviewer, as the interviewees elaborated on various themes and topics important to them.

The interviews took up to one and a half hours and were audio-recorded after obtaining consent from the interviewees. The participants were anonymised with unique ID codes consisting of numbers relating to the time and place of the interview and a running number. The recordings were then transcribed with the software Otter.ai to ensure accurate documentation and data analysis thereafter. The interviews were inductively coded with MaxQDA software using an approach based on grounded theory. Grounded theory does not work with pre-established theories to analyse data. Instead, concepts are grounded in the data, meaning theory is "generated and developed through interplay with data collected during the research process" [45] (p. 275). Interview transcripts were read, and sections identified as topically similar were grouped together as codes. Several codes could then be clustered together in umbrella themes. The decision to use a grounded theory approach was made in order to discover emerging themes and to establish relationships between those themes [44] in both case studies. A total of 31 codes were established across the interviews. These codes were then categorised and collated into the six overarching themes of Iceland and Planning, Marine Planning Process, Participation, Frustration and Exclusion, Aquaculture and Environment. The themes of Marine Planning Process and Participation emerged as a direct result of the line of questioning described above, but all other themes emerged organically from the interviewees' responses, their expertise and choice of topics to highlight. The theme Iceland and Planning includes four codes describing planning practices in Iceland in general and where respondents have mentioned how planning relates to political processes and power hierarchies in Iceland: Political nature of planning, Lack of regional planning, Power of the few and Municipalities responsible for planning. The theme Marine Planning Process consists of eleven codes that describe the specific MSP process in the Westfjords as well as respondents' reactions to the process, for example, codes on the selection of stakeholders, the role of the National Planning Agency, how involved the respondents were themselves, and their judgement on information flow and transparency. Participation developed as a separate theme with six codes because the interviewees did not only talk about their own involvement in the MSP process but also commented on participation processes in general and how they are carried out in Iceland. Similarly, Aquaculture emerged as a theme from the data with the code Aquaculture tensions, as interviewees specifically pointed out pressures that arose from this newly established industry in relation to MSP.

3. Results

This section will first present the results from the case study of the marine spatial planning process in the Westfjords in Iceland (Section 3.1). Second, the results from the case study of the intermunicipal coastal zone planning process in Norway will be described (Section 3.2). Third, the two processes and public participation opportunities will be compared and summarised (Section 3.3).

3.1. Marine Spatial Planning in the Westfjords, Iceland

3.1.1. MSP Process

In the Westfjords, interviews were conducted with ten individuals directly involved in MSP as members of the National Planning Agency, the regional council, the consultative group or as invited stakeholders. Many of the interviewees described their previous experiences with Icelandic planning in general (theme Iceland and Planning, see Table 1), drawing from their involvement in mostly terrestrial and urban planning at a municipal level. In many instances, these experiences were expanded on to explain gaps in knowledge or areas of concern for the current MSP process. Planning was characterised as inherently political. Further, the interviewees discussed planning authorities in Iceland, establishing that most of their experience with planning practice comes from municipal planning. Interviewees also reported a lack of regional planning authorities in the Westfjords, which means that Westfjords MSP is to be nationally led. Another general aspect that was expressed in relation to planning was that decisions seem to be made by a few powerful people in society, with little input from the public, and that this general non-participation was widely known and taken for granted.

With regard to the newly launched MSP process (theme Marine Planning Process, see Table 1), many of the interviewees reflected on the Stakeholder engagement (coded six times) process, describing the stakeholder meetings as three separate meetings for three fields of marine activities respectively: aquaculture and fisheries, tourism and nature conservation, and infrastructure and shipping. There was only one meeting per group, the meetings included 7–10 invited participants and were held at the data-gathering stage of the MSP process, and interviewees remarked on their absence in later stages that involved decision-making processes. Interviewees further commented on the pros and cons of the Selection of stakeholders (coded three times), one wanting to "select people that have information and interest, that you want to hear" but acknowledging at the same time that this targeted approach to inviting stakeholders will undoubtedly lead to others feeling left out.

Table 1. Code and theme matrix of the Westfjords interviews (n = 10). This table shows which codes and themes occurred in the Westfjords case study and how often. Themes are presented with their pertaining codes, and the numbers indicate how many times a specific code was allocated. The colour highlights illustrate the number of code occurrences visually and are arranged on a scale from low (blue) to high (red), with the extremes of the scale being the lowest and highest numbers that occurred (1 and 6, respectively).

