



HAL
open science

Past and Future Grand Challenges in Marine Ecosystem Ecology

Angel Borja, Jesper Andersen, Christos Arvanitidis, Alberto Basset, Lene Buhl-Mortensen, Susana Carvalho, Katherine Dafforn, Michelle Devlin, Elva Escobar-Briones, Christian Grenz, et al.

► To cite this version:

Angel Borja, Jesper Andersen, Christos Arvanitidis, Alberto Basset, Lene Buhl-Mortensen, et al.. Past and Future Grand Challenges in Marine Ecosystem Ecology. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 2020, 7, 10.3389/fmars.2020.00362 . hal-02746285

HAL Id: hal-02746285

<https://amu.hal.science/hal-02746285>

Submitted on 28 Aug 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



Past and Future Grand Challenges in Marine Ecosystem Ecology

Angel Borja^{1*}, Jesper H. Andersen², Christos D. Arvanitidis^{3,4}, Alberto Basset⁵, Lene Buhl-Mortensen⁶, Susana Carvalho⁷, Katherine A. Dafforn⁸, Michelle J. Devlin⁹, Elva G. Escobar-Briones¹⁰, Christian Grenz¹¹, Tilmann Harder¹², Stelios Katsanevakis¹³, Dongyan Liu¹⁴, Anna Metaxas¹⁵, Xosé Anxelu G. Morán⁷, Alice Newton^{16,17}, Chiara Piroddi¹⁸, Xavier Pochon^{19,20}, Ana M. Queirós²¹, Paul V. R. Snelgrove²², Cosimo Solidoro²³, Michael A. St. John²⁴ and Heliana Teixeira²⁵

¹ AZTI, Marine Research, Basque Research and Technology Alliance (BRTA), Pasaia, Spain, ² NIVA Denmark Water Research, Copenhagen, Denmark, ³ LifeWatch ERIC, Plaza de España, Seville, Spain, ⁴ Institute of Marine Biology, Biotechnology and Aquaculture, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Gouves, Greece, ⁵ Department of Science and Biological and Environmental Technology, University of Salento, Lecce, Italy, ⁶ Institute of Marine Research (IMR), Bergen, Norway, ⁷ Red Sea Research Centre, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Thuwal, Saudi Arabia, ⁸ Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia, ⁹ Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CeFas), Lowestoft, United Kingdom, ¹⁰ Instituto de Ciencias del Mar y Limnología, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico, Mexico, ¹¹ Aix-Marseille Université, Université Toulon, CNRS/INSU, IRD, Mediterranean Institute of Oceanography MIO UM 110, Marseille, France, ¹² Department of Chemistry and Biology, University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany, ¹³ Department of Marine Sciences, University of the Aegean, Mytilene, Greece, ¹⁴ State Key Laboratory of Estuarine and Coastal Research, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China, ¹⁵ Department of Oceanography, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada, ¹⁶ CIMA-Centre for Marine and Environmental Research, Gambelas, University of Algarve, Faro, Portugal, ¹⁷ NILU-IMPACT, Kjeller, Norway, ¹⁸ European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Ispra, Italy, ¹⁹ Coastal and Freshwater Group, Cawthron Institute, Nelson, New Zealand, ²⁰ Institute of Marine Science, University of Auckland, Warkworth, New Zealand, ²¹ Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Plymouth, United Kingdom, ²² Department of Ocean Sciences and Biology Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada, ²³ Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale (OGS), Trieste, Italy, ²⁴ DTU AQUA, National Institute of Aquatic Resources, Technical University of Denmark, Lyngby, Denmark, ²⁵ CESAM & Department of Biology, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

OPEN ACCESS

Edited and reviewed by:

Martin Edwards,
Marine Biological Association,
United Kingdom

*Correspondence:

Angel Borja
aborja@azti.es

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Marine Ecosystem Ecology,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Marine Science

Received: 27 February 2020

Accepted: 29 April 2020

Published: 03 June 2020

Citation:

Borja A, Andersen JH, Arvanitidis CD, Basset A, Buhl-Mortensen L, Carvalho S, Dafforn KA, Devlin MJ, Escobar-Briones EG, Grenz C, Harder T, Katsanevakis S, Liu D, Metaxas A, Morán XAG, Newton A, Piroddi C, Pochon X, Queirós AM, Snelgrove PVR, Solidoro C, St. John MA and Teixeira H (2020) Past and Future Grand Challenges in Marine Ecosystem Ecology. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 7:362. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2020.00362

Keywords: biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, human pressures, global change, ecosystem health assessment, ecosystem services, conservation and protection, ecosystem-based management

INITIAL GRAND CHALLENGES

Frontiers in Marine Science launched the Marine Ecosystems Ecology (FMARS-MEE) section in 2014, with a paper that identified eight grand challenges for the discipline (Borja, 2014). Since then, this section has published a total of 370 papers, including 336 addressing aspects of those challenges. As editors of the journal, with a wide range of marine ecology expertise, we felt it was timely to evaluate research advances related to those challenges; and to update the scope of the section to reflect the grand challenges we envision for the next 10 years. This output will match with the United Nations (UN) Decade on Oceans Science for Sustainable Development (DOSSD; Claudet et al., 2020), UN Decade of Ecosystems Restoration (DER; Young and Schwartz, 2019), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; Visbeck et al., 2014).

First, we analyzed each published paper and assigned their topic to a maximum of two out of the eight challenges (all information available in **Supplementary Table 1**). We then extracted the 3–5 most cited papers within each challenge using two criteria: the total number of citations during this 6-year period, and the annual citation rate (i.e., the mean annual number of citations since publication). We then collated the topics covered by this reduced list of papers (**Table 1**) and summarized the outcomes for each topic.

