

2023 URI GLOBAL PLASTIC FORUM / BUILDING CAPACITY

Building Partnerships for Action Working Groups

WORKING GROUP: Integrating Equity and Justice into Marine Pollution Research and Action

Yoshitaka Ota and Jessica Vandenberg

Workshop Background:

Equity and justice (E&J) issues are recognized as critical parts of the marine plastic pollution (MPP) crisis. How to effectively integrate equity into research and practice can be a challenge but has received limited attention. Workshop will facilitate initial development of steps to promote E&J in MPP research and practice. Hope to further expand upon Policy and Action Roadmap and identify effective approaches of incorporating equity-based actions into MPP. Areas of interest:

1. Incorporate equity into funding (research and actions)
2. Consider equity in education (science and advocacy)
3. Promote role of civil society (NGOs and community organizations)

Agenda:

1. Introduction and framework: ocean equity and anti-equity approach
2. Brainstorm to build common goals: what are E&J dimensions of plastic
3. Discussions
 - a. *Equity in Funding*: resources and opportunities needed to promote E&J in MPP
 1. Activity: make wish lists and set priorities
 - b. *Equity in Education*: how education can be part of fight against MPP
 1. Activity: listing needs of outreach
 - c. *Role of Civil Society*: role of NGOs and civil societies and how to support their work
 1. Activity: discuss current interaction between practitioners and academics

Children working as trash collectors/processors is a simple violation of human rights – criminal disparity between those who benefit from the ocean and those who do not/

Notes

Overview of Ocean Equity:

1. Equity is an **outcome** and process
2. Ocean equity is to *dismantle inequity in ocean governance*
 - a. Accountability
 - b. Responsibility
 - c. Legitimacy
 - d. Transparency
3. Different definitions of equity – dictionary, in law,
4. Equality – same group classifications, everyone is the same; ensure fairness and neutrality
 - a. Easy for the govt, no individual needs

5. Equity – individual-based needs; reallocation of resources; reduce variance in resource access
 - a. Close the gap between disparate groups
6. Equitable outcomes
 - a. Food sovereignty, gender and intersectional equity, climate justice, anti-deregulation, decolonize global workforce
7. Climate-conscious steps
 - a. Sustainable fisheries and blue economy, climate adaptation, zero waste, equitable supply chain
8. “Discredit destructive interpretations, defend equal protection of laws and advance systemic changes, ensure dignity of individuals and overcome barriers from stereotypes”
9. Cleanup is a main issue – who will do it
10. Plastic issue is about individual well-being □ bottom-up solutions
11. Foundation of ocean equity
 - a. Critical race theory
 - b. Critical ethnic studies
 - c. Feminist theory
 - d. Queer studies
 - e. Post-colonial theory
 - f. Indigenous governance theory

Brainstorming Issues:

1. Representation for underrepresented groups
2. How to make meaningful collaborative efforts
3. How to improve existing relationships
4. **Communications** – who bears responsibility of PP
 - a. Who is privileged enough to not buy plastic (inc. costs of sustainable Materials)
 - b. Individualized **responsibility** pressure – harmful and deflects responsibility from producers and govt
5. **Education and Resource Accessibility**
 - a. Bringing the right methods to children to empower and not burden them
 - b. Awareness – difference between ignorance and lack of education
 - c. Resource access
6. Civics
7. Need to start from a basic level of education before actually reaching equity on a large-scale
 - a. Recognize that there are some people who know more than others – listen to science and other experts
8. “Can’t reach equity without understanding inequity and inequality”
 - a. People are more comfortable with treating people equally but don’t think about the complexity of equity and individual/community-based needs
9. Delay between raising an educated generation and implementing that into society
 - a. Have to address years of misinformation
10. “Plastics seems like an easier sale than CC” – not about the understanding that it’s bad, people are on board, more about solution implementation

11. US has a “push/throw it away” mentality
12. Western world lack of connection between source of food, plastics, etc. and impacts of waste
13. Who is influencing decision-making – are the decision makers realizing that they have the power
 - a. Need to bring local concerns to policy for something to work long-term
14. *What are the channels we can create to allow for community representation?*
15. Science is more than education, also about listening to general concerns from communities
16. Accountability needs oversight to represent everyone
17. Needs differ even within specific communities
18. Combine social and physical science
19. Need to establish human dimensions through social science
20. Need to realize that we don’t know everything to address solutions
21. Representation is about more than sitting at the table, but making sure everyone is heard
22. No blanket solution
23. Who is going to take accountability
24. What to do with the waste that is collected – assigning accountability is step 1 of the problem

Role of Civil Society and NGOs

1. Politically weird to deal with – govts set goals but need more action
2. NGOs have local power to actually incorporate smaller communities to decision-making
3. Easier to mobilize small communities because they have passion within their own communities, this can influence neighboring communities – ends up being large scale from small scale local startups
4. Need to incorporate real cost of production to place on corporations
 - a. Include cost of cleanup
 - b. *Lack of economic framework to compel our capitalist society to act*
5. Who bears responsibility

Defining cleanup:

1. You can pick up but where does it go? GS? Are we allocating resources to cleanup?
2. Not enough studies
3. People can’t wait for the govt to act
4. Smaller NGOs need more funding
5. People who do have \$ may not always allocate it or use it for its purpose
6. NGOs to make it easier for the public to show
7. Market-based solutions
 - a. Consumers have market influence for supply side but not everyone has the privilege of voting with their wallets

Summary

- Messaging
- Education of empowerment
- Power imbalance (within ed systems)
- Asymmetry in research between physical and social science
- Equitable partnerships
- How to mobilize and activate smaller groups to empower groups through numbers
- Funding – what, who
 - o Equitable funding for non-academic institutions
- RFP
- How do we continue the conversation?
- Education, research, funding, and NGOs
- How to integrate 2-way dialogues