Theme	Code	Explanation	Occurrence
Iceland and Planning (6)	Political nature of planning	Planning is an inherently political process, and thus it is expected to include political agendas, actors and be used for political and	2
	Lack of regional planning	Comments on the lack of regional planning authorities and actors	2
	Power of the few	A few powerful people make decisions generally, and in planning	1
	Municipalities responsible for planning	Planning authority is usuallymunicipal (on land)	1
Marine Planning Process (23)	Stakeholder engagement	Comments on stakeholder engagement channels and meetings	6
	Selection of stakeholders	Comments on how stakeholders were selected and should be selected	3
	Planning process unclear	Confusion about how the MSP process works, who is making decisions, own role in it, what is being planned	3
	Top-down process	MSP characterised as a top-down process, decisions taken centrally by authorities, little or no power-sharing	2
	Concerns	Concerns, doubts and worries about the MSP process	2
	Arnafjörður base plan	Comments on the previous pilot plan in Arnafjörður	2
	COVID-19 impacts	Comments on how COVID-19 and related restrictions have impacted the MSP process	1
	Not involved	Statements of interviewees that they do not consider themselves involved in the MSP process	1
	Power of Planning Agency	Comments on the amount of and limits of decision-making power of the Planning Agency	1
	Lack of transparency	MSP process characterised as not transparent	1
	Lack of information	Statements of no available information about the process	1
Participation (21)	Passive participation strategy	Comments that in this MSP process, the participation strategy was passive, that the people had to find information and engagement channels on their own	5
	Lack of discussion	Critique of the MSP process that there was no, or not enough discussion about central issues, with the public, and within the committees involved	4
	Public participation	Acknowledgement that public participation is hard and faces many obstacles	4
	Success of participation	Comments that participation did work successfully in this MSP process, most related to the interactive web maps at the start of the process	4
	Information but no empowerment	Comments that there was information available, but public and stakeholders were not involved in any decision-making and thus not empowered to act	3
	Debating participation	Deliberating the challenges and realities of participation on a theoretical level	1
Aquaculture (2)	Aquaculture tension	Tensions have arisen due to the rapidly expanding aquaculture industry presence in the fjords. Concerns ranged from visual dislike, pollution, and genetic mutation of wild salmon to economic concerns.	2
Sum			52

Several interviewees specifically emphasised that the planning process was unclear to them (code Planning process unclear, coded three times). Despite all the interviewees' official involvement in this very process—being members of the Planning Agency, regional council, consultative group or invited stakeholders, respectively—several of the stakeholders and members of the consultative group expressed confusion as to how far their involvement would go, if there were any more meetings and if they held any decision-making or veto power. This often manifested as questions, i.e., how the process would continue and who was making central decisions. In terms of creating the plan itself, interviewees showed awareness that this is a complex matter and pointed out that the processes to get there were not clearly communicated: "How [do] they decide in an area what can prevail: Jobs? Output? How anything is weighted, I have not heard about how they will solve those things".

Overall, the MSP process was characterised as a top–down process (coded twice) by some interviewees, describing clear pressure and final decision-making by the relevant ministry. This was the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources at the start of the process, but it changed with parliamentary elections in late 2021 to the Ministry of Infrastructure [26].

Another aspect in the same theme pertained to concerns (coded twice) about the process, which included apprehensions about the structure of the process, the role of the Planning Agency and worries about the outcome of such an unclear process. Twice, interviewees mentioned their awareness of the local and regional initiative of the Arnafjörður marine plan from 2013 (code Arnafjörður base plan), which then did not have a legal basis nationally.

Coded once respectively, the following codes also occurred in the theme of Marine Planning Process: One interviewee described the COVID-19 impacts on the MSP process, explaining delays and how public meetings had to be re-arranged. Another stated that they did not consider themselves involved (code Not involved) in the MSP decision-making process despite officially being a member of one of the groups directly engaged in the process. One interviewee questioned the amount of Power of the Planning Agency in terms of how this leading agency was making decisions and what limitations they were working with. Finally, the MSP process in the Westfjords was characterised by its Lack of transparency (coded once) and its Lack of information (coded once). Although similar, these two codes describe different issues, one being that the leading planning actors did not sufficiently share how the process would unfold, and the second commenting on a lack of information available to the public.

3.1.2. Participation

From the document review, it became clear that Icelandic MSP does not include an official participation strategy. While participation is mentioned in the documents and on the website in a general manner, there are no documents describing any participation channels, justification or target groups in detail.

In the interviews, many informants characterised the adopted participation strategy in the Westfjords MSP process as passive, lacking discussion and adequate information (theme Participation, see Table 1). In addition, the intentions of such engagement measures were questioned, and one interviewee described public participation in this MSP as a tick box exercise: "We [planning actors] are obliged to do it. Yeah. Okay, check (gestures a checkmark in the air). We have done it" (code Passive participation strategy). A general critique was that there was an overall lack of discussion (coded four times) of the MSP process and that more discussions should have happened, both with the different groups involved in the planning as well as with the public. A related critique arose that the process did not actually focus on the conflicts of interests but rather avoided them: "They are not talking around the problems, clashings". This was further elaborated on by this interviewee, who postulated that it is precisely with controversial issues that the public can be engaged: "In public engagement, you need focussed problems/conflicts: How big should the harbour be, etc.".

Thus, a general lack of participation was explained. However, interviewees were also aware of the difficulties of engaging the public in a meaningful way, such as the difficulties in identifying any representative views, engaging a wide variety of people and other barriers to participation. Some interviewees acknowledged having had access to information but that they were not involved in making decisions (code Information but no empowerment, coded three times). Despite many critiques regarding the participation process of the Westfjords MSP, some interviewees reported successful instances of participation, too, most relating to the interactive web maps at the start of the process.

3.1.3. Aquaculture

Tensions involving the aquaculture industry specifically were in the interviews (theme Aquaculture, see Table 1) and included descriptions of "fish farming pressure" and the "clear conflict [arising] between tourism and aquaculture" specifically as the two industries compete for space. Other concerns regarding aquaculture have to do with the industry's high impact on the local environment, which worried some interviewees.

However, environmental issues were markedly not at the forefront of the interviewees' minds, which is perhaps a rather surprising finding, given that the areas in question are complex marine spaces that are currently undergoing considerable environmental changes [46,47]. This does not mean that the interviewees do not consider these topics in general, but rather that they were asked about the process of MSP and participation and did not emphasise environmental issues linked to these topics.

