

Manifesto: Humanities 4 the Ocean

As a global network of scholars from different scientific and cultural backgrounds, we are advocating for the importance of the ‘Humanities 4 the Ocean’.

Acknowledging the ecological and material foundations of cultures and societies, their energy and food sources, forms of biological coexistence, and the interdependence of humankind and the non-human world is fundamental. Maritime, environmental, and science historians, archaeologists, geographers, ecocritics, and ethicists, among other scholars from the humanities fields (philosophy, anthropology, cultural studies, ethnic and gender studies, narrative studies, religious studies) have been addressing far distant or recent societal and environmental changes and challenges - perceptions, representations of communities and marine populations; convergent or divergent ways of interaction with the ocean; exchanges, extractions, trade and consumption; heritage, memory, practices.

Current research is showing how integrating historical data adds to our view of oceanic processes and human practices towards the oceans. **Societies have historically depended on and have been shaped by marine organisms and ecosystems**, through which relationships have been built at ecological and cultural levels over millennia. These mutual interactions have ensured the subsistence of humans and the resilience capacity of societies based on a sustainable use of the oceans, but also caused deep impacts on ecosystem composition, structure and function due to overexploitation, leading to habitat degradation, species endangerment and extinction.

Pre-industrial levels of extractions of living marine organisms are being revealed in ever increasing detail, and they **reveal greater impacts on populations and ecosystems than previously known**. Information will continue to be made accessible in the years to come, making new contributions through quantitative data of long term historical fisheries, whaling and sealing, supported with knowledge of ecological and cultural drivers and consequences (4-OCEANS, TRADITION). Global, large scale, open-access data will enable identification of past baselines critical to addressing the current and future status of oceanic health.

We acknowledge humans (from individuals to societies) as ecological actors and non-humans as historical agents, and promote integrated development of knowledge on ocean systems based on these premises. Inter-and transdisciplinary frameworks are essential, and the collaborative efforts between academic and civil society, including vulnerable groups with ancestral knowledge about past ocean and coastal systems are a stepping stone for **our global, inclusive and equitable understanding of integrated nature-culture oceanic systems**.

Projects, such as those listed below, are making essential contributions to understanding the human history of the use and exploitation of the ocean, coastlines, and aquatic biodiversity. Global networks - Chair Ocean's Cultural heritage', Oceans Past Initiative, Ocean Decade Heritage Network, Humanities for the Environment Observatories, BRIDGES Sustainability Science Coalition - allow different people from distant parts of the world to connect and share knowledge. Promoting approaches to the study of social-ecological systems, addressing policy-relevant dimensions of integrated science and humanistic scholarship, working towards including **cross-cultural, trans-chronological and multidisciplinary dimensions**, allows for many possibilities of engagement with a range of societal stakeholders. At the UN Oceans Conference we have established new partnerships, materialized in the support of the statement 'Bridging Shades of Blue' by the International Science Council. **Building a more inclusive, equitable, just and sustainable world requires reciprocity and inclusiveness between academia and diverse communities, and among all creatures co-existing in the biosphere.**

Together we say **Humanities Matter** and it is essential that research from this academic domain be acknowledged as having a central role in addressing our current knowledge about the ocean, and future endeavors of science, conservation and literacy for the oceans.

Submitted by Cristina Brito (cbrito@fcs.unl.pt), Head of the Centre for the Humanities (NOVA FCSH) and PI of the ERC Synergy Grant 4-OCEANS, in connection with the the Interactive Dialogues of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference #6 and #8

Signatory list

All entities and groups listed below have agreed to the statement and are available to offer recommendations regarding this matter if and when needed.

UNESCO Chair Ocean's Cultural Heritage; Centre for the Humanities, NOVA FCSH; ERC Synergy 4-OCEANS; Trinity Centre for Environmental Humanities, TCD; Oceans Past Initiative; Humanities for the Environment Observatories; ERC TRADITION; ERC DUNES; Centre for History, University of Lisbon; Underwater Cultural Heritage of Stone Fish Weirs; Associação Para as Ciências do Mar; BRIDGES Sustainability Science Coalition; Ocean Decade Heritage Network; Maritime Archaeology Trust, UK.