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Concerning emotions: feminist contributions to reflexive marine governance

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ABSTRACT

This paper is *concerned* with emotions in marine governance. Governance studies are currently undergoing a ‘reflexive turn’ that focuses on the ‘how’ and ‘who’ of processes and practices of governing. It is also important to ask ‘why’ modes of governing emerge as they do. Drawing on feminist theories, this paper explores the ways that societal constructions of emotions, as well as the subjectivity of emotions, suffuse decision-making. Drawing in depth on the *concerns* driving the development of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1986), and the roles of Arvid Pardo and Elisabeth Mann Borgese in its development, this paper shows how a global-level governance outcome was simultaneously a deeply embodied one, where emotional work, structured by socialised norms, identities, values and opinions, shaped governance. It addresses *why* this governance tool emerged in a specific form, and how the factors shaping it persist in ocean management today. To conclude, the paper hints towards other examples that might benefit from the reflexive approach developed while also contending that recognising the role of emotions is a useful addition to studies of marine governance, leading to more care-full, reflexive, and resilient forms of governance in the face of uncertainty.

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Emotional introductions

The dark oceans were the womb of life: from the protecting oceans life emerged. We still bear in our bodies – in our blood, the salty bitterness of our tears – the marks of this remote past. Retracing the past, man, the present dominator of the emerged earth, is now returning to the ocean depths. His penetration of the deep could mark the beginning of the end for man, and indeed for life as we know it on this earth: it could also be a unique opportunity to lay solid foundations for a peaceful and increasingly prosperous future for all peoples . . . (Excerpt from Arvid Pardo’s speech, United Nations General Assembly, 1967, p. 2)

How do you, how do we, *feel* about the seas and oceans? What issues *concern* us? Such questions might seem irrelevant in the field of marine governance, which is oftentimes defined as a technocratic exercise rather than an embodied, *emotional* one. Yet recent work has demonstrated the importance of grappling with emotions in making better sense of environmental management, with the term ‘emocean’ being coined by McKinley et al. (2023) to this end (see also Clissold et al., 2022). The impacts of climate change, sea level rise, degraded oceans and biodiversity loss are issues that are viscerally and affectively *felt* – by research scientists, policy makers,

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charities and everyday citizens (Head, 2016). Additionally, emotions may be harnessed or used to meet certain desired end goals, acknowledging the fact that we are often *moved* to act by emotional messaging (Wood & Smith, 2004; Wright & Nyberg, 2012). In the quote at the start of this paper, it is hard to distinguish whether Arvid Pardo's speech was a reflection of his own inner love of the ocean or a performance to leverage political support. Its closely relatable, non-jargon-filled wording was undeniably emotional, however, and led in part to instigating the current constitution of the oceans – the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982). We explore Pardo's speech more in the sections to follow.

This paper posits that emotion should be taken seriously in marine governance and develops one means of achieving this: through reflexive practice. This means critically examining the ways emotion may be put to work in governance processes and decision-making. Indeed, studies of governance are undergoing a 'reflexive turn' that emphasises knowledge exchange and learning, critically reflecting on *how* governance is conceived, *who* is conceiving it and for *whom*. However, it is also important to ask 'why'. Why are regimes of marine governance developed as they are and by those who are driving them? How might emotion be relevant at an individual, subjective level? And, vitally, how might social norms and constructions shape emotions – their use, deployment, harnessing, and leveraging in governance work? To make sense of this, it is important to define emotion. For the purposes of this paper, we draw from Pile's (2010) tripartite understanding of affect-feeling-emotion. For Pile, *emotions* are representations of *feelings*, which are the felt outcome of *affects*, which in turn are the very visceral moments of being moved. In other words, the words 'happy' or 'sad' are emotions – they represent the feeling and the embodied affects of an individual. These representations of feeling then become tangible to others, so that emotional meaning can be shared and understood (Pile, 2010). However, emotion is also not outside of socially constructed norms: we may expect some moments, events, scenarios, places to be emotional. We may even harness emotion (e.g., nations may leverage emotions to achieve patriotism, see Closs Stephens, 2019). Likewise, we may manage or buffer our emotions in other settings, not representing the feelings we have, for (often political) purposes.