Not surprisingly, 50.5% of the papers dealt broadly with the role of marine biodiversity in maintaining ecosystem function, since they are related to the core of the journal section. They are followed by papers addressing relationships between human pressures and marine ecosystems (19.5%), and ecosystem modeling (11.6%). Just fewer than 10% of the papers were unrelated to any of the challenges defined by Borja (2014) (**Table 1**). Papers related to the assessment of ocean health had the highest impact, with a relatively high number of citations, despite the low number of papers published on the topic (**Figure 1**). In fact, of the top papers assigned to each challenge, those assessing ocean health received the highest annual mean number of citations, followed by papers on understanding relationships between human pressures and ecosystems, and those dealing with understanding the role of biodiversity in maintaining ecosystems functionality (**Table 1**).

The topics of the publications spanned all ecosystem components, from microbes to mammals; habitats from pelagic to benthic; many individual and multiple human pressures and natural stressors affecting species, their populations, communities and habitats; methodologies for monitoring, modeling, and assessment; conservation, protection, restoration, and recovery of marine ecosystems; global change effects; and different management issues (**Table 1**). Some of the papers that did not focus on the grand challenges dealt with a special Research Topic, for example, ocean literacy (Borja et al., 2020a).

GRAND CHALLENGES FOR COMING DECADE

Although publications in FMARS-MEE have focused on many of the challenges stated in 2014, critical gaps remain which will require considerable research effort to be bridged (**Table 1**). Furthermore, the analysis of the papers published from 2014 to 2019 in FMARS-MEE, and the discussion held by the editorial board when preparing this paper, points to some new or updated grand challenges, as core of our journal section. Other secondary challenges alongside governance, social, and methodological priorities, were identified as important and we also propose them for consideration into the next decade (**Table 2**). Addressing these challenges, which are deeply related to each-other (**Table 2**), would help increase our knowledge of the global ocean, raise awareness on ocean status and identify nature-based solutions to mitigate the impacts of current pressures.

New and Updated Grand Challenges

Our revisited list of new (N) grand challenges (**Table 2**) includes:

(N1) Understanding of interaction among diversity and ecosystem processes, structure and function, which is still the core of FMARS-MEE. Expanding the scope and relevance of future studies will allow to better understand the complex biophysical relationships among biodiversity, food-web structure, ecological processes, and ecosystem

functioning, and thus increase our predictive capacity of the ecological consequences of shifts in biodiversity;

- (N2) Measuring ecosystem shifts, biodiversity and habitat loss, clearly related to international commitments on sustaining biodiversity (O'Hara et al., 2019). Although ecologists recognize that Earth is now experiencing the sixth mass extinction, quantifying ecosystem shifts, and biodiversity loss remains challenging and often leads to scientific debates (e.g., Vellend et al., 2017);
- (N3) Restoring degraded systems, in line with the UN DER. Marine and coastal ecosystems have suffered substantial degradation in the last century, with important loss in their capacity to deliver ecosystem services (Rocha et al., 2015). Ecological restoration efforts often have low success rates, indicating the need for new strategies, that better account for marine connectivity and interactions with adjacent ecosystems, as well as the physical environment (Gillis et al., 2017). To date, restoration efforts have focused on coastal ecosystems, but with increasing exploration for hydrocarbons and other resources offshore and in areas beyond national jurisdiction, approaches for deep-sea and open sea restoration should be explored and tested;
- (N4) Moving from descriptive studies to those providing functional assessments, improving the understanding of marine ecosystems, supporting management and sustainability strategies for human activities in the ocean, in line with the UN DOSSD;
- (N5) Understanding the cause-effect pathways and the response of ecosystems to increasing cumulative human impacts and climate change (Ortiz et al., 2018), as drivers of shifts in most marine ecosystems, altering species distributions and threatening biodiversity (Halpern et al., 2019). Such cause-effect pathways are inherently non-linear and include direct and indirect feedbacks (Fu et al., 2018). Consequently, this challenge is complex and requires novel methods of assessment and models spanning across disciplines (Crain et al., 2008; Phillips et al., 2019). The assessment of success rates for management under these often synergistic pressures (Audzijonyte et al., 2016); and
- (N6) Supporting marine conservation actions and their efficiency under global change and shifting policies. Climate change and a developing policy landscape (e.g., Blue Growth, UN SDGs) present great challenges for marine conservation, requiring changes in human attitudes, and adaptive and creative approaches, such as adaptive conservation planning (including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) design) that account for climate hotspots and refugia (Queirós et al., 2016), assisted evolution, and shifting focus from protecting species to protecting ecological functions (Rilov et al., 2020).

Secondary Challenges

In addition to the grand challenges, we have also identified some secondary (S) challenges (**Table 2**), including:

TABLE 1 | Grand Challenges in Marine Ecosystems Ecology, as defined by Borja (2014), number of papers published (and percentage) on each challenge in Frontiers in Marine Science (section Marine Ecosystems Ecology), topics covered by the most cited references for each challenge, considering mean annual citations per paper (excluding self-citations from all authors for the period 2014–2019) and/or total number of citations received (as in SCOPUS on 15th January 2020).