3.2. Intermunicipal Coastal Zone Planning in Tromsø Region, Norway 3.2.1. Intermunicipal CZP Process

From the analysis of documents relating to the intermunicipal coastal planning process in Tromsø, as well as from interviewing a key informant, multiple themes have come to light that will be presented here. The following section describes how the process unfolded and the issues encountered as identified in the interview and in the related planning documents, which are referenced where they are relevant.

The interviewee reflected that in the previous iteration of *the* intermunicipal planning process in 2015, the two goals were to revisit the old plans but also to build capacity in the communities for them to understand coastal zone planning and the environment of the coast better and what it could mean for their future. So, many local authorities hired citizens from within the municipalities to do this work, except in the Tromsø municipality, where external consultants were brought in. This decision was left up to municipalities to handle as they preferred. Looking back, the interviewee believed it better to do the planning work from within the municipality—an opinion echoed in a Nofima report on intermunicipal planning [40]. The interviewee explained this is because some of the biggest challenges include managing different interest groups and the public response in the hearing phase. At this time, it is particularly important to have local people from the municipalities involved in the planning process because they will understand much better where the arguments from the different interest groups are coming from and how much flexibility there is to adapt the suggested plan. This is very hard to do for external consultants who are hired for such projects as they often lack relationships of trust with many local stakeholders and the public. This means local planners are much better equipped to understand the challenges that planning brings, especially in the later phases. Therefore, municipal knowledge of the coastal area is crucial to planning success [40].

It is equally important that municipalities work together using a common framework and creating cooperative practices. One of the main goals of intermunicipal planning is to foster synergies between municipalities and to learn from each other. The interviewee stated that most municipalities that ran coastal planning alone were not very successful because when they hired external consultants without local knowledge, they would run into problems with stakeholders. Furthermore, they would struggle to use the new knowledge gained by coastal planning in the existing local authority frameworks.

Additionally, the interviewee pointed out that there is also a financial challenge attached to the practice of commissioning external planners. For a single municipality with limited resources, this course of action is likely to be very expensive. Most of the resources would have to go into the initial generation of a plan proposal by the hired planner. However, arguably, most of the work needs to be carried out when the suggested plan receives a lot of objections or suggestions from the authorities in the hearing phase. The whole planning process can become ineffective if there is not enough money left to finance working on the comments and adapting the proposed plan to meet the suggestions.

The idea for intermunicipal planning emerged from needs identified by the Northern municipalities. Firstly, the municipalities needed resources in terms of finance and knowledge to conduct this planning appropriately. Secondly, they needed the cooperation and synergies that an intermunicipal project could offer. Thirdly, they needed new digital solutions. Thus, the process of intermunicipal planning is based on close collaboration between municipalities and actors [39,40]. From past experience, the interviewee also believed it worked best in municipalities that had long been working together in other areas such as health care, public services, and fire administration [48]. Therefore, a solid foundation had been built before the launch of intermunicipal coastal zone planning in the Tromsø region.

3.2.2. Participation

The participation strategy for the intermunicipal coastal zone planning process in the Tromsø region is presented in the plan programme [42]. It lays out why public participation is desired and pathways to achieve this. It declares that participation serves democratic purposes to hear all interested parties and provide opportunities for input. Furthermore, an "open process" is desired to "promote creativity in planning" [42] (p. 19), which shows an awareness of the synergies that can be achieved when multiple perspectives are heard and not just expert opinions. In line with the aforementioned theoretical arguments on participation, the plan programme states that " is important that the citizens feel heard through the process and that they feel ownership of the plan." [42] (p. 19) Additionally, it is the hope of the responsible planning actors that if conflicts arise, they could be discussed early in the process through open communication with the public. This envisaged participation is directed towards stakeholders and the public alike, with no special or additional provisions made on how to engage the public as a specific target group. However, special mention is made in stages in which the public is to be consulted and what channels are to be used.

The main communication channels of the planning stages, meetings and outcomes of the consultations are the project website, the websites of the three participating municipalities and of the regional council, as well as announcements in the news outlets iTromsø, Nordlys and Nye Troms [42]. The plan programme emphasises the importance of participation, but it leaves the detailed arrangements and exact steps largely up to the municipalities who undertake the planning process in their local areas.

A proposed plan was published for ten weeks leading up to 18 February 2022 for public feedback. At the same time, public meetings were held in each municipality. Documents relating to the plan proposal, maps and local documents for each municipality can be viewed online on the project website [49], and an interactive map can be used on the website to study the newly created plan against the previous plan. It is also possible to comment on the process on the same website.

The interviewee acknowledged that, in reality, "participation is difficult", especially when finding effective ways to engage with the public. During the recent Coronavirus crisis, open meetings had to be cancelled, and digital solutions brought in. In some way, this has helped many people to take part in the online meetings. However, it is regarded as much easier to engage traditional stakeholders, such as representatives from industries, nongovernmental organisations and organised interest groups, as it is to engage members of the public. Stakeholder groups in Norway are generally well-organised and easily accessible to planners and municipal authorities. Such interest groups are often very knowledgeable and able to make arguments on behalf of their industry or activities.

