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# Shades of blue: what do competing interpretations of the Blue Economy mean for oceans governance?

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## ABSTRACT

The 'Blue Economy' is an increasingly popular term in modern marine and ocean governance. The concept seeks to marry ocean-based development opportunities with environmental stewardship and protection. Yet different actors are co-opting this term in competing, and often conflicting ways. Four conceptual interpretations of the Blue Economy are identified, through examination of dominant discourses within international Blue Economy policy documents and key 'grey' literature. The way the Blue Economy is enacted is also examined, through an analysis of the Blue Economy 'in practice', and the actors involved. Finally, the scope of the Blue Economy is explored, with a particular focus on which particular marine industries are included or excluded from different conceptualizations. This analysis reveals areas of both consensus and

conflict. Areas of consensus reflect the growing trend towards commodification and valuation of nature, the designation and delimitation of spatial boundaries in the oceans and increasing securitization of the world's oceans. Areas of conflict exist most notably around a divergence in opinions over the legitimacy of individual sectors as components of the 'Blue Economy', in particular, carbon-intensive industries like oil and gas, and the emerging industry of deep seabed mining.

KEYWORDS:

Blue Economy

Blue Growth

oceans governance

Sustainable Development Goals

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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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