A reflexive approach to emotion, as part of larger turns towards reflexive approaches to governance, are thus necessary. It is our contention that the ways in which we hold and develop particular values and identities; the ways we relate to individuals, groups, movements, and institutional and social structures; and the ways we respond to change are partly driven by emotion (Dixon, 2023). This is *why* we have concerns – why we care. This is why we may respond to governance as we do, whether by shaping it, negotiating it, or resisting it. In this paper, we acknowledge the difficulty of researching emotion, of truly knowing or assuming the intentions of those whose emotions are on display in governance work. We use a reflexive approach as a 'way to identify conditions, channels, and constraints as "real" without reproducing problematic modes of describing the real (e.g. deterministic, reductive, teleological, or Eurocentric)' (Wilson, 2016, p. 273). For example, while we may never truly know Pardo's feelings, we can ascertain from his words his intent to build a relationality not through a technical language of governance but through one linked to planetary citizenship and the shared threats to a shared future.

Building from this introduction, in this paper, we contribute to the growing literature on reflexive governance by considering the 'why' of ocean management as an emotional question. Whilst we do not wish to be overly deterministic on the role of emotion, we do feel it is important to address its relative absence in, and potential contributions to, the ever-growing body of marine governance research (as do McKinley et al., 2023). In the next section, we draw on feminist theories to explore how decision-making in marine governance is shaped by emotions, asserting that they are a crucial component of learning as well as a legitimate form of knowledge per se. We then use this theoretical framework to reflect on how emotions of concern saturate governance, drawing in detail on a global yet simultaneously embodied scale example that examines Arvid Pardo and Elisabeth Mann Borgese, the individuals who helped forge the current Law of the Sea. We show how emotional work, structured by socialised norms, identities, values and opinions shaped governance: *why* it came to emerge in a specific form, and the current ramifications of this form. To conclude, the paper hints towards other examples that might benefit from the reflexive approach developed while also contending that recognising the role of emotions is a useful addition to studies of marine governance, leading to more care-full, reflexive, and resilient forms of governance in the face of uncertainty.

Feminism, reflexivity, emotion: crucial concepts for marine governance

To take seriously emotions in marine governance, we take a feminist approach to reflexivity situated in the critical turn in ocean scholarship (Blum, 2010, 2013; DeLoughrey, 2019; Neimanis, 2017; Steinberg, 2013). Reflexivity is an attunement to subjectivity and an acknowledgement of the validity of subjective ways of being and knowing, creating and making (Haraway, 1988; Shepherd, 2023). It is also an attunement to the ways in which our subjectivities are relationally shaped by individuals, communities, and larger societal structuring processes (e.g., the marginalisation of specific peoples based on perceived or constructed characteristics). In short, reflexivity is about examining and acknowledging how who we are, including our positionalities and privileges, both structures and is structured by outcomes. This helps to address the 'why' in the context of this paper: *why governance comes to be as it is and how governance is emotionally structured*. This is not to claim that emotions determine governance outcomes or are always coupled to governance regimes, but rather to closely interrogate the genealogy of marine governance to better understand why it emerges in the modes and models it does. Indeed, we aim to 'trace a genealogy for a different way of feeling ... to show how that feeling was formed, inherited, reshaped and passed on until it became accepted by an individual or an age' (Macfarlane, 2009, p. 21).

We do this because emotion is a bridge to understanding our relationships with the world. As Shepherd (2023, p. 96) writes, 'the currency of connection is emotion; being held in relation.' It is at the very core of how we form and maintain relations to ourselves, others, and the world, 'the source of all our thinking as it is integral to the relations we have with our world and the people within it' (Burkitt, 2012, p. 461; Holmes, 2010). Emotions shape our engagements with the world around us, every day, in our attachments to places, people, and things (Anderson & Smith, 2001). Yet emotion has a fraught history in Western scholarship, based on historically gendered binaries that have grouped emotion with femininity, subjectivity, and the body on one side; and reason with masculinity, objectivity and the mind on the other (Ahmed, 2014; Sharp, 2009). In this way, emotion is both individualised and always structured and constructed. Historically, 'man' has been equated with (or rather, socially constructed as possessing) the essential qualities of rationality, strength, rigour and objectivity (Sayer, 1997). Women, on the other hand, have been stereotyped with the character traits of irrationality, weakness, inconsistency and subjectivity (Ahmed, 2014; Haraway, 1988). The stereotyped emotions (and lack thereof) associated with each gender are more than constructs, however: they are *structured* constructs – overarchingly white, Eurocentric, heterosexual, able-bodied, and masculine – within dominant patriarchal social systems (Haraway, 1988).