Grand challenge	Papers published (nr)	(%)	Most cited references	Topic covered	Top papers citations (annual mean total)	Comments
1. Understanding the role of biodiversity in maintaining ecosystems functionality	187	50.5	Renaud et al., 2015	Macroalgal detritus and food-web subsidies in the Arctic	7.0 45	From the papers received in 2014–2019, this is the main core topic of the journal. This includes the multiple relationships and interactions between different ecosystem components, between them and the physico-chemical component of the system, including processes, structure and functionality. Likely this will also be the main topic in the future
			Kristensen et al., 2014	Effects of shifts in benthos and functional traits to biogeochemical cycling	6.3 47	
			Heithaus et al., 2014	Relationships between seagrasses, turtles and sharks	5.8 47	
2. Understanding relationships between human pressures and ecosystems	72	19.5	Katsanevakis et al., 2014	Human activities and alien species mapping	10.7 76	With increasing maritime activities, the need of understanding these relationships will be maintained, and, as such, occupying a part of the papers in the journal. Especially, the effects of multiple pressures on marine ecosystems will receive increasing attention. Some specific pressures (e.g., invasive species) will need a new grand challenge (Table 2)
			Patrício et al., 2016	DPSIR framework review	7.3 38	
			Korpinen and Andersen, 2016	Review on marine cumulative impact assessments	5.8 24	
			Chartrand et al., 2016	Dredging activity pressures on seagrasses	3.5 27	
3. Understanding the impact of global change on marine ecosystems	36	9.7	Duarte and Krause-Jensen, 2017	Seagrass meadows contribution to carbon sequestration	9.3 38	This global problem will receive increasing attention in our journal in coming years, since it will be a transversal issue for multiple aspects of the marine systems, from natural communities, but also for resources, conservation and management
			Thomsen et al., 2019	Extinctions after heatwaves	8.0 13	
			Lindemann and St. John, 2014	Phytoplankton dynamics in a changing world	4.3 31	
4. Assessing marine ecosystems health in an integrative way	31	8.4	Borja et al., 2016	Review on integrative methods to assess ocean's health	14.5 95	The importance of this challenge is highlighted with the number of citations and the increasing need of assessing the marine systems to take informed management decisions
			Aylagas et al., 2016	Metabarcoding in assessing the status of benthos	11.5 57	
			Danovaro et al., 2016	Innovative monitoring tools for ecological status	6.0 44	
			Goodwin et al., 2017	DNA sequencing to monitor ecological status	6.0 22	
			Borja et al., 2014	Methods to aggregate indicators in assessing the status	5.5 57	
5. Delivering ecosystem services by conserving and protecting our seas	14	3.8	St. John et al., 2016	Services provided by mesopelagic fishes	9.3 41	The links between the oceans' health (through conservation and protection) and the ecosystem services delivered, as well as the benefits for human well-being, need increasing attention
			Galparsoro et al., 2014	Services provided by benthic habitats	4.3 34	
			Mačić et al., 2018	Conservation planning and biological invasions	3.5 12	
6. Recovering ecosystem structure and functioning through restoration	16	4.3	Duarte and Krause-Jensen, 2018	Recovery from coastal eutrophication	2.0 5	Although our journal has attracted little attention on this challenge, the recovery of marine systems after degradation should have an increasing attention
			Pérez-Ruzafa et al., 2019	Recovery of a lagoon from eutrophication	2.0 5	
			Rouse et al., 2019	Conservation features for subsea infrastructures	2.0 2	
			Gillis et al., 2017	Restoring tropical coastal ecosystems	0.3 2	

(Continued)

TABLE 1 | Continued

Grand challenge	Papers published (nr)	(%)	Most cited references	Topic covered	Top papers citations (annual mean total)	Comments
7. Managing the seas using the ecosystem approach and spatial planning	8	2.2	Newton and Elliott, 2016 Smith et al., 2016 Tam et al., 2017	Stakeholder engagement in marine management Conceptual models in marine management Thresholds and reference points for ecosystem-based management	3.5 26 2.3 21 2.0 12	Effects of management of the seas, an ecosystem-based approach and maritime spatial planning on marine ecosystems should receive increasing attention, because of different legislations worldwide
8. Modeling ecosystems for better management	43	11.6	Faillietz et al., 2018 Mayorga-Adame et al., 2017 Nanninga and Berumen, 2014 Robinson et al., 2017 Lynam et al., 2016	Larvae dispersal and connectivity Modeling larval connectivity of coral Role of individual in larval dispersion Review of species distribution models	4.0 8 3.3 11 2.5 17 3.3 12	The use of models for habitats and species distribution, connectivity, climate change scenarios, monitoring and assessment, ecological processes, management, etc., will increase
None of the above	34	9.2	Borja, 2014 Vázquez-Luis et al., 2017 Xavier et al., 2016	Innovative modeling tools for management Challenges in marine ecosystems ecology Mass mortality of an endangered bivalve Research challenges in the Southern Ocean	2.3 16 8.3 57 4.3 22 2.8 21	Social-ecological issues, socio-economic topics, ocean literacy, solutions for the problems of the oceans, human health and oceans, etc., will become more important

Percentages add up to more than 100% because papers were assigned to up to two challenges.

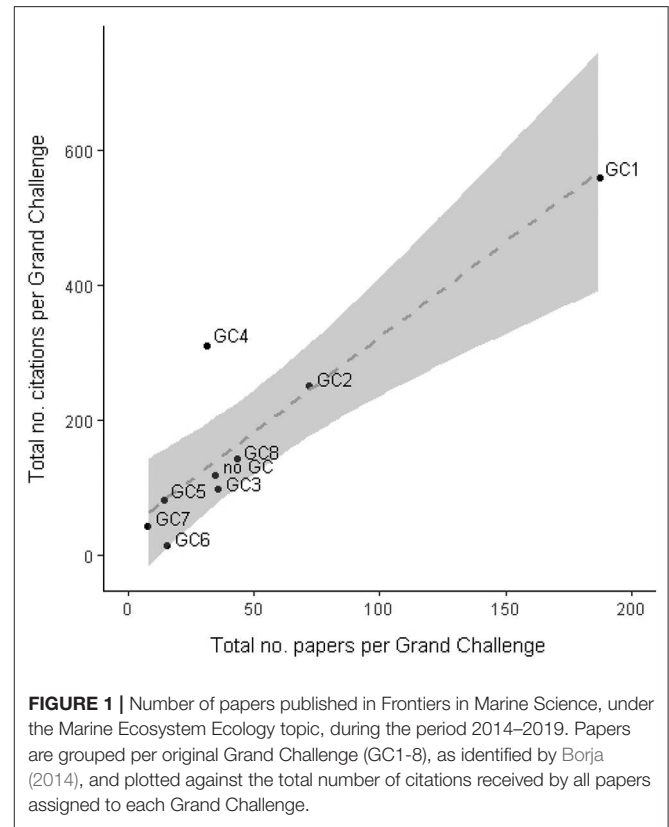


FIGURE 1 | Number of papers published in Frontiers in Marine Science, under the Marine Ecosystem Ecology topic, during the period 2014–2019. Papers are grouped per original Grand Challenge (GC1–8), as identified by Borja (2014), and plotted against the total number of citations received by all papers assigned to each Grand Challenge.