Engaging the public meaningfully in the coastal zone planning process presents multiple challenges: "Most of the plans have failed in relation to achieving a broad participation. We have participation from the main stakeholders, but the public, in general, is lacking". First, the planning process and its actors are competing with numerous different activities and media for people's attention in their already busy day-to-day lives. Regular citizens outside of the field of coastal activities or planning are often hard to interest in such matters. One other obstacle that was identified is also that citizens often do not know why it would be important for them to take part in planning activities, or why it is important for the success of the plan to have public buy-in. The interviewee characterised this general engagement of the public as low in Norwegian intermunicipal CZP processes.

The picture looks slightly different when there is a considerable conflict that the public are invested in and that has been publicly debated. "If you have a big conflict, then you are able to attract people. But those meetings are not very productive". The interviewee reported that in cases of local conflict, groups of people from the public would take part in meetings, and often would have very "loud, strong objections". However, this does not mean that those people represent the view of the public, or even their interest, or that their points are necessarily the best arguments. There seems to be a disconnect between constructive discussions to advance the planning process and the reality of some public meetings. Moreover, this raised level of conflict tends to scare other people away from this public debate: "We have to make an arena where people can have a say without risking being part of a lot of local conflicts. Because what I have experienced is that most people do not want to become involved when the conflict level is increasing".

The interviewee did not believe that public participation should only be conducted when discussing great conflicts but rather that the public needs to be made aware that coastal zone planning, in general, is of great importance to them: "You should be interested in this because this will affect your way of living", meaning that every citizen of a coastal community depends on the resources and the health of the ocean and the coast, and every local inhabitant has an interest in what is decided in the plans, and a right to speak their mind about it. Therefore, the interviewee believes it would be best to focus on general ocean literacy in the community, "changing their understanding of the coastal zone. And it's important because [...] you have to understand what is the basic foundation of this community".

3.2.3. Frustration and Exclusion

Of the groups that are hardly engaged, youth and Indigenous groups, in particular were mentioned by the interviewee. The problem of representation is a complex one, with an acknowledgement that among a lot of citizen groups and interest groups, it is becoming harder and harder for planners to identify whom those groups represent and who remains excluded from the conversation—"and that is a problem for democracy", as the interviewee put it.

Youth are not targeted specifically in the participation strategy or any other part of the plan programme and are thus not at the forefront of planners' minds. The interviewee pointed out that this is an oversight that should be rectified as especially remote communities need to counteract young people's emigration to urban areas, which in Norway means moving far south, likely to the capital area or to bigger cities.

One of the more complex tasks in Northern Norwegian CZP has been to ensure participation by the Sami people. Sami have traditional rights to coastal areas and use the resources for fishing and other marine activities. However, the interviewee stated that it can be difficult to engage the Sami people as they are thought of as "hard to find". To explain this difficulty, the interviewee described it as a complex problem with many facets: Sami people might be moving between different municipalities regularly but only appear registered in one, making it hard to find out and decide which would act as their main municipality. Furthermore, there is no publicly accessible register of Sami people, and some might choose not to identify as Sami. This was attributed to a legacy of historical oppression of traditional Sami culture when their language, traditions and cultural practices were forbidden. These circumstances make it additionally difficult for planners to identify and find Sami people and to successfully invite them to engage with the planning processes.

The interviewee also remarked that, even if they can be engaged, they found it challenging to find anyone who is willing to make statements on behalf of the coastal Sami people. This was attributed to the representation in the Sami Parliament, which is elected by the Sami people to represent their views [50]. The interviewee claimed that coastal Sami are not very well represented in the official organisations, as the main influential group is the Sami reindeer herders. Amidst various high-tension conflicts that are partly debated in the media between industry, authorities and the Sami Parliament, local coastal Sami voices are not being heard and are discouraged from coming forward. This is particularly challenging with elder generation inhabitants who tend not to identify as or speak on behalf of coastal Sami—but it is exactly them who hold the type of traditional knowledge about their coastal uses and resources that the planners need. For example, it remains difficult to pin down Sami fisheries in the area as there are no concrete maps or information on this from official sources. Without such knowledge, delimiting zones for customary or traditional fisheries in a coastal zone plan does not work effectively. In order to circumnavigate those issues, letters were sent out to coastal Sami to inform them about the ongoing process and to invite them to the dialogue in the hopes of engaging some of the local users. Throughout the planning process, four meetings were held with two Sami organisations: the Reinøy reindeer grazing district and Bivdu (Sami for fishing or hunting), an organisation of Sea Sami fishermen [49].

As much as the documents pertaining to the intermunicipal coastal zone planning process in the Tromsø region emphasise that the goal of these projects is to arrive at spatial plans that make it easier to sustainably manage the coastal zone [49], the interviewee stressed that "coastal zone planning is not just about areas. In fact, it's about the coastal communities" as well. This suggests that there is a spectrum on which involved parties see the objectives of the planning process, ranging from product-oriented (to create a plan that can be used) to process-oriented (to engage all relevant parties in the process and work on conflicts to arrive at a plan). The interviewee clearly claims the latter region of that spectrum, stating: "It's not [only] about space, it is about community and relations and flows".

In terms of such flows, some aspects were brought up as gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed by the planning system: Flows of money and people are rather understudied to make use of the information for coastal zone planning. For example, fishermen who would be considered stakeholders often do not actually live in the area they work in. In many cases, they are not inhabitants of either of the three municipalities. Therefore, they are not local users, but as people who are affected by the decisions in the plan, they should have a say.