Whilst longstanding feminist work has exposed and deconstructed these binaries, the idea of rationality as intrinsic to 'man', 'men' and 'masculinity', and to objective knowledge, endures (Butler, 1999; Cresswell, 1996). Key feminist writers in the 1980s challenged the view that knowledge – what we know and how we know it – is ever rational and objective (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986). They unveiled what Haraway calls the 'god trick', the idea that knowledge, as well as the outcomes of social and political life (e.g., law, regulation, policy), are somehow objective, neutral, detached from their creators and from the partialities, perspectives, and personalities of those creators and the structured social norms in which they sit. As such, waves of feminists (and of feminist theories) offer us a different way of thinking about how we know what we know and how the world comes to be as it is. Critical scholarship has also demonstrated the intersection of constructs around identities – where race, ethnicity, sexuality, class and other categories overlap to produce unique experiences of marginalisation, 'where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects' (Carbado & Crenshaw, 2019; Crenshaw, 2010, 2023, n.p.). As hooks (1987) showed in her germinal work, for example, it is not just being a woman, but being a Black woman, that matters. Many Black scholars make a distinction between 'feminism', often seen as an overwhelmingly white movement, and 'Black feminism' and 'womanism', which, while not interchangeable, are specific to Black women's experiences of racial and gender oppression (Collins, 1996). It is crucial, then, to bear in mind going forward that 'feminism' is not a homogeneous term and that accounting for the intersections and constructions of identity is necessary to render the invisible visible and to understand why phenomena may emerge as they do.

A multitude of diverse feminist, queer, and de/post/anticolonial thinkers have long resisted and subverted gendered, racialised, and other identity constructs that continue to structure much of Western society (Yong,

2020). One of the ways in which feminist thinkers in particular have challenged this is through deconstructing the emotion/reason binary and its linkages to structured norms around gender, race, sexuality and other facets of self. They do this by approaching emotion not as antithetical but integral to the way we reason and come to know our world: as a valid form of knowledge in and of itself (Ahmed, 2014; Anderson & Smith, 2001). As Evans (2002, pp. xii, 177) notes, emotions do not have to sit contra to ‘reason’ or rationality; rather, emotion is ‘reason’s ally’ and ‘the things that emotions do, from making us flee from danger ... to concentrating our minds and influencing our judgements, all have their reasons ... Not only are there passions within reason, but there are reasons within passion’. As such, there is good *reason* to acknowledge emotion as part of our understanding of the world, and, as we argue here, particularly in relation to why the marine environment is managed how it is. Emotion can be a window to exploring some of the structuring devices underpinning decision-making and making sense of them to better understand, and tell the story of, the creation of marine governance.

Indeed, various authors have shown emotions to be crucial to understandings and practices of natural resource governance. For example, according to Sultana (2011, p. 163), emotions ‘influence how and why people use, access, control and conflict over resource the ways they do.’ Rather than dismissing or outright denying the role of emotions, closely examining them may allow us to gain a more nuanced and complete picture of resource conflicts, understanding these as not only conflicts over a resource but also over ‘the emotions involved as these influence the practices and decisions people make in everyday resource use, control and conflict’ (Sultana, 2011, p. 171). If we do not take emotion seriously, we may risk forms of governance that at best are out of touch with local realities and at worst actively marginalise and silence local voices (Kearns & Collins, 2012). We may fail to see the structures structuring governance, including the way emotions, as representations of feelings, are often harnessed by decision-makers to ‘play to’ particular desired outcomes. Recognising emotion thus becomes not simply a matter of ticking a box but a matter of politics and of justice. Indeed, emotions are embedded in power relations and systems that, whether subtly or overtly, privilege some emotions while disregarding others, and determine whose emotions come to matter. Thus, whose emotions become political matters *is* a political matter (Gustafsson & Hall, 2021; Shepherd, 2023). Indeed, the critical feminist approach we develop demands something more nuanced than simply noting the presence of emotion in governance. It must examine the broader (and often hidden) conditions and infrastructures in which a particular mode of governance is situated, and from which particular displays of emotion emerge – or rather, are *legitimised* and *allowed to* emerge. This may also see stakeholders and governance actors using the emotions that are allowed and deemed acceptable (or even beneficial) to shape governance outcomes. This does not undermine the point of our paper, but rather supports it: being reflexive in view of governance helps us to see, and address, why governance comes to be as it does – through whose visions, driven by whose priorities.