- (S1) Linking ocean health with human health, as in the recent agenda proposed by Borja et al. (2020b)
- (S2) Understanding the impacts of alien and neontive (Essl et al., 2019) species on ecosystems. Species modify their natural range and invade new regions either aided by human activities (alien species) or by natural means, tracking human-induced environmental change (neontive species). In both cases, they may substantially modify recipient communities, ecosystem functioning and services. Important knowledge gaps restrict our understanding of traits that facilitate invasions and the magnitude of their impacts, our capacity to predict future shifts in ecosystem processes and functioning due to invasive species, and our ability to propose adequate mitigation measures;
- (S3) Assessing urban development and subsequent loss of natural coastlines and ecosystem services (Barragán and de Andrés, 2015)
- (S4) Understanding the impacts of human activities as well as climate change in the deep ocean (Levin and Le Bris, 2015; Danovaro et al., 2017)
- (S5) Considering the land-ocean continuum, with major terrestrial and riverine inputs to the ocean (Xenopoulos et al., 2017). Better understanding these processes would help resolve massive uncertainties in global ocean function, including nutrient cycling, and especially carbon cycling, tightly linked to climate regulation (Friedlingstein et al., 2019)

- (S6) Reassessing and evaluating ecosystem processes under the marine “holobiont” paradigm (Margulis, 1991), meaning that any marine organism is a multispecies entity of host and associated microbes. The role of these microbes in organismal function, performance, interaction and ecological context is grossly underappreciated and hence poorly understood;
- (S7) Assessing cumulative effects to guide management, since such assessments are increasingly used to inform environmental policy and guide ecosystem-based management but are inherently complex and seldom linked to management processes (Stelzenmüller et al., 2018). There is a need for developing best practices for the operationalization of cumulative effects assessments in a management context (Greenwood et al., 2019; Stelzenmüller et al., 2020); and
- (S8) Investigating emerging pollutants (e.g., plastics and additives, pharmaceuticals), artificial light at night, noise and toxin effects on coastal and marine species, habitats and ecosystems (Chae and An, 2017; Rako-Gospić and Picciulin, 2019), including monitoring and assessment.

Governance and Social Priorities

We identified some major challenges related to governance (G) and social priorities (Table 2), including:

- (G1) Using ecological knowledge, as well as traditional knowledge, to meet UN SDGs, and contributing to the UN DOSSD and DER;
- (G2) Incorporating new methods into decision support tools for policy frameworks, promoting effective ecosystem-based management (Pinarbaşı et al., 2019);
- (G3) Implementing climate-ready Marine Spatial Planning, including the role of MPAs in conserving the oceans, and creating climatic refugia (Queirós et al., 2016; Frazão Santos et al., 2019);
- (G4) Developing transnational observation strategies, in the long-term (Moltmann et al., 2019);
- (G5) Engaging society more effectively in ocean science, from ocean literacy, to citizen science and participation in supporting management decision making (Pocock et al., 2018; Borja et al., 2020a); and
- (G6) Investigating the role of fake news and how we can use science and science communication to offset this (Scheufele and Krause, 2019). Understanding the impact of social media in positive (e.g., citizen science) and negative ways (e.g., dissemination of fake news).

Methodological Priorities

In this section, we identified some methodological (M) priorities, including:

- (M1) Further developing and refining molecular tools for marine applications as decision support tools, particularly those related to the implementation of DNA/RNA-based approaches, e.g. metabarcoding (Pochon et al., 2017; Keeley et al., 2018). These are highly promising approaches, but often still have limited direct applications for monitoring and assessment. International standardization of protocols, Quality Assured/Certified laboratory workflows, and minimal reporting standards, which are critical for improved policy-level uptake, are needed (Leese et al., 2018; Pawlowski et al., 2018). Integration of multi-omics tools for understanding ecosystems functioning is also important;
- (M2) Addressing problems multidimensionally, taking into account the whole Earth (e.g., planetary boundaries; Nash et al., 2017);
- (M3) Achieving “Consilience,” that is, a common path to knowledge by linking facts and fact-based theory across disciplines to create a common groundwork of explanation (Wilson, 1998); this will promote and embrace interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary studies, including e.g., marine ecologists, fisheries scientists, oceanographers, social scientists, economists;
- (M4) Acknowledging cultural differences in conducting marine science. Much of the knowledge we produce today is an outcome of many ecologists who share their data and algorithms and release them open and free for access to other scientists and society. All this information can be used in big data and machine learning to tackle all the grand and secondary challenges outlined here (Ma et al., 2018)
- (M5) Modeling the future states of marine ecosystems and their services in the face of scenario and process uncertainty (MacNeil et al., 2019). Real limitations still exist with our ability to project and simulate the ecology of a multiple stressors ocean, regime shifts, or extreme climate events (cold snaps, heatwaves); and
- (M6) Developing thresholds/targets to assess current and future ecosystems health, especially under climate change (Borja et al., 2012; Queirós et al., 2018).

