

O17.3**Using social network analysis in the coastal ocean assessment for sustainability and transformation (COAST card) framework**

Vanessa Vargas-Nguyen, William Dennison

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, USA

Abstract

The Coastal Ocean Assessment for Sustainability and Transformation (COAST Card) approach encourages stakeholder engagement and transdisciplinary collaboration in order to produce cost-effective and balanced pathways toward resilient communities and ecosystems. Stakeholder participation and collaboration is critical and careful stakeholder selection and engagement is needed throughout. However, research has shown that stakeholders only collaborate to advance their agenda while having little interest or having limited individual capacity to contribute towards solutions. One way of addressing this is through Social Network Analysis and Socio-ecological Network Analysis, which are increasingly being used in natural resource governance. It has been used and applied in many systems around the world in the context of coupled human and natural systems, social-ecological systems, sustainability and resilience, and collaborative governance, among others. These network approaches can identify the structure of social connections between and among different stakeholders and ecological units allowing for the prioritization of actions that have the greatest potential for stakeholder buy-in. It can be used to improve communication, enhance social learning, and promote collaborative actions through the understanding of societal barriers and opportunities by identifying relationships, information flow, and key individuals that can influence decision-making to improve scores. SNA can also be used to evaluate engagement processes by showing how connections form and change over time. The merging of social network analysis, socio-environmental report cards, and system dynamics modeling in the COAST Card framework will enable the assessment of coastal and ocean systems, provide guidance on optimal cost-benefit solutions to maintain or improve the health of these systems, and identify the actors best placed to deliver these solutions. Getting the right people, armed with publicly available synthesized information, informed by robust models, and having trusted relationships through the co-production of COAST Card can and will catalyze positive socio-environmental change.

Keywords

COAST Card, social network analysis, governance, co-production