



ONE
OCEAN
HUB

ONE OCEAN HUB

Closing Conference Report

20-24 MAY 2024

Lagoon beach hotel, Cape Town

The One Ocean Hub is an international programme of research for sustainable development, working to promote fair and inclusive decision-making for a healthy ocean whereby people and planet flourish. The Hub is funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), a key component in delivering the UK AID strategy to tackle the Sustainable Development Goals. It addresses the challenges and opportunities of South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, and shares knowledge at regional (South Pacific, Africa, and Caribbean) and international levels. The One Ocean Hub is led by the University of Strathclyde, UK and gathers 126 researchers, 21 research partners, and 19 project partner organisations, including United Nations bodies and programmes under one umbrella.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I – BACKGROUND CONTEXT.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
KEY DRIVERS FOR OOH RESEARCH AND PRACTICE.....	1
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT.....	2
VISION FOR THE CLOSING CONFERENCE.....	2
OBJECTIVES OF THE CLOSING CONFERENCE.....	3
REFLECTING ON HOW FAR THE HUB HAS COME.....	3
 PART II – CLOSING CONFERENCE AGENDA AND HIGHLIGHTS.....	 5
CLOSING CONFERENCE DESIGN.....	5
Day 1: Reconnecting and remembering as hub researchers.....	5
Day 2: Sharing and acknowledging achievements and challenges as hub researchers.....	5
Day 3: An immersive day allowing for an embodied experience of arts-and theatre-based ocean work and that of the Hub.	5
Day 4: Learning how and to what extent working with the Hub has been meaningful and useful/ transformative for our partners.....	6
Day 5: Developing new and future research agendas with co-researchers.....	6
Highlights From Events at the Closing Conference.....	6
Key highlights from researchers included:	10
USING DIALOGUE TO UNPACK TRANSFORMATIONAL AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY ASPECTS OF ONE OCEAN HUB WORK.....	13
Conditions that were there (non-negotiables):.....	14
ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS: NATURE AND QUALITY OF PARTNERING THAT WAS EVIDENCED.....	16
Quality of dialogue amongst researchers and co-researchers.....	18
Challenges and questions that emerged from the dialogue:	18
3D MAPPING EXERCISE: ‘GATHERING’ NARRATIVES AND REFLECTIONS ON WHAT HAS BEEN AND TRANSITIONING INTO HUB 2.0	20
CONCLUDING THE CLOSING CONFERENCE	22

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: OOH researchers reflecting on the Hub’s collective journey at the start of the conference	7
FIGURE 2: OOH researchers during the oral history exercise detailing the history of the Hub, as well as key opportunities and challenges that emerged over the years	8
FIGURE 3: Building a wall of connections reflecting Hub participants at the conference.....	9
FIGURE 4: OOH researchers during the ‘beach walk’ exercise	10
FIGURE 5: Wall map seaweed tree displaying reflections captured from researchers.....	11
FIGURE 6: OOH Knowledge Exchange Fellow, Milica Prokic, creating an artistic representation of the “mood” in the conference venue during the ongoing dialogues that took place	12
FIGURE 7: Four phases of conversation diagram informing discussions about dialogue.....	13
FIGURE 8: Word Cloud depicting OOH researchers’ reflections on conditions that made OOH research and impact possible.....	14
FIGURE 9: Word Cloud depicting OOH researchers; reflections on conditions required for future research and impact	15
FIGURE 10: Showcasing of OOH arts-based and other research outputs at Bertha House	17
FIGURE 11: An illustration of conceptual analogies that were used to facilitate dialogue-based exercises.....	18
FIGURE 12: An illustration of dialogue as a form of relational engagement	19
FIGURE 13: Hub researchers participating in the dialogue circles	20
FIGURE 14: 3D model of current reality in relation to oceans governance and transition pathways to desired futures.....	21
FIGURE 15: 3D model of current reality in relation to oceans governance and transition pathways to desired future	22

PART I – BACKGROUND CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

One Ocean Hub (OOH) aims to transform our response to the urgent challenges facing our ocean, and to influence decisions and practices that shape the future of the ocean by promoting sustainability and justice. Our research seeks to bridge current disconnections in law, science and policy and integrate governance frameworks to balance multiple ocean uses. We strive to support and capacitate local and indigenous communities – especially women and children – most reliant upon the oceans for livelihoods, culture and identity, and we promote decisions based on plural values and knowledge systems. Our ambition from the outset has been to “contribute towards a shift in the global research landscape as evidence for the resolution of complex, societal challenges through equitable, transdisciplinary research”. Throughout implementation of the programme, we have brought together coastal people, researchers, decision-makers, civil society, and international organisations to value, and learn from, different forms of knowledge and voices.

KEY DRIVERS FOR OOH RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

One of the key reasons why the OOH sought to bring forth transformative approaches to ocean governance and decision-making is the overwhelming evidence that ocean health is under threat from climate change and rampant blue growth strategies that are not only often governed through strategies that usually trade-off environmental and social dimensions, but also progressively exclude marginalised people in decision-making processes in different parts of the world. The need to transform this status quo in ocean governance was one of the key motivations bringing together all OOH partners from the very beginning.

Another strong pillar of OOH research over the past five years has been the strong relationships that Hub researchers have with communities and partners in the project. Many of these relations pre-dated the OOH project itself, and when the OOH project commenced in 2019, recognising those relationships and trust building became essential ingredients for successfully carrying out transdisciplinary research for development.

“We have learnt, based on prior research collaborations, that solidarity and friendship are essential elements for transformative transdisciplinary research.... We have also learnt that trust, partnerships, relationships take time and rushing in or not giving it time can result in negative and unintended consequences, such as increasing the disciplinary divide, missing key partners, and losing strategic focus.” (How to enable transformative science during the International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, Elisa Morgera et al March 2021).