FINAL REMARK

To adequately address these revised grand challenges over the next 10 years, the FMARS-MEE editors recommend promoting open access to scientific data and publications in order to provide wider distribution of marine ecosystem science, ecological processes, and the complex relationships between biotic and abiotic components, at all levels of biological organization and scales of observation. Free and easy access to data and publications creates a system of information that is transparent, promoting confidence among stakeholders, marine users, policy-makers and the society at large, thus facilitating informed decisions to find solutions for global and ocean-based challenges, such as the UN SDGs, DOSSD and DER. These are core values of FMARS-MEE, enhancing collaborations across the global ocean (Borja et al., 2017; Duarte et al., 2018; Behrenfeld et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2019; Moltmann et al., 2019).

TABLE 2 | Summary of the new (N) and updated Grand Challenges faced by marine ecosystems in the next decade, as identified by the editorial board of Frontiers in Marine Science (section Marine Ecosystems Ecology), which need to be addressed from science in different ways.

		New and Updated Grand Challenges					
		N1. Understanding of interaction among biodiversity and ecosystem processes	N2. Measuring ecosystems shifts, biodiversity & habitat loss	N3. Restoring degraded systems	N4. Moving from descriptive studies to functional	N5. Understanding the response of ecosystems to increasing cumulative impacts	N6. Supporting marine conservation actions
Secondary challenges	S1. Linking ocean health and human health	■	■	■		■	■
	S2. Understanding the impacts of alien and nonnative species	■	■	■	■	■	■
	S3. Assessing urban development and impacts				■		
	S4. Understanding the impacts from human activities	■	■	■	■	■	■
	S5. Considering land-ocean continuum		■	■		■	■
	S6. Reassessing the marine holobiont concept	■			■		
	S7. Assessing cumulative effects to guide management		■	■		■	■
	S8. Investigating emerging pollutants	■	■	■		■	■
Governance and social priorities	G1. Using ecological knowledge to meet UN SDGs.	■		■	■		■
	G2. Incorporating new methods into policy frameworks		■			■	■
	G3. Implementing climate-ready Marine Spatial Planning	■		■		■	■
	G4. Developing transnational observation strategies	■	■		■	■	■
	G5. Engaging society more effectively in ocean science	■	■	■	■	■	■
	G6. Investigating the role of fake news and how we can use science and social media		■	■		■	■
Methodological priorities	M1. Developing and refining molecular tools	■	■		■	■	■
	M2. Addressing problems multidimensionally		■	■		■	■
	M3. Achieving 'Consilience'			■		■	■
	M4. Acknowledging cultural differences in marine science, including open access and big data	■	■	■	■	■	■
	M5. Modeling the future states of marine ecosystems	■	■	■	■	■	■
	M6. Setting thresholds/targets to assess	■	■	■	■	■	■

Also, we highlight other secondary (S) challenges, governance (G), social, and methodological (M) priorities, and the interactions with the Grand Challenges. UN, United Nations; SDG, Sustainable Development Goals; MPA, Marine Protected Areas. Note: for complete names of the challenges, consult the text.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

AB developed the idea of the paper and wrote the first draft. Each author contributed with ideas for new challenges and contributed equally to the discussion and in writing the final manuscript.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was contribution number 973 from AZTI's Marine Research; Basque Research and Technology

Alliance (BRTA). Heliana Teixeira thanks FCT/MCTES for the financial support to the host institution CESAM (UIDB/50017/2020+UIDP/50017/2020).

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2020.00362/full#supplementary-material>