3.3. Comparison of the Two Planning Processes

The following section presents both processes in comparison based on the document analysis from the planning documents, websites and related grey literature, such as newspaper articles, before drawing conclusions and offering recommendations.

Figure 4 offers an overview of the developments in coastal and marine planning in both countries over time. While Norway had established processes much earlier, there have also been some Icelandic precursors to today's MSP. However, these were spearheaded by municipal and local actors before there was a legal basis for MSP and outside of their municipal jurisdiction. In the recent MSP process, the conception of the Arnafjörður plan



and its process did not play a major role. In Norway, by contrast, CZP has been on the official agenda and carried out for decades.

Figure 4. Timeline of the developments in coastal and marine planning in the Icelandic and Norwegian case study areas.

Table 2 describes the processes as they unfolded in the Westfjords of Iceland and in the Tromsø region in Norway. The main driver for planning in both regions was the rapid expansion of the aquaculture industry and increased competition for marine space. The Westfjords had national-level planning authority, while in the Tromsø region, the municipal level led the planning. A striking difference also lies in the municipal jurisdiction over marine space, which extends to 115 m out to sea in the Westfjords. Norway follows a 1 nautical mile offshore boundary from its baseline, established by the Planning and Building Act [36]. In line with UNCLOS [37], Norway employs a straight baseline around its outer islands [38], granting municipalities greater marine planning authority compared to Iceland.

The planning process period varied from 2019–2023 in the Westfjords to Tromsø region between 2020–2023. The plan validity shows that different objectives were at play in either plan: While the Westfjords plan is valid from 2023 onwards, the coastal zone plan in the Tromsø region is valid between 2023–2033. Adaptability was not built-in for Westfjords while it is regarded as important in Norway, with a built-in review of the Tromsø region plan in ten years. Monitoring was not detailed in either plan. Land-sea integration was also not part of the Westfjords plan. In contrast, the coastal zone plan in the Tromsø region integrates land-sea interactions. Another difference in the planning processes was their objectives, which were found to be product-oriented in Westfjords while they were both product- and process-oriented in the Tromsø region. There was no documented participation strategy in the Westfjords while this was an important part of the plan programme in the Tromsø region. Communication channels varied, with the Westfjords using a website, announcements, web maps and news outlets, while the Tromsø region also employed additional methods like radio broadcasts and webinars. In terms of engagement channels, both processes relied heavily on in-person meetings with stakeholders and the public, although some had to be re-arranged to online meetings during COVID-19. More meetings as well as educational

presentations were held in the Tromsø region planning process, and the Sami in particular, were a group that was specifically singled out to target to ensure participation.

Table 2. Key aspects of two marine planning processes compared: Marine spatial planning in theWestfjords of Iceland and Intermunicipal coastal zone planning in the Tromsø region in Norway.

Aspect	Westfiords (Iceland)	Tromsø Region (Norway)
Status	One of two first official marine spatial plans	Review of previous coastal zone plan 2015
Main driver	Rapid expansion of aquaculture industry, competing interests for marine space	Rapid expansion of aquaculture industry, competing interests for marine space
Main planning authority	National level: National Planning Agency (Skipulagstofnun)	Local level: Municipalities (Tromsø, Karlsøy, Balsfjord)
Levels of governance involved	National Planning Agency leadership, municipalities involved in working groups	National overall strategy, regional and intermunicipal coordination, municipal planning
Municipal jurisdiction	115 m out to sea	1 nautical mile out to sea from baseline (outermost islands and skerries)
Process period	2019–2023	2020–2023
Plan validity	2023 onwards	2023–2033
Adaptability	None built in	Review within 10 years
Monitoring	Not laid out	Not laid out
Land-sea integration	No	Yes
Objectives	Product-oriented	Product- and process-oriented: clear product (plan) and process targets
Participation strategy	None documented	Engagement plan documented
Information and engagement channels	 Documentation of plan process and proposals on Hafskipulag.is website Interactive web maps before the start and after plan proposal on website Announcements on municipal websites and news outlets Three sectoral stakeholder meetings for data gathering Three local public meetings for draft plan 	 Website Regional council website News outlets Radio programme Two rounds of public inspections in plan proposal stage, final hearing stage Five public meetings: four online due to COVID-19, recorded Two webinars on aquaculture and other industry needs and impacts Sami participation: four meetings with two Sami organisations (fisheries and reindeer herders Interactive web maps after plan approval, comparison with previous plan maps

Table 3 shows that the realities of public engagement were different for both regions, with the general public being unaware of ongoing MSP in Westfjords due to a passive participation strategy and an unclear process as identified by the interviewees. Established stakeholders dominated the discussion in contrast to the general public in the Tromsø region. In the Tromsø intermunicipal CZP process, the lack of specifically young people and Sami was noted. This lack of engagement was attributed to a lack of interest, a lack of education on marine resources, benefits of MSP and participation, as well as an acknowledgement of the often-messy nature of the process. In the Westfjords, the difficulties in engaging the public were attributed to corruption, negative experiences with previous planning, and issues of knowing who represents the public view. The main contention point was aquaculture in both regions. Overall, the institutional framework for MSP in the Westfjords can be described as inadequate for the objectives it set in terms of public participation. The process worked more successfully in Tromsø intermunicipal CZP. However, it still did not fully incorporate the reality of life of Sami people and lacked input from the general public. Going forward, both processes need to consider big-picture questions such as whether their established institutional planning frameworks effectively work in their contexts.