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

From 20 - 24 May 2024, the One Ocean Hub held its closing conference in Cape Town, South Africa. Although the One Ocean Hub project had its inception in 2019, the story of the OOH began before that – when researchers and practitioners with ocean-related interests and expertise (including lawyers, scientists, social scientists, geographers, artists – many of which also worked with community, civil society and government partners in different parts of the world) convened in 2018 to develop what commenced as the OOH project in 2019. In the developmental stages of the OOH, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to ocean research involving multiple partners from different parts of the world (but with a specific focus on African, south Pacific and Caribbean contexts) drove the research for development agenda.

Over the years, the OOH transcended from its initial objective of a research for development project, culminating in a rich network that responds to multi-faceted ocean governance related topics, translating research/science into policy and making contributions to other implementation practices through research, innovation, co-production and fair partnerships.

Even though 2024 marks the end of a five-year GCRF-UKRI funded project, the closing conference presented an opportunity to not only just bring the project to a close, but to celebrate five years of a remarkable transdisciplinary research journey that has paved a way for ongoing research for development for the future.

This report contains collective reflections from the core OOH team on the journey of the five days, and what was revealed about different dimensions of the work of the Hub, including with partners and co-researchers. It is also intended to help inform the legacy work of the Hub.

VISION FOR THE CLOSING CONFERENCE

The primary goal of the five-day conference was to create space to reflect on learning from implementation of Hub research - based on the initial vision as a transformative research programme for sustainable development. The agenda was also designed to create a platform to document evidence of impact and transformation from Hub research and activities, emerging from wider OOH network. This evidence was documented through dialogue, mapping, storytelling, reflections (collective and individual) and future modelling.

The vision for the closing conference gathering was to facilitate individual and collective reflections on:

- ***what the OOH set out to do at the start of the project (i.e., in 2019)***, and to see how far the Hub had come by 2024 in shifting away from past patterns towards new ideas and ways of working.

- **individual narratives**, as well as reflecting on the Hub as “more than the sum of its parts”.
- **what was ‘hard’** in the duration of the project and what could be learnt from those experiences.
- **the plurality and diversity of experiences** (irrespective of how far along various Hub researchers were in their research process) and relations within/across disciplines, countries, and scales (local/international; past/present/future)

The OOH team also designed activities around envisioning the future, both in terms of ocean governance research, and broader lessons and learning relating to transformational research for different areas of sustainable development through fair and equitable partnerships applicable in and across different contexts/sectors/scales.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CLOSING CONFERENCE

The specific objectives of the closing conference were to:

- Celebrate all that had been achieved over the last five years
- Maximise learning from Hub implementation (Hub Code of Practice, transdisciplinarity, transformation) and validate Hub integration/synthesis outputs
- Share and build a vision for future OOH (legacy activities, funding and research, as well as further contributions on transdisciplinarity in the United Nations Decade for Ocean Science 2021-2030 (UN Ocean Decade) through our implementation partnership mandate with the UN Ocean Decade from 2023-2028.

REFLECTING ON HOW FAR THE HUB HAS COME

The beginnings of the OOH project (between 2018 and 2019) were met with collaborative appetite among different researchers and practitioners who sought to embark on the ambitious and groundbreaking collective journey - embarking in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research for development project of an international scale. At the start, the project commenced with five work packages representing the expertise of researchers and partners in the project:

- Work package 0
- Work package 1 – Legal research
- Work package 2 – Arts-based approaches/Empatheatre
- Work package 3 – Fisheries
- Work package 4 – Deep-sea research/biodiscovery
- Work package 5 – Critical perspectives of the Blue Economy

The OOH beginnings also had a strong ethos of equitable and fair partnerships enshrined in OOH's Code of Practice. This meant that grounded and bottom-up approaches for identifying key foci for all the work packages were always at the forefront. There was a strong drive to ensure that the research activities involved partners at the grassroots, from inception to execution and beyond, to ensure that activities and outcomes respond to local needs and capacitate not only local communities, but also civil society agents, governments, private sector and other actors all the way up to the international level, including academic researchers themselves. Another key aim was to ensure the inclusion of women in all facets of the project, as well as within the various project teams in the project.

Although the closing conference provided an opportunity to reflect on the successes and impact derived from the project over the past five years, it is important to note that an ambitious undertaking of such an international scale presented significant challenges in management. In fact, the "messiness" of embarking on an interdisciplinary / transdisciplinary project of this scale became evident in the first few workshops that took place in the early stages of the project where project partners began seeking to find "one voice" to define the project vision and objectives. For instance, in bringing together natural sciences, legal research, social sciences, arts-based approaches, and other disciplines and approaches, it was clear that conducting inter- and transdisciplinary research for development at an international scale would require a significant amount of dialogue, time, empathy and iterative approaches to reach a stage where there was sufficient alignment in terms of vision and goals among different partners.

In addition, there were some curveballs that presented unexpected challenges not long after the OOH project commenced that presented further challenges. These included the COVID-19 pandemic at the start of 2020 that made it difficult to conduct research activities on the ground; as well as the UK Government ODA budget cuts which were imposed in 2021. These events, especially the latter, meant that the scope of the project had to be scaled back, although the scale of ambition remained high.

Therefore, reflecting back at all the different events and stages of the OOH and how far the Hub had come at the closing conference was met with mixed ideas, thoughts and emotions conveyed by participants - ranging from enthusiasm, pride and fulfilment to feelings of exhaustion, being overwhelmed, but also, hope for the future, particularly invested in early career researchers who have been exposed to inter- and transdisciplinary approaches from early in their professional development.