REFERENCES

- Audzijonyte, A., Fulton, E., Haddon, M., Helidoniotis, F., Hobday, A. J., Kuparinen, A., et al. (2016). Trends and management implications of human-influenced life-history changes in marine ectotherms. *Fish Fish.* 17, 1005–1028. doi: 10.1111/faf.12156
- Aylagas, E., Borja, A., Irigoien, X., Rodriguez-Ezpeleta, N. (2016). Benchmarking DNA metabarcoding for biodiversity-based monitoring and assessment. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:96. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00096
- Barragán, J. M., and de Andrés, M. (2015). Analysis and trends of the world's coastal cities and agglomerations. *Ocean Coast Manage.* 114, 11–20. doi: 10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2015.06.004
- Behrenfeld, M. J., Moore, R. H., Hostetler, C. A., Graff, J., Gaube, P., Russell, L. M., et al. (2019). The North Atlantic Aerosol and Marine Ecosystem Study (NAAMES): science motive and mission overview. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:122. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00122
- Borja, A. (2014). Grand challenges in marine ecosystems ecology. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 11:1. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00001
- Borja, A., Dauer, D. M., and Grémare, A. (2012). The importance of setting targets and reference conditions in assessing marine ecosystem quality. *Ecol. Indic.* 12, 1–7. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolind.2011.06.018
- Borja, A., Elliott, M., Andersen, J. H., Berg, T., Carstensen, J., Halpern, B. S., et al. (2016). Overview of integrative assessment of marine systems: the ecosystem approach in practice. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:20. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00020
- Borja, A., Elliott, M., Uyarra, M. C., Carstensen, J., Mea, M. (2017). *Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Science in Assessing the Health Status of Marine Ecosystems, 2nd Edn.* Lausanne: Frontiers Media. doi: 10.3389/978-2-88945-126-5
- Borja, A., Prins, T., Simboura, N., Andersen, J. H., Berg, T., Marques, J. C., et al. (2014). Tales from a thousand and one ways to integrate marine ecosystem components when assessing the environmental status. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 1:72. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00072
- Borja, A., Santoro, F., Scowcroft, G., Fletcher, S., and Strosser, P. (2020a). Editorial: connecting people to their oceans: issues and options for effective ocean literacy. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:837. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00837
- Borja, A., White, M. P., Berdalet, E., Bock, N., Eatock, C., Kristensen, P., et al. (2020b). Moving toward an Agenda on ocean health and human health in Europe. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 7:37. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2020.00037
- Chae, Y., and An, Y. J. (2017). Effects of micro- and nanoplastics on aquatic ecosystems: current research trends and perspectives. *Mar. Pollut. Bull.* 124, 624–632. doi: 10.1016/j.marpolbul.2017.01.070
- Chartrand, K. M., Bryant, C. V., Carter, A. B., Ralph, P. J., and Rasheed, M. A. (2016). Light thresholds to prevent dredging impacts on the Great Barrier reef seagrass, *Zostera muelleri* ssp. *capricorni*. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:106. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00106
- Claudet, J., Bopp, L., Cheung, W. W. L., Devillers, R., Escobar-Briones, E., Haugan, P., et al. (2020). A roadmap for using the un decade of ocean science for sustainable development in support of science, policy, and action. *One Earth* 2, 34–42. doi: 10.1016/j.oneear.2019.10.012
- Crain, C. M., Kroeker, K., and Halpern, B. S. (2008). Interactive and cumulative effects of multiple human stressors in marine systems. *Ecol. Lett.* 11, 1304–1315. doi: 10.1111/j.1461-0248.2008.01253.x
- Danovaro, R., Carugati, L., Berzano, L., Cahill, A. E., Carvalho, S., Chenuil, A., et al. (2016). Implementing and innovating marine monitoring approaches for assessing marine environmental status. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:213. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00213
- Danovaro, R., Corinaldesi, C., and Dell'Anno, A., Snelgrove, P. V. R. (2017). The deep-sea under global change. *Curr. Biol.* 27, R461–R465. doi: 10.1016/j.cub.2017.02.046
- Duarte, C. M., and Krause-Jensen, D. (2017). Export from seagrass meadows contributes to marine carbon sequestration. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:13. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00013
- Duarte, C. M., and Krause-Jensen, D. (2018). Intervention options to accelerate ecosystem recovery from coastal eutrophication. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 5:470. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2018.00470
- Duarte, C. M., Poiner, I., and Gunn, J. (2018). Perspectives on a global observing system to assess ocean health. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 5:265. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2018.00265
- Duffy, J. E., Benedetti-Cecchi, L., Trinanes, J., Muller-Karger, F. E., Ambo-Rappe, R., Boström, C., et al. (2019). Toward a coordinated global observing system for seagrasses and marine macroalgae. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:317. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00317
- Essl, F., Dullinger, S., Genovesi, P., Hulme, P. E., Jeschke, J. M., Katsanevakis, S., et al. (2019). A conceptual framework for range-expanding species that track human-induced environmental change. *BioScience* 69, 908–919. doi: 10.1093/biosci/biz101
- Faillietaz, R., Paris, C. B., and Irisson, J. O. (2018). Larval fish swimming behavior alters dispersal patterns from marine protected areas in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 5:97. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2018.00097
- Frazão Santos, C., Ehler, C. N., Agardy, T., Andrade, F., Orbach, M. K., and Crowder, L. B. (2019). "Chapter 30 - marine spatial planning," in *World Seas: an Environmental Evaluation, 2nd Edn.*, ed C. Sheppard (London: Academic Press), 571–592.
- Friedlingstein, P., Jones, M., O'Sullivan, M., Andrew, R., Hauck, J., Peters, G., et al. (2019). Global carbon budget 2019. *Earth Syst. Sci. Data* 11, 1783–1838. doi: 10.5194/essd-11-1783-2019
- Fu, C., Travers-Trolet, M., Velez, L., Grüss, A., Bundy, A., Shannon, L. J., et al. (2018). Risky business: The combined effects of fishing and changes in primary productivity on fish communities. *Ecol. Model.* 385, 265–276. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolmodel.2017.12.003
- Galparsoro, I., Borja, A., and Uyarra, M. C. (2014). Mapping ecosystem services provided by benthic habitats in the European North Atlantic Ocean. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 1:23. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00023
- Gillis, L. G., Jones, C. G., Ziegler, A. D., van der Wal, D., Breckwoldt, A., and Bouma, T. J. (2017). Opportunities for protecting and restoring tropical coastal ecosystems by utilizing a physical connectivity approach. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:374. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00374
- Goodwin, K., Thompson, L., Duarte, B., Kahlke, T., Thompson, A., Marques, J., et al. (2017). DNA sequencing as tool to monitor marine ecological status. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:107. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00107
- Greenwood, N., Devlin, M. J., Best, M., Fronkova, L., Graves, C. A., Milligan, A., et al. (2019). Utilizing eutrophication assessment directives from transitional to marine systems in the thames estuary and liverpool bay, UK. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6: doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00116

