



Summary

Indigenising the blue economy in Aotearoa New Zealand

Our paper *Indigenising the blue economy in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Rout et al 2024) examines the significant role Māori play in the marine sector and the potential benefits of transitioning towards a sustainable blue economy. It highlights the constraints Māori face in transitioning to a blue economy. These constraints include existing laws and systems, particularly the Quota Management System (QMS), and treaty settlement legislation relating to fisheries. To address these constraints the paper proposes a Māori-aligned approach that fits with the ethos of te ao Māori.

A Māori-driven approach to the marine economy is needed

The paper opens with a brief history of the Treaty of Waitangi and the QMS. It then introduces the blue economy concept. Defined by objectives of economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity, the blue economy is criticised for its capitalist underpinnings that may marginalise Indigenous perspectives. The authors argue for a Māori-driven approach that respects and incorporates te ao Māori, ensuring Māori governance and philosophical influence. Te ao Māori is presented as a holistic and relational view of reality, integral to understanding a Māori approach to the marine economy. This approach emphasises a balanced consideration of natural, human, social, and cultural capital.

Three constraints to transition to an Indigenised blue economy

Using fisheries as an example, the paper describes three ways in which Treaty settlement processes and the QMS constrain the transition to a blue economy from a Māori-driven perspective: centralisation, fragmentation, and commodification.

Centralisation via the QMS has resulted in a centralised quota market, favouring large quota holders and detaching actual fishing activity from these revenues. It has led to a disconnection from traditional fishing practices and a focus on economic returns over community development.

Fragmentation, or the division of Māori fishing rights, creates inefficiencies and conflicts between commercial and customary fishing rights, while also weakening Māori influence in national fisheries policy.

Commodification, defined as a focus on low-cost, high-volume fisheries, limits the potential for value growth and has led to the dominance by a small number of owners in the market for quota. This dominance has suppressed innovation and the entry of smaller operators in the Māori marine economy.

A coordinated approach is needed to overcome constraints

The paper concludes by advocating for shifts from: centralisation to balance, fragmentation to integration, and commodification to innovation.

These shifts involve:

- supporting small-scale fishing operations
- facilitating the trading of settlement quota
- creating joint ventures
- emphasising te ao Māori in operations and marketing.

The authors propose a coordinated approach to overcome the current constraints and transition effectively to a sustainable, Māori-influenced blue economy.

Academic
Publication

Rout M, Reid J, Mika J, Whitehead J, Gillies A, Wiremu F, McLellan G & Ruha C (2024). [Indigenising the blue economy in Aotearoa New Zealand](#). *Marine Policy* 161, 1-7.