PART II – CLOSING CONFERENCE AGENDA AND HIGHLIGHTS

CLOSING CONFERENCE DESIGN

A co-design task team to co-develop the conference programme was established, drawing in individuals from across the Hub network in the different countries involved in OOH activities.

The initial design was the outcome of several conversations within the expanded core design team, the smaller group as well as 1:1 conversations with Hub researchers and co-researchers who were taking responsibility for different sessions during the course of the 5 days. It was also informed by reflections from Hub researchers who attended the UN Oceans Decade conference in Barcelona.

The broad journey of the five days - to achieve the vision and objectives - was as follows:

Day 1: *Reconnecting and remembering as hub researchers*

- Allowing OOH researchers to reconnect in person
- Mapping a historical timeline of the collective journey
- Surfacing individual journeys
- Reflecting on “friendships” emerging from the OOH
- Using the Hub as a case study to enable honest reflections on working together

Day 2: *Sharing and acknowledging achievements and challenges as hub researchers*

- Sharing achievements by country/region focussing on research outcomes and impact trajectories
- Conversations about the impact of positionality in contributions to promoting/developing the growth of the OOH and its reach
- Exploring how and to what extent the Hub has become “more than the sum of its parts”;
- Envisioning the future

Day 3: *An immersive day allowing for an embodied experience of arts-and theatre-based ocean work and that of the Hub*

- Exhibition of ocean art: Nothing Comes Without Its World. Viewings of various film projects produced by One Ocean Hub researchers, co-researchers and collaborators.

- A research 'fair', offering the display and the opportunity for the audience to engage with various artwork produced by the Hub researchers, co-researchers and collaborators, to celebrate the Hub's awe-inspiring work and experience its innovations: an immersion with co-researchers in a local innovation hub in Cape Town.

Research 'Fair' centred around sharing:

- 'Artefacts' that connect to research to spark discussion
- Posters/key policy briefs
- Display photos/images (either printed or digitally)
- Film/documentary/animation outputs

Day 4: Learning how and to what extent working with the Hub has been meaningful and useful/transformative for our partners

- Reflection on transformation from the perspective of co-researchers
- How can we make more/longer-term impact?

Day 5: Developing new and future research agendas with co-researchers

- Co-researchers leading setting of new research agendas
- Roundtable on future research agendas
- Discussions about the Hub's contribution to the UN Ocean Decade
- Continuing dialogue post conference

Highlights From Events at the Closing Conference

One of the recurring themes of the OOH closing conference was that the Hub had become 'more than the sum of its parts'. This was evidenced by the individual and collective reflections that emerged from the five-day journey of the conference. A summary of key highlights from the week follows:

The first two days of the conference were reserved for Hub researchers to provide an opportunity to reconnect, reflect and take stock of the five years activities and outcomes. When planning the closing conference, the co-design team held a strong intention to build the relational dimension in the first two days of the conference – building on the strong social tissue that had already been built among the vast network of Hub's international researchers, co-researchers and collaborators – to create a container for the five days ahead. To that end, we opened the conference on the roof terrace with an embodied practice, co-led by Hub early career researchers from Ghana, Namibia and South Africa. Hub collaborators were asked first to assemble according to their geographical/regional bases, and to then to assemble according to the year in which they joined the OOH; and to share perspectives from those positions.

During this exercise, there was rich storytelling from Hub participants where various researchers were invited to share key highlights that they could remember from the years in which they joined the Hub. It was also clear that there was an equal spread of researchers from different countries and at different career stages, that joined at different stages, from 2019 and up to 2023. Some collaborators joined the Hub during the phase when work packages were strongly used to distinguish between the different strands of Hub work, while others joined the Hub in the latter periods when the initial work packages became amalgamated, since the strengthening of the inter- and transdisciplinary nature of the project over the years saw multiple collaborators straddling multiple work packages. Another key highlight from this exercise was the strong presence of early career researchers from the different countries across the different years represented.



Figure 1: OOH researchers reflecting on the Hub’s collective journey at the start of the conference

After the first reflection exercise was completed, Hub researchers were then invited over tea to connect with researchers they hadn’t yet met, and to reconnect with those they already knew. This was intended to set a tone of collegiality and solidarity from the start. It gave individual researchers a chance to physically position themselves in relation to one another, and to ‘see’ the whole Hub ‘system’. The exercise made visible the quality and depth of relationships in the Hub. It also made visible some of the underlying assumptions people held about the Hub and their role in it.

This internal focus on the Hub as a ‘system’ - and its evolution - was deepened by an exercise in oral history: mapping the vision and the journey of the Hub (at different levels) since inception. This exercise flowed well from the opening exercise and involved small groups capturing their experience of the evolution of the Hub on large sheets, which remained in the room for the 5 days. This exercise divided Hub researchers in country-based teams, and they were asked to reflect on opportunities and challenges faced throughout the Hub journey.



Figure 2: OOH researchers during the oral history exercise detailing the history of the Hub, as well as key opportunities and challenges that emerged over the years

There were cross-cutting highlights that emerged from this exercise that revealed similar events and issues in the different country contexts across the years. Most of the opportunities emanating from Hub research over the years pointed to the impact that the Hub has had in reaching partners at community, government and at international scales. Some of the key challenges that were raised over the five years included the budget cuts that took place in 2021 that saw certain planned research activities cut from the original research agenda, which for some, left significant gaps in their holistic suite of activities that would derive impact from their activities.

At the start of the conference, another key activity was the creation of a OOH researcher wall with Polaroid pictures of Hub researchers present at the conference. The wall served as a useful reminder of the people that have made up the fabric of the Hub over the past five years.