Reflexivity is a means of addressing the question of why certain emotions are present and made to matter. Reflexivity is broadly defined as the capacity to consider one’s position in the world through one’s relations, and vice versa, in order to navigate the world (Archer, 2003, 2007; Burkitt, 2012; Davidson, 2019; Holmes, 2010; van Tatenhove, 2022; Voyer, 2021). If reflexivity is the capacity for people to consider how they stand in relation to the world, and emotion is understood to be part of these relations, then a reflexive approach to emotions may hold potential for the context of marine governance. Being reflexive requires a degree of what has variously been described as ‘the self-referential characteristic of “bending-back”’ (Archer, 2010, p. 2; in van Tatenhove, 2022); ‘self-confronting’ (Beck, 2006; in van Tatenhove, 2017); ‘the capacity... to improve in light of reflection’ (Yanuardi et al., 2022, p. 428); and ‘the ability of a structure, process, or set of ideas to reconfigure itself’ (Dryzek & Pickering, 2017, p. 1; in Jacobi & de Souza, 2021). It is also the process of looking inwards to who we are and outwards to those we encounter and engage (Rose, 1997).

Our own process in working on this paper has certainly been one of ‘bending back’ and ‘self-confronting’, reflecting on the structures that shape our own positions and also, in Shepherd’s (2023, p. 4) words, dealing with the ‘violence’ of representation when writing about others. Whilst emotions are representations of feeling, through our reflexive practice we also consider what those representations could mean. In working together on this paper, Author One engaged with the development of the Law of the Sea through Pardo’s speech and Mann Borgese’s contributions (via Mallia & Testa’s, 2019 reading of her role) and took time to

get to know the material for the Bering case study. A necessary part of this process, Author One began to notice, was being reflexive of our own positionalities and of the arguments we were developing (Shepherd, 2023). We were critical social scientists but we were distanced temporally and geographically from both cases (neither of us being in living memory of the development of UNCLOS, and, while based in a polar marine institute, far from Bering). How could we take care to write of the (gendered and classed) emotions structuring the developments of the Law of the Sea? How could we take care not to write *for* the Indigenous communities who submitted comments about routing measures in Bering, to avoid repackaging their words for Western consumption (and for bolstering our own argument)?

Our own reflexive processes as we shared the paper between us were vital (and demonstrated how scholars of governance might act in self-conscious ways in the very doing of policy and planning work). As such, this paper has been shaped and reshaped through iterative self-reflection and ‘bending back,’ all the while taking a firmly feminist approach to acknowledge our own place in the production of knowledge and the framing of theory for governance work. Although we originally focused on the Bering Strait case as our case study, we eventually decided to draw out the development of the Law of the Sea as a well-known retrospective example of marine governance on the global level, to show that this seemingly technical piece of law was not devoid of emotions but rather suffused with concerns for the future. We retained the Bering case study in the conclusion as a regional example to reflect upon the emotions in action that shaped the development of location-specific marine protection measures. Our approach may not be perfect; as Rose (1997) notes, there is no perfect route to reflexivity. It is an ongoing, constant, iterative process, albeit one with significant value. In making governance reflexive we may be better attuned to both emotions and the structures of power that order them, and better equipped to more fully recognise, integrate, and be transformed by emotion. Our purpose is to develop the point that emotions matter through different spheres and scales of governance, and that feminist approaches provide an important framework for theoretically developing and practically engaging with reflexive governance. We close by drawing out what the paper could mean for future studies, practices, and understandings of marine management.