- Halpern, B. S., Frazier, M., Afflerbach, J., Stewart, J. S., Micheli, F., O'Hara, C., et al. (2019). Recent pace of change in human impact on the world's ocean. *Sci. Rep.* 9:11609. doi: 10.1038/s41598-019-47201-9
- Heithaus, M. R., Alcoverro, T., Arthur, R., Burkholder, D. A., Coates, K. A., Christianen, M. J. A., et al. (2014). Seagrasses in the age of sea turtle conservation and shark overfishing. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 1:28. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00028
- Katsanevakis, S., Coll, M., Piroddi, C., Steenbeek, J., Ben Rais Lasram, F., Zenetos, A., et al. (2014). Invading the mediterranean sea: biodiversity patterns shaped by human activities. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 1:32. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00032
- Keeley, N., Wood, S. A., Pochon, X. (2018). Development and preliminary validation of a multi-trophic metabarcoding biotic index for monitoring benthic ecological enrichment. *Ecol. Indic.* 85, 1044–1057. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolind.2017.11.014
- Korpinen, S., and Andersen, J. (2016). A global review of cumulative pressure and impact assessments in marine environment. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:153. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00153
- Kristensen, E., Delefosse, M., Quintana, C. O., Flindt, M. R., and Valdemarsen, T. (2014). Influence of benthic macrofauna community shifts on ecosystem functioning in shallow estuaries. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 1:41. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00041
- Leese, F., Bouchez, A., Abarenkov, K., Altermatt, F., Borja, Á., Bruce, K., et al. (2018). Chapter two - why we need sustainable networks bridging countries, disciplines, cultures and generations for aquatic biomonitoring 2.0: a perspective derived from the DNAqua-net COST action. *Adv. Ecol. Res.* 58, 63–99. doi: 10.1016/bs.aacr.2018.01.001
- Levin, L. A., and Le Bris, N. (2015). The deep ocean under climate change. *Science* 350, 766–768. doi: 10.1126/science.aad0126
- Lindemann, C., and St. John, M. A., (2014). A seasonal diary of phytoplankton in the North Atlantic. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 1:37. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00037
- Lynam, C., Uusitalo, L., Patrício, J., Piroddi, C., Queiros, A., Teixeira, H., et al. (2016). Uses of innovative modelling tools within the implementation of the marine strategy framework directive. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:182. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00182
- Ma, A., Bohan, D. A., Canard, E., Derocles, S. A. P., Gray, C., Lu, X., et al. (2018). "Chapter seven - a replicated network approach to 'Big Data'" in *Ecology in Advances in Ecological Research*, eds D. A. Bohan, A. J. Dumbrell, G. Woodward, and M. Jackson (London: Academic Press), 225–264.
- Mačić, V., Albano, P. G., Alpanidou, V., Claudet, J., Corrales, X., Essl, F., et al. (2018). Biological invasions in conservation planning: a global systematic review. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 5:178. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2018.00178
- MacNeil, M. A., Mellin, C., Matthews, S., Wolff, N. H., McClanahan, T. R., Devlin, M., et al. (2019). Water quality mediates resilience on the Great Barrier Reef. *Nat. Ecol. Evol.* 3, 620–627. doi: 10.1038/s41559-019-0832-3
- Margulis, L. (1991). "Symbiosis as a source of evolutionary innovation: speciation and morphogenesis," in *Symbiogenesis and Symbioticism* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press), 1–14.
- Mayorga-Adame, C. G., Batchelder, H. P., and Spitz, Y. H. (2017). Modeling larval connectivity of coral reef organisms in the Kenya-Tanzania region. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:92. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00092
- Moltmann, T., Turton, J., Zhang, H.-M., Nolan, G., Gouldman, C., Griesbauer, L., et al. (2019). A Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), delivered through enhanced collaboration across regions, communities, and new technologies. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:291. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00291
- Nanninga, G. B., and Berumen, M. L. (2014). The role of individual variation in marine larval dispersal. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 1:71. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2014.00071
- Nash, K. L., Cvitanovic, C., Fulton, E. A., Halpern, B. S., Milner-Gulland, E. J., Watson, R. A., et al. (2017). Planetary boundaries for a blue planet. *Nat. Ecol. Evol.* 1:1625. doi: 10.1038/s41559-017-0319-z
- Newton, A., and Elliott, M. (2016). A typology of stakeholders and guidelines for engagement in transdisciplinary, participatory processes. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:230. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00230
- O'Hara, C. C., Villaseñor-Derbez, J. C., Ralph, G. M., and Halpern, B. S. (2019). Mapping status and conservation of global at-risk marine biodiversity. *Conserv. Lett.* 12:e12651. doi: 10.1111/conl.12651
- Ortiz, J. C., Wolff, N. H., Anthony, K. R., Devlin, M., Lewis, S., Mumby, P. J. (2018). Impaired recovery of the Great Barrier Reef under cumulative stress. *Sci. adv.* 4:ear6127. doi: 10.1126/sciadv.aar6127
- Patrício, J., Elliott, M., Mazik, K., Papadopoulou, N., and Smith, C. (2016). DPSIR - two decades of trying to develop a unifying framework for marine environmental management? *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:177. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00177
- Pawlowski, J., Kelly-Quinn, M., Altermatt, F., Apothéoz-Perret-Gentil, L., Beja, P., Boggero, A., et al. (2018). The future of biotic indices in the ecogenomic era: Integrating (e)DNA metabarcoding in biological assessment of aquatic ecosystems. *Sci. Total Environ.* 637–638, 1295–1310. doi: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2018.05.002
- Pérez-Ruzafa, A., Campillo, S., Fernández-Palacios, J. M., García-Lacunza, A., García-Oliva, M., Ibañez, H., et al. (2019). Long-term dynamic in nutrients, chlorophyll a, and water quality parameters in a coastal lagoon during a process of eutrophication for decades, a sudden break and a relatively rapid recovery. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:26. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00026
- Phillips, G., Teixeira, H., Poikane, S., Herrero, F. S., Kelly, M. G. (2019). Establishing nutrient thresholds in the face of uncertainty and multiple stressors: a comparison of approaches using simulated datasets. *Sci. Total Environ.* 684, 425–433. doi: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2019.05.343
- Pinarbaşı, K., Galparsoro, I., and Borja, Á. (2019). End users' perspective on decision support tools in marine spatial planning. *Mar. Policy* 108:103658. doi: 10.1016/j.marpol.2019.103658
- Pochon, X., Zaiko, A., Fletcher, L. M., Laroche, O., Wood, S. A. (2017). Wanted dead or alive? Using metabarcoding of environmental DNA and RNA to distinguish living assemblages for biosecurity applications. *PLoS ONE* 12:e0187636. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0187636
- Pocock, M. J. O., Chandler, M., Bonney, R., Thornhill, I., Albin, A., August, T., et al. (2018). "Chapter six - a vision for global biodiversity monitoring with citizen science," in *Advances in Ecological Research*, eds D. A. Bohan, A. J. Dumbrell, G. Woodward, and M. Jackson (London: Academic Press), 169–223.
- Queirós, A. M., Fernandes, J., Genevier, L., and Lynam, C. P. (2018). Climate change alters fish community size-structure, requiring adaptive policy targets. *Fish Fish.* 19, 613–621. doi: 10.1111/faf.12278
- Queirós, A. M., Huebert, K. B., Keyl, F., Fernandes, J. A., Stolte, W., Maar, M., et al. (2016). Solutions for ecosystem-level protection of ocean systems under climate change. *Glob. Change Biol.* 22, 3927–3936. doi: 10.1111/gcb.13423
- Rako-Gospić, N., and Picciulin, M. (2019). "Chapter 20 - underwater noise: sources and effects on marine life," in *World Seas: an Environmental Evaluation, 2nd Edn*, ed C. Sheppard (London: Academic Press), 367–389. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-805052-1.00023-1
- Renaud, P. E., Løkken, T. S., Jørgensen, L. L., Berge, J., and Johnson, B. J. (2015). Macroalgal detritus and food-web subsidies along an Arctic fjord depth-gradient. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 2:31. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2015.00031
- Rilov, G., Fraschetti, S., Gissi, E., Pipitone, C., Badalamenti, F., Tamburello, L., et al. (2020). A fast-moving target: achieving marine conservation goals under shifting climate and policies. *Ecol. Appl.* 30:e2009. doi: 10.1002/eap.2009
- Robinson, N. M., Nelson, W. A., Costello, M. J., Sutherland, J. E., and Lundquist, C. J. (2017). A systematic review of marine-based species distribution models (SDMs) with recommendations for best practice. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:421. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00421
- Rocha, J., Yletyinen, J., Biggs, R., Blenckner, T., and Peterson, G. (2015). Marine regime shifts: drivers and impacts on ecosystems services. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B* 370:20130273. doi: 10.1098/rstb.2013.0273
- Rouse, S., Lacey, N. C., Hayes, P., Wilding, T. A. (2019). Benthic conservation features and species associated with subsea pipelines: considerations for decommissioning. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:00. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00200
- Scheufele, D. A., and Krause, N. M. (2019). Science audiences, misinformation, and fake news. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 116, 7662–7669. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1805871115
- Smith, C., Papadopoulou, K.-N., Barnard, S., Mazik, K., Elliott, M., Patrício, J., et al. (2016). Managing the marine environment, conceptual models and assessment considerations for the European marine strategy framework directive. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:144. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00144
- Stelzenmüller, V., Coll, M., Cormier, R., Mazaris, A. D., Pascual, M., Loiseau, C., et al. (2020). Operationalizing risk-based cumulative effect assessments in the marine environment. *Sci. Total Environ.* 724:138118. doi: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.138118
- Stelzenmüller, V., Coll, M., Mazaris, A. D., Giakoumi, S., Katsanevakis, S., Portman, M., et al. (2018). A risk-based approach to cumulative effect