Figure 3: Building a wall of connections reflecting Hub participants at the conference

Personal reflections from researchers also provided an important element of learning at the individual and collective levels. There was consensus that reflecting on the relations that evolved and emerged gave substance to the insight that 'solidarity and friendship are essential elements for transformative transdisciplinary research'. This gave the group a starting point, and the necessary narrative material to lay out the story of the Hub. That afternoon, participants undertook beach dialogue walks in small groups, sharing some of the most important moments of friendship that each had experienced over the course of the Hub (the hardest and most inspiring social engagements) and reflecting on what they had learned together about navigating difference.



Figure 4: OOH researchers during the 'beach walk' exercise

Key highlights from researchers included:

- One PhD researcher reflected that the Hub created a unique environment that helped to overcome traditional hierarchies, with senior colleagues more open to listening and collaborating with early career researchers
- The Hub was an incredible networking tool for building friendship and future collaboration - more likely to work with people with whom we are friends, those you laugh and talk beyond work
- There was strong consensus over the need for sufficient time and space to get to know others in the early stages of the project, less opportunity to misinterpret communications or critique down the line. Slowing down is vital to build relationships leading to more impactful work
- Reflections on different types of cultural differences, within and between countries, but also between those of different disciplinary backgrounds. Learning to navigate this was essential in being able to collaborate successfully

It is also important to highlight that the collaborative and reflective exercises within the closing conference were intended to create the conditions for using the Hub as case study and having the necessary honest reflections about the challenges of working together as a group of Hub researchers

across disciplinary, cultural, geographic and other boundaries. The co-design team had agreed that the best format for such a conversation was as a dialogue circle, which allowed for more informal, connected conversation. This was convened by a small group, who initiated the conversation and invited others to participate. From the point of view of transformative methodology, dialogic processes allow a sharing of lived experience, for reflective encounter with perspectives other than your own, and the possibility of shifts of perception. It is also intended to allow the possibility for individuals to take up agency, and for new insights to emerge (see Figure 6 below). Researchers were asked to capture their reflections after their walk-in triads, and to place these on a wall map of a seaweed tree. These provided the stimulus for the opening of the conversation in the circle, and topics were brought into the circle for deliberation.



Figure 5: Wall map seaweed tree displaying reflections captured from researchers

The conversation in the dialogue circle revealed the challenges of working across geographic and cultural boundaries, particularly in relation to the 'global North', with research teams in the 'global South', and the project management and other structures necessary for ensuring accountability. This theme persisted in the second dialogue circle, in relation to human rights frameworks, and challenges regarding a focus on gender, a core commitment of the Hub. It was clear from the nature of the conversation, that while some of the Hub researchers had experienced profound personal transformation through their work in the Hub, which in turn had transformed their research practices and produced global impact, others continued to name inequitable structures and financial challenges as reasons for not having sufficiently progressed the transformative mandate of the Hub.

Visual scribing in watercolour using shades of blue of different depths and opacities was employed to follow and reflect the flow of the conversation about the core themes and methods used in the Hub, and to capture conversation about challenges and 'hard' topics.



Figure 6: OOH Knowledge Exchange Fellow, Milica Prokic, creating an artistic representation of the "mood" in the conference venue during the ongoing dialogues that took place

One of the 'hard' topics emanating from discussions in the first two days was also about the 'messiness' of the nature of transdisciplinary research. Some researchers in the room reflected on how the messiness was at times difficult and uncomfortable to navigate, while others raised that the 'messiness' is something that they learnt to embrace, as a core part of undertaking such large-scale transdisciplinary research approaches. As such, themes such as sensitivity, holding space and taking time became pivotal - the conversation about challenges occupied a significant portion of the session. This was reflected both in the act, and in the result of scribing, as the flow of the conversation determined the flow of water and inks in the image above. The resulting piece reflects these themes

USING DIALOGUE TO UNPACK TRANSFORMATIONAL AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY ASPECTS OF ONE OCEAN HUB WORK

Throughout the closing conference, there was a significant focus on 'dialogue' and the significant role that it has played in shaping the fabric of the Hub's impact. Some of the key themes that emerged from spotlighting the role of dialogue informed the structure of four smaller group conversations. The purpose was to further explore issues related to existing conditions for the transformative, transdisciplinary work of the Hub, and the taking up of personal and collective agency and creating conditions through the research itself. This was intended to enable an exploration of the extent to which the Hub had become more than the sum of its parts.