Concerning the law of the sea? Situating reflexive governance in retrospect

We return in this section to Pardo’s quote from the beginning of this paper in an example of how emotions are arguably part of global governance. This historical example allows us to deploy a reflexive governance approach retrospectively – to bend back and attempt to see *why* something as significant as the Law of the Sea developed as it did. Pardo’s 1960s speech provides us with exactly the point we wish to pursue in this paper: that emotions matter to governance, and that feminist approaches to reflexivity – which are attuned to subjectivity and emotion – offer a way to attend not only to the processes by which emotions shape governance, but also to *whose* emotions are leveraged or made to matter (or silenced) by larger modes of social structuring. It was in the twenty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly (first committee, 1515th meeting), held on 1st November 1967, that Pardo, the representative of the then newly-independent state of Malta, with its own marine and maritime interests, delivered a speech that is widely regarded as pivotal in the development of the eventual constitution for the global oceans: UNCLOS (1982) (United Nations, 1999). Pardo’s delivery was described as being emotionally ‘electrifying’ (Standing, 2023, para 5) and ‘stirring’ (Affarijiet Barranin, n.d., para 7), words that hint towards its emotional ‘clout’. We can only ‘bend back’ to reflect on our own reading of Pardo, but his phrasing seems to work to build an emotion connection, using shared pronouns (‘our’) to describe how ‘we’ hold the oceans within ‘us’ ‘in the tears we share (United Nations General Assembly, 1967, p. 2). Pardo’s bold speech was a response to what was becoming a protracted effort to write an international legal guiding document for marine governance, and it reignited the discussion in such a memorable way that he was eventually labelled ‘the *Father* of the Law of the Sea’ (United Nations, 1999, emphasis added).

Pardo’s speech may appear a strange place to open a discussion on feminist approaches to reflexive marine governance. On the one hand, the speech was at many moments structured by deeply gendered, masculinist, patriarchal language (likely a social product of its time). For instance, Pardo speaks of the oceans as ‘wombs of life’, of ‘man’ being the dominant planetary force and of man’s ‘penetration of the deep’ (United Nations

General Assembly, 1967, p. 2). Yet on the other hand, here was a man demonstrating, whether genuinely, performatively, or both, a love of the ocean, a care for its future, and a plea for equality in its access and use, in a *passionate, prolonged* speech described by Meyer (2022, p. 79) as ‘emotional’ and having ‘a dreamy, mystical quality, quite at odds with the character of a hardheaded, stoic diplomat’. Whether Pardo truly felt the emotions represented in his speech or whether he harnessed them to make his point, a reflexive approach to the speech helps demonstrate the presence of emotion in one of the most pivotal guiding tools of modern marine governance, thus upending assumptions of purely technocratic and rational ‘fixes’ to marine governance issues.

However, a further reflexive approach to understanding Pardo’s meaning can be read through his personal correspondence, which sheds light on the *reason* for his passion for a global governance treaty. As cited in Meyer (2022, p. 79), in reference to his special interest in the seabed as a space of concern, Pardo explained that his desire led from ‘[a] dream which I had in January 1967. After this dream I studied the question very hard for several months’. Pardo’s concern, then, emerged through the harnessing and taking seriously of his imagination. After attending one of Pardo’s speeches, a contemporary source (cited in Meyer, 2022, p. 96) described Pardo as

...a man who dreamed an impossible dream and reached for an unreachable star. His dream was of an ocean regime which would rule the great unclaimed savannahs of the blue and develop them and fructify them for the benefit of all mankind.

Pardo’s dream must, however, be contextualised. A reflexive lens demonstrates the way that marine governance knowledges are not only emotional but that certain emotions come to count – notably, Pardo’s articulations, and his rousing of the emotions of listeners – over others. Here we can see that social structures shape and form *why* governance histories are known as they are. Indeed, he was not the first, nor the only, to have such a dream. Around the same time, halfway around the world, a woman, Elisabeth Mann Borgese, had a similar dream: ‘the depth below, hiding sunken cities or continents, treasures, monsters and mermaids, was a dream world unfathomable as man’s unconscious or the Milky Way’ (Meyer, 2022, p. 108). As a Fellow at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California, Mann Borgese was working towards a constitution for the oceans based on principles of freedom, cooperation, and the common heritage of mankind (CHM) (Mallia & Testa, 2019).