Table 3. Key findings relating to public participation in coastal and marine planning processes compared.

Aspect	Westfjords (Iceland)	Tromsø Region (Norway)
Issues of public engagement as characterised by the interviewees	 Passive participation strategy—people would not know/find ways to engage Hard to engage public Planning process unclear Lack of discussion of issues 	 Public less than established stakeholders Lack of Sami people involved in planning → problems of institutional framework unaddressed Lack of youth involved in planning
Difficulties to engage public attributed to	 Corruption Issues with representation Negative experiences with previous planning No perceived benefits Finances 	 Lack of interest Lack of education on marine resources, benefits of MSP and participation Recognition of messiness of process
Main contention point	Aquaculture	Aquaculture
Institutional framework inadequate for regional MSP → Summary a more nested approach from local to regional to national might work better		Institutional framework works better but does not incorporate the reality of the life of Sami people \rightarrow inadequate
Next steps	Both processes need to consider big picture questions: Do established institutional planning frameworks effectively work in their contexts? \rightarrow "MSP is rarely a continual process that encourages questioning of its own conclusions over time" [51] (p. 8)	

4. Discussion

The MSP process in the Westfjords and the intermunicipal planning process in the Tromsø region do not have the exact same objectives, nor do they cover the same coastal and marine areas. However, both are processes that attempt to organise marine space and human use of that marine space in a sustainable way. In both countries, coastal and marine waters are under state rather than private ownership and are managed by the state or the local authorities, respectively, in the interest of the wider public. Therefore, the public should be invited to engage with either process, voice their opinions and be able to influence the decision-making process. It is precisely that one process is more established

that this research was undertaken in an effort to see what can be learned, in regard to participation and procedural practice, from a long-established process as expected to be found in Norway. It was assumed that Norway's planners may have encountered similar problems faced presently by Icelandic planners.

The documentation of both planning processes indicates that public participation is desired and planned for in both case studies. However, Norwegian intermunicipal CZP includes a detailed participation strategy, whereas Icelandic MSP documents merely mention participation as a general aim. Some of the issues with local community participation in practice could have to do with how the legal frameworks set up the responsible parties in these processes. Norwegian municipalities have retained a large share of the planning authority in the extended coastal space (out 1 nautical mile), whereas, in Iceland, municipal actors have to yield planning authority to national authorities in any marine planning, which starts at 115 m out to sea. This has consequences on how engaged municipal actors are in the planning process and how much time, effort and resources they can and are expected to spend on public participation. Arguably, municipal planners would be best placed to engage their local constituents in planning activities, as opposed to national agencies. In the Westfjords, not all adjacent municipalities were even in the working committees consulting on the plan. However, both processes seem to fall short of finding a variety of effective ways to put public participation into practice.

Norway seems to be a few decades 'ahead' of Iceland in terms of the establishment of aquaculture as a vital marine industry as well as the advent of coastal planning as a national priority with many planning processes trialled and launched all over the country. This is why a comparison between the two countries is compelling: it sheds light on issues in Iceland that might have been encountered in Norway earlier, or some that they still struggle with, indicating a need for a substantial overhaul of the assumptions present in coastal and marine planning.

The data suggests that in both processes, further steps need to be taken for more inclusive and participatory practices. Iceland could adopt the practice of more processorientation and a detailed participation strategy from Norway. However, Norwegian CZP also has room for improvement, especially in the inclusion of Sami and youth. Marine or coastal planning enabling large industries such as aquaculture needs to consider how it might regulate and monitor these industries. These findings are not unique to Norway or Iceland, either, and scholars in adjacent disciplines have found similar prevailing issues.

To arrive at just and sustainable futures at our coasts and in our oceans, the relatively recent concept of blue justice has been proposed. Emerging in 2018, the concept addresses injustices in ocean policies and practices. It challenges the celebrated idea of the blue economy, which has gained prominence with growing maritime activities [50,52,53]. Blue justice encompasses three dimensions: recognitional justice, focusing on recognizing diverse perspectives and rights; procedural justice, concerning fair decision-making processes; and distributional justice, ensuring equitable outcomes and addressing past harm. Recognitional justice acknowledges the historical exclusion of groups like small-scale fisheries, women, and Indigenous people from maritime affairs. Procedural justice highlights the importance of inclusive discussions and decision-making processes. Distributional justice emphasises the fair distribution of benefits and addresses previous injustices [50,52]. Bennett et al. [54] recommend adopting an explicit justice framework to guide decisionmaking in the ocean economy to address these issues. While not designed as justice-focused research, it seems vital to refer to the concept of blue justice because the findings emphasise aspects that are discussed in this theory and because solutions for the issues identified within the two planning processes might be found within the justice field.

Exclusion from decision-making, as seen in top–down processes like Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), exacerbates injustices [55]. This is relevant since both studies found groups that were not involved in the respective planning process.