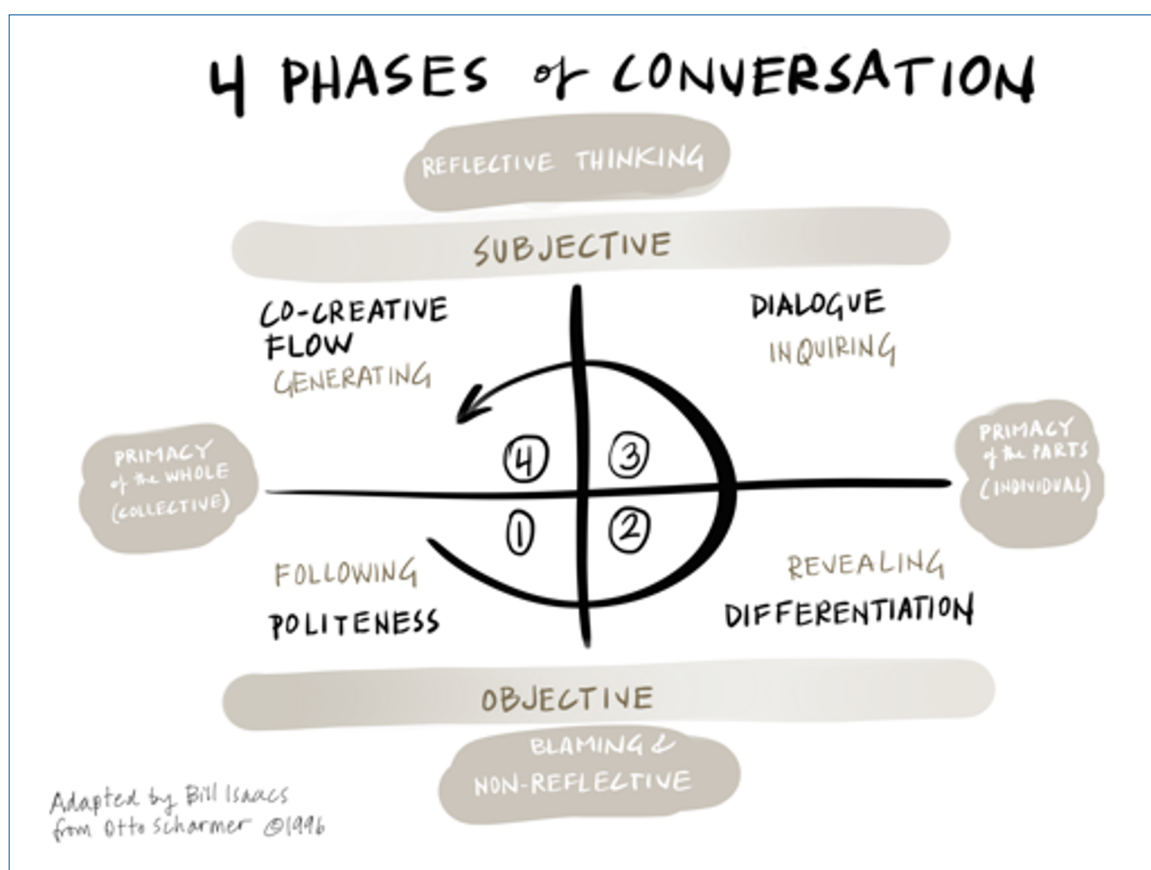


Figure 7: Four phases of conversation diagram informing discussions about dialogue

Centring on the significance of dialogue, there was a reflection on the conditions that made it possible for the Hub to achieve impact and come as far as it has. These conditions are listed below.

Conditions that were there (non-negotiables):

- a. Focus on intractability of sustainable development challenges (messiness that is real life) - funder's parameter
- b. Fair partnerships - funder's parameter
- c. Gender equality - funder's parameter
- d. Flexibility of research design/outcomes - funder explicitly allowed
- e. Iterative learning - funder's parameter
- f. 5 years' duration
- g. Being brought together with non-like-minded researchers
- h. Initial most ambitious strategic planning, never attempted at such scale and level of ambition (even if many things didn't happen due to budget cuts and, in hindsight, also because we didn't have the capacity to do them all)
- i. Pre-existing relationships of trust



Figure 8: Word Cloud depicting OOH researchers' reflections on conditions that made OOH research and impact possible

During the conference, Hub researchers were also asked to reflect on conditions that they created in order to achieve outcomes and impact. A summary of those conditions is listed below:

- j. Binding and co-developed Code of Practice, drawing on earlier work by some Hub researchers and “what went wrong” in previous partnerships and inception of the hub
- k. Iterative research design (WPO)

- l. Responsiveness to community needs and opportunity to shift priorities of outputs (for some, but not everyone in the Hub; also many didn't budget/plan for reactive activities)
- m. "Knowledge entrepreneurs"/ bumblebees (Hub researchers that helped connect other Hub researchers with one another)
- n. ECR network
- o. "Ever presence of the Hub" (meetings, webinars, Living Aulas) allowed us to get to know one another, discover each other's constraints and common agendas
- p. Request for inputs into UN processes provided structures for dialogue and connection and discovery of new areas of inter-disciplinary work (but there hasn't been enough time to make the most of these interactions)
- q. Opportunities to "step back and then step back in" at a later stage
- r. Opportunities for self-discovery and transforming oneself
- s. International recognition of our contributions
- t. Exposure to UN fora allowed to recognise differences in narratives
- u. For some first-ever contact with diverse worldviews and knowledge systems
- v. Perceptions/understandings of dominant approaches within and across disciplines
- w. New networks and capacities allowed new positioning of one's own work
- x. Openness to explore Indigenous ways in own work
- y. Call in instead of call out - this is how we now manage anger re. injustices and have had better/more impact as a result



Figure 9: Word Cloud depicting OOH researchers; reflections on conditions required for future research and impact

In summary, key emerging insights relating to transdisciplinarity and impact that emerged from various discussions in the conference included:

- Underlining why it is essential to understand that collaboration relies on dealing with people on an interpersonal level, and that individuals are not defined by their disciplines.
- Highlighting transdisciplinary working, learning and doing is extremely challenging – in some ways needs to operate in “post-disciplinary” ways, underpinned by single discipline-based expertise to allow multidisciplinary outcomes.
- Acknowledging the “messiness” of transdisciplinary work - where some researchers indicated that the “messiness” made them uncomfortable whereas, for others, it was part of reality. The Hub space has been intentional in recognising this as part of the complexity all researchers in the Hub had to navigate. In other words, transdisciplinary working can be both difficult and uncomfortable - but those uncomfortable spaces can create rich opportunities for genuine learning and progress, as exemplified by certain OOH research outcomes.
- Cautioning against the danger of not reflecting on own boundaries of expertise. It was noted that there was a need for individuals to remember that they could potentially overreach at times. This underlined the need to be respectful of everybody’s expertise
- Reflecting on difficult conversations that were part of the process – this is where people learn the most and is the change that was sometimes need.
- Acknowledging how some deep-sea ecologists felt that their voices hadn’t been heard and have really struggled to find space within the Hub. Some felt there was too much of a focus on social science issues, leading to some feeling disengaged and losing researchers along the way.
- Challenges relating to university administration processes being slow and cumbersome – many delays experienced because of this.
- Recognising the importance of the individual - rather than representing a ‘discipline’ or institution, it’s the individual richness that we all bring.