Resonating with, and perhaps moved by, the values and emotions in his speech, she contacted Pardo and initiated a productive, long-lasting collaboration centring on the CHM as a foundational principle of the UNCLOS (Mallia & Testa, 2019; Meyer, 2022). Through this collaboration, Mann Borgese organised a series of *Pacem in Maribus* (PIM) conferences, which enabled a creative ferment of ideas, discussions and relations among ocean leaders that eventually underpinned UNCLOS (Mallia & Testa, 2019). Among her unique contributions were the introduction of a participation-based assembly and the novel concept of a maritime court (Meyer, 2022). Her most enduring legacy, however, is the International Ocean Institute (IOI), whose original purpose was to provide institutional support for the PIM and to play an active role in the UNCLOS III negotiations. Through the IOI, she became a leader in capacity-building and training for ocean stewardship, establishing training programmes which are offered at the IOI to this day (Mallia & Testa, 2019).

Yet Mann Borgese and Pardo would diverge in their perceptions of the ocean and its governance. Mann Borgese argued that it was not possible to fully comprehend or manage the oceans without accounting for the vertical dimension, advocating for a radical, three-dimensional approach to the oceans. Pardo staunchly adhered to the traditional, two-dimensional perspective; Mann Borgese, however, believed that ignoring this vertical dimension, and treating the oceans as a flat, two-dimensional space based on terrestrial logics, was the cause of so much damage to the marine environment. Indeed, she was deeply concerned (and we reflexively read this concern in articulations of her worries) that this two-dimensional view was embedded in a *colonial* approach that rendered the oceans ‘ripe for subjection by state sovereignty and a state-based extraction regime’ and posed ‘the greatest threat to the Ocean’s well-being’ (Ashworth, 2023, p. 4). Thus, much of her work on the CHM principle was driven by a *concern* for nation-states exploiting the oceans with no regulations or repercussions, which in her eyes was yet ‘another manifestation of colonial violence that would lead to the destruction of the planet’ (Ashworth, 2023, p. 7).

Reflecting on Mann Borgese's story allows us to unearth the patriarchal logics, centring Pardo's emotion at the expense of Mann Borgese's, that have crystallised into marine governance history. Today, scholars widely accept Mann Borgese's concern with verticality, though governance remains entrenched in two-dimensional logics (Peters, 2020a). Interestingly, the subjective feelings of both were drivers of their marine governance work, but Mann Borgese's concerns were overshadowed in the final UNCLOS document. Indeed, the flat vision of marine governance has stubbornly endured (Peters, 2020a, 2020b; Steinberg & Peters, 2015). *Why* does contemporary governance look as it does? Due, in part, perhaps, to a saturation of Pardo's emotional vision. A feminist reflexive approach hence allows for an attunement not only to the presence of emotion but also to the structural facets that determine whose emotions count in marine governance.

Yet it is also vital to situate Mann Borgese's concerns and influence, using a reflexive approach, to upend dominant histories. Throughout her life, she believed that 'participation, responsibility and initiatives are more important incentives than profits, that cooperation today is more productive than competition, that consensus is more important than coercion' (Mallia & Testa, 2019; Meyer, 2022, p. 112). These are values often under-recognised in the dominant narratives around the 'fathering' of the Law of the Sea by Pardo, but which have shaped and are reflected in the UNCLOS. Claiming that the UNCLOS is a purely patriarchal or gender-neutral instrument actively erases the work of women such as Mann Borgese (Mallia & Testa, 2019). Indeed, her unwavering advocacy of cooperation was embedded in the hope that cooperative governance at the global scale would foster gender equality; since, for Mann Borgese, 'collectivization also meant feminization, future developments of society would benefit women, leading to a truly equal society' (Ashworth, 2023, p. 3). Pardo and Mann Borgese shared a concern for and worked towards a vision of global justice underpinned by equality, cooperation and participation (Meyer, 2022). Why, then, is Pardo lauded as 'the Father of the Law of the Sea' despite his eventual disengagement from the UNCLOS, while Mann Borgese's role, an equally important and lifelong commitment, is often overlooked? How is it that a man's emotions were hailed as revolutionary, while a woman's were relegated to relative obscurity?