- assessments for marine management. *Sci. Total Environ.* 612, 1132–1140. doi: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2017.08.289
- St. John, M. A., Borja, A., Chust, G., Heath, M., Grigorov, I., Mariani, P., et al. (2016). A dark hole in our understanding of marine ecosystems and their services: perspectives from the mesopelagic community. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:31. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00031
- Tam, J. C., Link, J. S., Large, S. I., Andrews, K., Friedland, K. D., Gove, J., et al. (2017). Comparing apples to oranges: common trends and thresholds in anthropogenic and environmental pressures across multiple marine ecosystems. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:282. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00282
- Thomsen, M. S., Mondardini, L., Alestra, T., Gerrity, S., Tait, L., South, P. M., et al. (2019). Local extinction of bull kelp (*Durvillaea* spp.) due to a marine heatwave. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:84. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00084
- Vázquez-Luis, M., Álvarez, E., Barrajón, A., García-March, J. R., Grau, A., Hendriks, I. E., et al. (2017). S.O.S. *Pinna nobilis*: a mass mortality event in the Western Mediterranean Sea. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:220. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2017.00220
- Vellend, M., Dornelas, M., Baeten, L., Beauséjour, R., Brown, C. D., De Frenne, P., et al. (2017). Estimates of local biodiversity change over time stand up to scrutiny. *Ecology* 98, 583–590. doi: 10.1002/ecy.1660
- Visbeck, M., Kronfeld-Goharani, U., Neumann, B., Rickels, W., Schmidt, J., van Doorn, E., et al. (2014). A Sustainable development goal for the ocean and coasts: global ocean challenges benefit from regional initiatives supporting globally coordinated solutions. *Mar. Policy* 49: 87–89. doi: 10.1016/j.marpol.2014.02.010
- Wilson, E. O. (1998). *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. Vintage Books, A Division of Random House. New York, NY.
- Xavier, J. C., Brandt, A., Ropert-Coudert, Y., Badhe, R., Gutt, J., Havermans, C., et al. (2016). Future challenges in Southern Ocean ecology research. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 3:94. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2016.00094
- Xenopoulos, M. A., Downing, J. A., Kumar, M. D., Menden-Deuer, S., and Voss, M. (2017). Headwaters to oceans: ecological and biogeochemical contrasts across the aquatic continuum. *Limnol. Oceanogr.* 62, S3–S14. doi: 10.1002/lno.10721
- Young, T. P., and Schwartz, M. W. (2019). The decade on ecosystem restoration is an impetus to get it right. *Conserv. Sci. Pract.* 1:e145. doi: 10.1111/csp2.145

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2020 Borja, Andersen, Arvanitidis, Basset, Buhl-Mortensen, Carvalho, Dafforn, Devlin, Escobar-Briones, Grenz, Harder, Katsanevakis, Liu, Metaxas, Morán, Newton, Piroddi, Pochon, Queirós, Snelgrove, Solidoro, St. John and Teixeira. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.