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS: NATURE AND QUALITY OF PARTNERING THAT WAS EVIDENCED

From Day 3 onwards, the conference expanded to include participants drawn from community, government and international partners.

Engaging project partners commenced at Bertha House (in Mowbray, Cape Town) on Day 3 of the conference with a visit to the exhibition of ocean art *Nothing Comes Without Its World*, informed by the work of anthropologist, Deborah Bird Rose which set an inspiring invitation and context for co-researchers and partners who joined from Day 3. Immersion in the tangible 'artefacts' that had emerged from the broad research and engagement of the Hub, allowed high quality engagement amongst co-researchers and partners. The quality of relationships and collaborations that had been built over the years was evident. Some of the work that was showcased on Day 3 included the various short films and documentaries produced by OOH researchers in South Africa, Namibia and Ghana (i.e., *Hurinin*, *Mapping for Justice*, *Umkhosi Wenala*, *Cocooned in Harmony*); while physical displays included posters from Hub research (i.e., research on plastics pollution in Ghana), as well as augmented virtual reality work produced in Namibia. All these and other OOH work showcased at Bertha House provided a visual experience of the collective evidence of the Hub approach and impact in different parts of the world.



Figure 10: Showcasing of OOH arts-based and other research outputs at Bertha House

Insights that emerged from the immersive engagements and showcasing on Day 3 were shared in small groups and set the tone for the collaborative work of the final two days of the conference.

On Day 4, Participants were introduced to the work of the Presencing Institute and methodologies for awareness-based systems change. These methodologies were introduced in order to contribute

to deliberations around what is required to take multiple stakeholders on journeys of transformation towards justice as they address intractable challenges (figure 2 below). This requires working 'beneath the iceberg' and not at the level of symptoms (see Figure 12 below). Dialogue was introduced as a vehicle and core methodology for navigating different perspectives and worldviews (see figure 6 below) and for enabling systems (however conceived) to go on a transformative, rather than transactional, path.

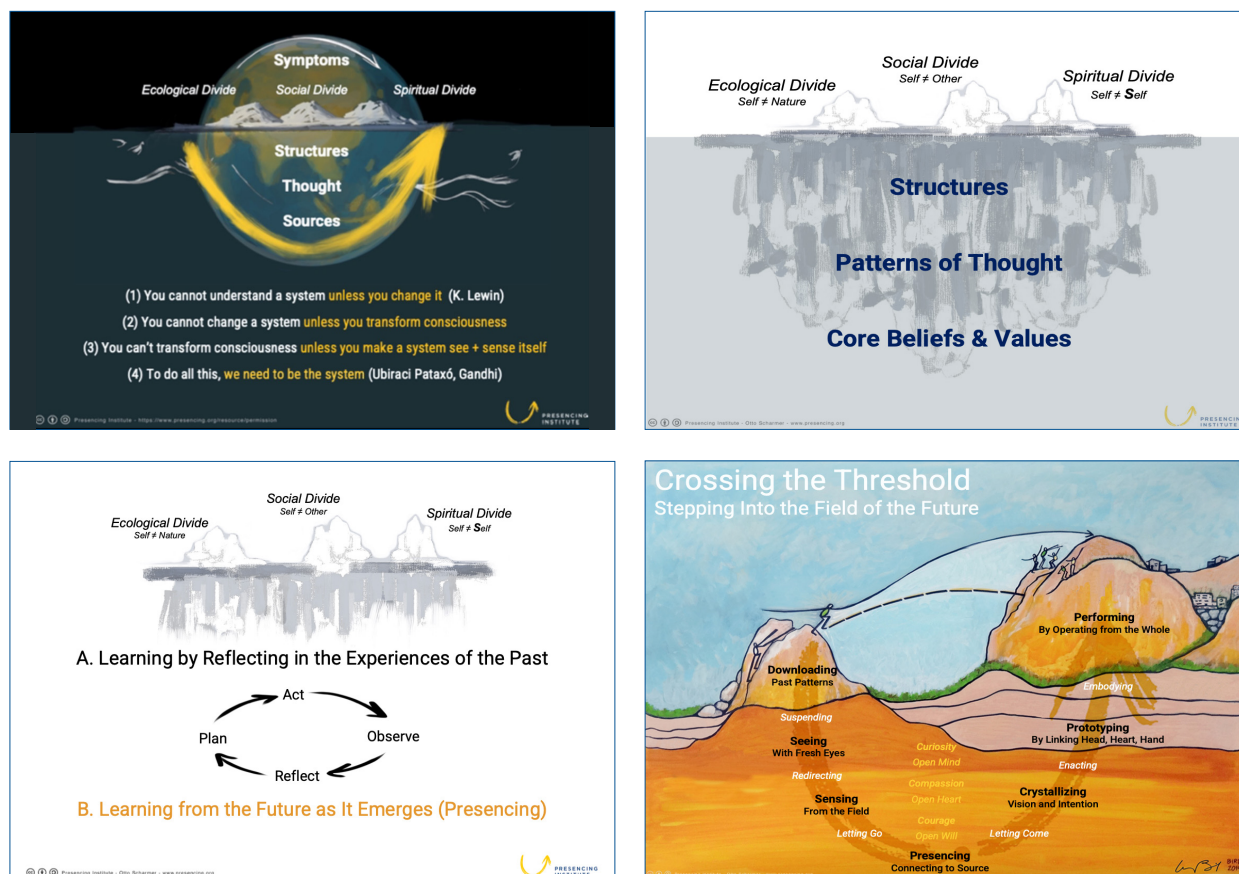


Figure 11: An illustration of conceptual analogies that were used to facilitate dialogue-based exercises

Researchers and co-researchers then worked in country groups to explore the topic: The value of Hub research and methods to communities and NGOs.