One of the excluded, or at least not sufficiently included, groups mentioned in the Norwegian case study are the Sami people. Sea Sami on the coast of Northern Norway have traditionally lived on small-scale fisheries and farming, and their rights to practice these activities are legally protected [50]. In a study investigating Sami names of features in seascapes, Brattland and Nielsen [56] found that there is a rich and complex history of fishing grounds that have been named in different languages and traditions, including Sami, Kven and Nordic languages, which often co-existed. They found that many of these fishing grounds were known to multiple groups at the same time, and fisheries co-existed, both peacefully and sometimes with conflict. This further exemplifies the long-standing traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that the Sea Sami hold. To protect this knowledge as well as the ecosystems attached, the Sami Parliament created guidelines laying out the importance of protecting traditional Sea Sami fishing areas in CZP as well as listing stakeholders. However, Engen et al. [50] point out that, in reality, it remains contested how much decision-making power Sea Sami actually have with regard to their traditional fishing grounds. To rectify this situation, more conversations with Sami representatives need to take place about the best ways in which to meaningfully engage Sami in the process, and this would be at the design stage of the process itself, rather than in the consulting stages. The issues of not being able to identify registration municipalities and the lack of concrete area demarcations of customary fishing grounds do not seem to be solvable within the current structure of the coastal zone planning process but point towards a larger mismatch between Norwegian administration frameworks and Indigenous people's traditional use and conception of land and sea spaces.

Gustavsson et al. [57] bring gender issues to the foreground by highlighting that women in maritime fields (traditionally fisheries) have been systematically excluded from policy and decision-making. It is surprising that none of the interviewees involved in either planning process commented on this issue as they were discussing exclusion from decision-making. Although women contribute substantially to the blue economy, their part in governing marine space is limited. Women's groups advocating for inclusion in marine decision-making exist, but Gustavsson et al. [57] illustrate that their influence is often at the local level and does not expand to regional or national level governance. Perhaps this is why they do not feature more prominently in the present data. Gustavsson et al. [57] suggest formalising women's groups as a way into procedural justice and to be better positioned as recipients of distributive justice and benefits.

Another group that was mentioned specifically in the Tromsø region in Norway was young people and their lack of involvement in the intermunicipal CZP process. In the Nordic countries, there's a strong focus on promoting a healthy childhood connected to nature, outdoor experiences, environmental education, and fostering stewardship of the natural world. The Norwegian tradition of friluftsliv (outdoor life) is vital for today's youth, particularly in coastal communities [58]. In Iceland, outdoor education aims to instil respect for nature, encourage environmental protection, and empower young people to engage in society and decision-making [59,60]. Children and youth are seen as capable individuals who actively participate in societal life and contribute to environmental protection, introducing new values and attitudes. They are also the first generation to confront the full impact of climate change [61]. It should thus not be far-fetched to include young people in decision-making processes about their local environment, and in this case, the coast and sea. The importance of keeping youth from moving away from remote coastal communities has been recognised. However, they were notably absent from both the Norwegian intermunicipal CZP and the Icelandic MSP, and neither process had strategies to target young people in particular. Engaging this group should be straightforward because both countries already have experience in outdoor, environmental, and sustainability education. It's advisable to initiate conversations with young people, either in schools or social settings, about their vision for the future of their communities. This informal engagement with specific groups, even if they do not participate in official planning meetings or read planning documents, would still be valuable for both planners and the future of remote communities. Municipalities and planning authorities should prioritise this approach.

One of the most prominent findings was that interviewees reported a lack of discussion with the Icelandic MSP process, both between involved parties as well as involving the public. According to Hurlbert and Gupta's split ladder of participation (see Figure 2, Section 1.1, [16]), the type of wicked problems encountered in MSP requires extensive debates and ongoing discussions from multiple perspectives in order to attempt to solve such unstructured problems. Relating to procedural justice (Figure 5), how, when and with whom decisions are discussed and ultimately taken plays a central role in marine planning.



Figure 5. Elements of blue justice as identified in the case study data of Norwegian intermunicipal CZP in the Tromsø region and MSP in the Westfjords, Iceland.

Distributional justice (Figure 5) is a result of recognitional and procedural justice, and in the cases of the two marine planning processes, there are a lot of unanswered questions relating to distributional justice. For example, it remains obscure who benefits to which extent from the resulting plans. In addition, it is unclear how the costs and burdens of particular parts of the plans are distributed and if there might be any compensation for those whose access to marine space, resources or earning potential have been limited by the plans.

Aquaculture is a central point of contention in both case studies and was identified as the main driver for both planning processes. Johnsen and Hersoug [62] identify the industry as one of the biggest nearshore stakeholders. As in Iceland, the rapid expansion and growth of the aquaculture industry has generated considerable conflict, which has prompted coastal and marine planning but also presented some of the biggest challenges for these planning processes. Not only does aquaculture require a lot of fixed ocean space that it needs to fight for with other industries, but it also raises questions about the current licensing procedures and the distribution of profits in both countries [32,62]. This is why aquaculture presents a good example for looking at the decision-making power hierarchies in both countries. Mikkelsen et al. [63] explain that there are legal requirements in Norway for both the content of an aquaculture site in a coastal plan as a marked zone and for the process of establishing them, including transparency, predictability and public participation for all affected parties. However, the responsibility of prioritising aquaculture in a given area is a municipal matter. In contrast, in Iceland, municipal actors get a say in the working groups that are nationally led when creating marine plans so that the overall authority to establish aquaculture sites does not lie with the municipalities. Norway has come through an evolution of coastal planning that was first heavily dominated by national interests [62], leaving local governments with only minor decisions. After revising many of the previous plans and the processes of planning itself, municipalities gained more authority in creating their own plans and in the spatial aspect of many of the maritime industries. While the national Ministry of Fisheries and Industry Directorate is responsible for marine resources, including fisheries and aquaculture, the spatial authority lies with the municipalities, who can decide where, when and how they want to incorporate these activities [62]. In Iceland, there is not a similar division of tasks; rather, fisheries resources completely fall under national legislation and their own quota system and are excluded from the marine plans altogether, while aquaculture follows maximum capacity rules per fjord system and their spatiality is dictated by the marine plans. It stands to reason that in the future, the newly developed Icelandic planning process might shift in a similar direction to the Norwegian practice, with many of the same pressures and activities to organise, and perhaps yield more decision-making power to the local municipalities with time. For this to happen, however, Johnsen and Hersoug [62] point out that in the Norwegian case, it was a process riddled with conflicts, for example, balancing out national interests like conservation of marine resources and ecosystems with local priorities like the creation of jobs. In Iceland, this seems to be the other way around, with aquaculture and its impacts debated heavily on the local level while largely supported by national actors. Johnsen and Hersoug [62] highlight that a change in responsibility for aspects of marine planning requires time to build trust between the actors at multiple levels, and they suggest creating stable networks with regular meetings to pave the way for such change.