Quality of dialogue amongst researchers and co-researchers

Co-researchers were invited into a dialogue circle, led by other Hub researchers. Dialogue was initiated around the following question: How far have we come in terms of shifting away from past patterns towards new ways of working?

Challenges and questions that emerged from the dialogue:

- What are the entry points to effect transformations to justice?
- What is the role of human rights in dismantling injustice?

- What is the role of 'insiders' (working 'inside the system') and those working 'outside' to effect transformations to justice? What are roles and complementary roles?
- What is the language we can use other than the language of human rights?
- How do we find language to name violations and hold people accountable?
- How do we achieve transformation and become a force for change?
- Where does transformation come from: what initiates transformation?
- How can we transform the way we manage ourselves?
- How do we address asymmetries in power?
- How do we continue to engage with cultural heritage, different knowledge systems and the arts?
- How can we grow common agendas with communities?
- What are the multiple threads that can be pulled?

Essentially, the exploration was around the nature of the collaboration necessary to bridge some of the disconnects that have been identified, and that the work of the Hub was intended to bridge. These include 'disconnected norms (and legal frameworks); disconnected science (and limited holistic understanding), which contributes to poor science-policy interface and lack of consideration of the role of different knowledge systems; disconnected dialogue across sectors and communities.

These disconnects are also relational disconnects - how do we strengthen connection at all levels ('interconnections are the currency of change'). We introduced dialogue as a form of relational engagement that moves away from adversarial approaches to achieving justice and resolving the disconnects (Figure 13 below). This generated a challenging conversation around the language of human rights and how it can polarize, and pointed to the need for bridging legal (and human rights) frameworks and the quality of intervention this requires in order to navigate a transformative path. If we fail to understand and find better questions to address the disconnects, we can unwittingly contribute to the intractability of the problems we're seeking to address.

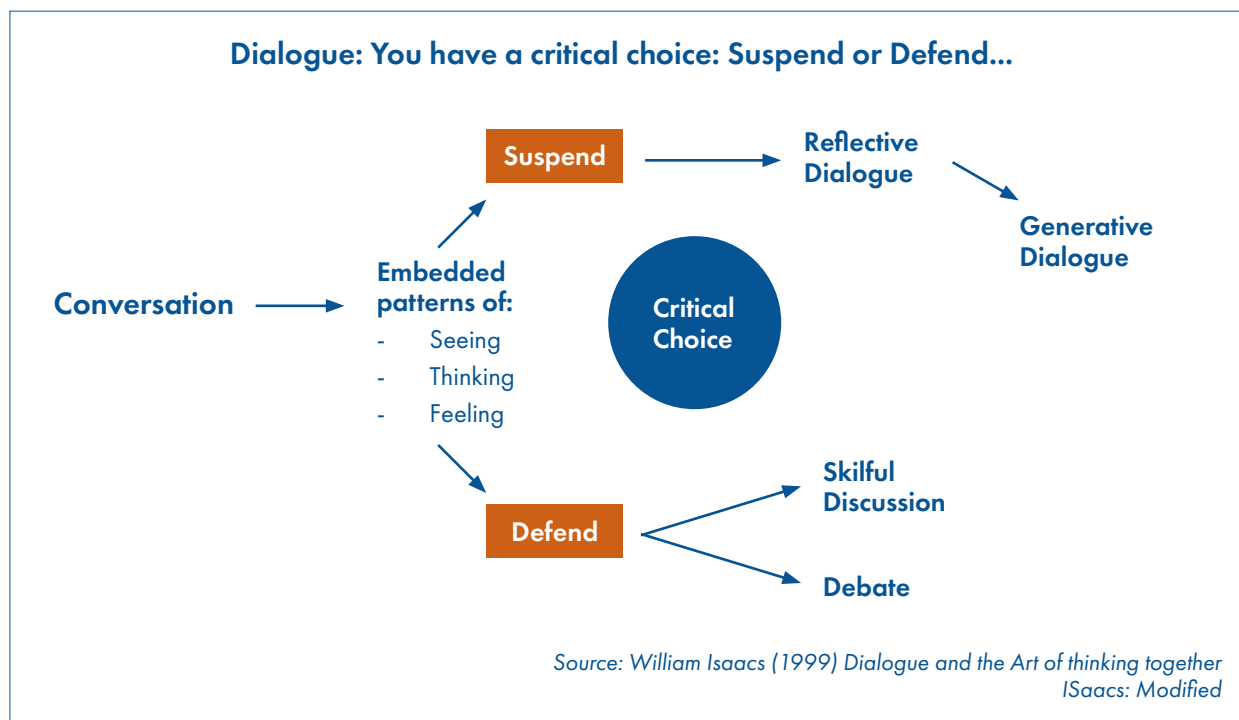


Figure 12: An illustration of dialogue as a form of relational engagement



Figure 13: Hub researchers participating in the dialogue circles

Researchers and co-researchers revealed the strength of their relationship, by their readiness to share their vulnerabilities and to make their assumptions visible (suspending rather than defending). It was a testament to the trust that has been built over time, and the quality of the relational field over the 5 days, that participants were able to share honestly and openly and generate the challenges and questions listed above.

3D MAPPING EXERCISE: 'GATHERING' NARRATIVES AND REFLECTIONS ON WHAT HAS BEEN AND TRANSITIONING INTO HUB 2.0

By the final day the closing conference, of the exploration of key areas of research and impact; and experience of truthful, honest conversation over the previous 4 days, allowed participants to engage in a reflexive futuring exercise giving life to the legacy work. The legacy work relates to Hub activities beyond the life of the first iteration of the project – ending in June 2024. The 3D modelling exercise was used to provide an opportunity to reflect on how the Hub work collectively enabled a shift/transformation to the status quos (i.e., policy, societal, decision-making related, etc.) and the degrees to which that change took place. As part of the design, it was agreed that bringing together an 'ecology of knowledges' would require some form of creative, experiential, embodied work to facilitate the necessary knowledge co-creation, with work being informed by the legacy themes that had emerged.

This required weaving research understandings and multiple, various and diverse lived experiences of the Hub into a 3D model of current reality relating to ocean governance and the work of the Hub. This was undertaken in groups, using different materials (including marine debris collected from the beach and ocean – shells, coral, sponges, seaweeds and plastics etc.) and conversing while creating. Each group then reflected on the models they had created in order to create a second model, which reflected their desired future. Each group shared what had shifted from model 1 to model 2, and what this suggested for transition pathways and legacy work.

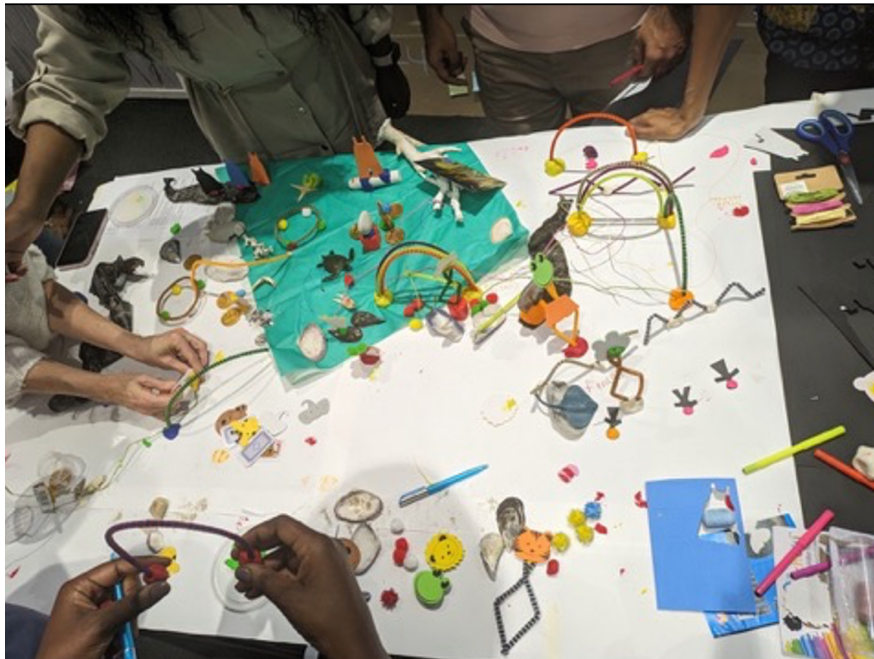


Figure 14: 3D model of current reality in relation to oceans governance and transition pathways to desired futures

3D Modelling is a physical process that brings multiple perspectives to understanding how a situation or system might evolve. Participants create a sculpture that represents their current situation and the emerging possibilities of their work and life. The process prompts questions from four vantage points, allowing for 360-degree seeing and sensing of an emerging future. The power of the practice lies in participants relying on their hands, rather than on habitual ways of thinking, to discover new insights.

<https://www.u-school.org/3d-modelling>

There were some differences in approaches used by different groups to develop their 3D models of current and future scenarios. Discussions took place among different researchers in each group about similarities in prevailing conditions within their current realities, and those discussion informed the constructing of the models to represent present realities, after which future or envisaged realities were constructed to demonstrate what needs to change in current realities for transformed futures or realities to emerge. Below are samples of images from the exercise illustrating from different groups. The following set of images below depict how the modelling exercise was carried out in its different phases, providing an opportunity and dialogue to discuss what was there in the beginning, what has changed since beginning of OOH, and where some of the gaps still lay to enable a better future for all.



Figure 15: 3D model of current reality in relation to oceans governance and transition pathways to desired future

CONCLUDING THE CLOSING CONFERENCE

One of the final sessions at the closing conference was 'Harnessing the Decade: The Transdisciplinary Toolbox for Transformative Ocean Governance'. This session was dedicated towards:

- bringing everyone up to speed about the Hub's mandate as a UN Ocean Decade Implementing Partner from 2023 to 2028
- discussing and planning the next stage of the implementation partnership with the UN Ocean Decade which entails curating and packaging the Transdisciplinary (TD) Toolbox programme. The TD Toolbox entails creating collection of the transdisciplinary research projects and outputs of the Hub, alongside a guideline (or 'the user manual') for the TD researchers across the Decade of how to learn from the Hub's TD process.
- discussing the best ways in which the Hub research whose work informed the Toolbox can in turn harness the vast resource such that is the UN Ocean Decade network.

Hub researchers were invited to engage further with the TD Toolbox by putting forward suggestions for research methods and approaches developed through the Hub to form part of the Toolbox and the Decade.

At the session, various researchers indicated interest in participating in the Hub's legacy plans, including UN Ocean Decade contributions and activities, and shared their details and planned research activities and outputs:

Going forward, the Hub legacy coordinating team will be working towards delivering a programme that will be beneficial for the TD researchers across the Decade programme and beyond, with continuing partnerships from the OOH network. The further packaging of the Toolbox will thus steer further towards this two-directional approach that benefits both the Decade and the Hub researchers.

By the end of the closing conference, there was consensus that a new era of research collaboration awaits – one that carries forward the lessons and findings from work begun by the OOH and that paves a way forward for OOH legacy.