Lastly, an aspect largely missing from the data in both case studies presented here is a connection between ecosystem protection or enhancement goals and the planning processes discussed. It is rather surprising that none of the interviewees nor the documents in question raised this point, as coastal and marine planning is by default envisaged to incorporate an ecosystem-based approach to ocean management and has come about with the realisation that humans cannot keep exploiting the oceans without careful consideration of the implications and consequences. The plans, of course, go into detail about the ecosystems present in their vicinity and their importance, sometimes detailing ecosystem services derived, but they do not detail how specific planning measures, zoning and the activities to follow will prevent further degradation or support net biodiversity gain. The ecosystem goals of the two plans studied seem rather implicit than explicit. Kvalvik et al. [64]argue that the theory of ecosystem services providing supporting and regulating as well as provisioning and cultural benefits to humans is well accepted theoretically, but it lacks integration in policies and practice. They expect that this fragmented inclusion into planning practice has to do with the complicated language used and that there needs to be a shift so that the concept can be better used in practice and on the ground. This could be one of the reasons why none of the interviewees, who were all in some capacity involved in the planning processes they spoke about, connected the marine and coastal plans with environmental issues, some of which (especially concerning the impacts of aquaculture) are heavily debated topics in the communities. Since the study was primarily concerned with participation and how interviewees understood that in relation to the planning processes, there were no probing questions regarding environmental impacts. However, studying environmental impacts in relation to MSP, CZP, and participation processes could be the focus of further research.

5. Conclusions

This study compared two recent coastal and marine planning processes in Iceland and Norway to assess how public participation works and what barriers still exist. Public participation is imperative to CZP as all people who are affected by such plans need to be involved. Furthermore, participation makes the planning process democratically legitimate and transparent, and presents valuable opportunities for communities to increase ocean literacy, exchange knowledge, discuss conflicts and establish stewardship over their coastal resources.

The objective of the two case studies was to study public participation in two recent coastal and marine planning practices, the intermunicipal CZP process in the Tromsø region and the MSP process in the Westfjords and identify shared lessons. Documents relating to the plans, reports and academic literature have been analysed, and in-depth interviews with key informants have been conducted.

The results show that stakeholders and interest groups are, to some extent, participants in both planning processes. However, similarly to other marine planning and management processes, public participation is reportedly low, and the intermunicipal CZP process in Tromsø notably lacks input from youth and the Sami people. Complex issues were uncovered in terms of barriers to participation including political conflict avoidance, restricted channels of participation, representation issues and legacy of oppressive laws towards Sami as well as ongoing knowledge gaps about the coastal zone and its users. In the Westfjords of Iceland, the general public was unaware of the MSP process up until the draft plan was presented, and thus missing from the discussions leading to decision-making.

Both case studies have revealed that coastal and marine planning has implications for blue justice: there are issues in recognitional justice in terms of who gets to be involved in the planning process, in procedural aspects of justice regarding how the processes have unfolded especially in terms of participation, and in raising questions about distributional justice. This does not only matter on a theoretical level: We know from literature and past experience with marine planning that better decisions are taken, both for communities as well as for the environment, when local people participate in the generation of the plans, and that the resulting plans are stronger and more sustainable [5,14,65].

Recommendations to establish broader public participation include appointing a community learning and engagement officer as a municipal employee. This would create much-needed opportunities to support ocean literacy as well as generate a platform of community exchange and participation that would be beneficial not just for coastal and marine planning but also beyond. Widespread engagement needs to be part of other processes within municipalities and on an intermunicipal level. Coastal and marine planning cannot just be seen in isolation or as a strategic process to create a spatial plan. The relationships of trust that need to be forged and maintained between the authorities, organisations, and citizens need to be considered, and they can rarely be established within the timeframe of a single planning activity. This would also go a long way in addressing some of the identified issues that uncover injustices in the coastal and marine planning processes. To improve these further, mainstreaming justice as a framework for marine planning and ocean policy in a broader sense is required.

Further, the results and discussion have shown that it is not only about what Icelandic MSP can learn from Norwegian CZP, but rather that both processes should be looking for best practices. Perhaps there is scope for policymakers to trial more innovative participatory methods of generating plans in the next iteration of Norwegian intermunicipal CZP and in the next application of Icelandic MSP.

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