At the geopolitical level, several complex situations cast long shadows over the initial UNCLOS negotiations, obscuring her efforts. First, the Cold War posed a global atomic threat, which, in the context of UNCLOS, manifested as widespread fear that the seafloor would be used for establishing weapons stations, and made securing the seafloor as a conflict-free zone an imminent priority. However, this posed a challenge for finding common policy ground between two world powers, the USA and the USSR (Meyer, 2022). Second, many newly independent former colonies that gained independence following World War II were eager to actively participate in and shape world politics; the UN was, at that time, the only space in which they could do this. There was a very real fear on the part of the 'developed nations' that if 'these new states were able to form alliances and close ranks, they could have a chance of overruling the former imperial states' (Meyer, 2022, p. 152). Third, there was a significant geographical division in the UNCLOS negotiations between coastal and non-coastal states, which led to the formation of opposing factions, the 'Coastals' and the 'Land Locked States and Geographically Disadvantaged States'. Fourth, shifting trends in global values meant that the core values that kick-started the UNCLOS negotiations in the 1960s-1970s, primarily the CHM, were replaced by capitalist and market-driven logics of exploitation and extraction, which transformed the seafloor into a space of lucrative opportunity (Meyer, 2022).

At the individual (yet still structural) level, Pardo was a prominent politician and diplomat; his position as Maltese ambassador afforded him a level of visibility, regard, access, and influence – as well as lasting symbolic status – that was not available to Mann Borgese. While Mann Borgese was an activist and practitioner, she was not heavily involved in International Relations (IR) circles. This was partly due to the fact that her work did not fit into several deep-seated beliefs of IR: she conceived of and worked with power very differently; she challenged what was realistic and what was possible; and most significant of all, her work shed light on the complete absence of the oceans in dominant IR paradigms (Ashworth, 2023). Additionally, her work follows a trajectory taken by many women in the twentieth century who found academia unwelcoming, turning instead to other spaces in which to develop and share their work. Indeed, Ashworth (2023, p. 9) writes that 'Mann Borgese's success, despite the academy, puts into glaring focus the misogyny of the contemporary university system'. Lastly, moving from the past to the present, we wonder whether a hegemonic global memory, largely

conditioned by patriarchal dominance and sexism, has played a role in enshrining Pardo as a passionate, driven man while filing Mann Borgese under ‘yet another emotional woman’.

We close this case study by reflecting on critical questions posed by Mehta and Wibben (2018, p. 15):

Whose stories are we telling? To whom? Who benefits from these narrations and analyses? Why are we telling these stories? How are we telling them? Since there will always be stories that continue to be untold or unheard, we need to further examine why they are omitted. We should ask: What stories are we choosing not to tell and why? Whose voices – and therefore stories – are we unable to hear because of our biases?

By offering a reflexive lens on Mann Borgese’s story, we tell the story of a woman in a time when being so was limiting; but also of a white woman from a privileged background in a time when not being so was (and continues to be) limiting. We tell this story to benefit decision-makers, practitioners, and scholars involved in managing our oceans in the hopes that they might consider more inclusive and just forms of management. We tell this story to bring attention to the importance of emotion in marine governance, perhaps at the expense of other crucial intersections such as race, class, sexuality, and dis/ability, and in doing so omit – and perhaps obscure – so many other stories that must be told (Heathcote, 2019).

We tell this story to highlight the fact that marine governance does not exist in a vacuum. It is shaped by geopolitical and societal structures (e.g. sexism, racism, colonialism) which work to legitimise and privilege certain *concerns* while delegitimising and silencing others. As a case in point, Mann Borgese’s focus on the physical, three-dimensional materiality of the oceans was considered too radical for its time. However, it is more relevant than ever now, in a time when global UN targets aim to ‘change humanity’s relationship with the ocean’ (Ocean Decade, n.d.). We see this now developed in the work of women scientists who argue for dynamic forms of marine governance (Maxwell et al., 2015). Such a vision, though, remains less popular as concerns about the oceans grow and sealed, flat, bordered regimes of control endure (Satizábal & Le Billon, 2022). Indeed, moving to a three-dimensional view which encompasses both human and more-than-human worlds may allow for more meaningful engagement with many diverse subjectivities not limited to ‘a single feminist mode of thinking and understanding but rather a commencement of conversations’ which includes all humans and more-than-humans (Ashworth, 2023; Heathcote, 2019, p. 105). We now turn to conclusions and hint to further examples of using a reflexive approach to understand why governance exists as it does, and how emotions (and their embeddedness in power structures) shape ocean management approaches.

Emotional futures? Towards conclusions

In recent years, the Arctic has been at the centre of global attention due to climate change, with high temperatures causing unprecedented ice melt on large swathes of the sea’s surface, which is normally covered in ice year-round (Hartsig et al., 2012). Aside from the catastrophic impacts of this on marine biodiversity, ice-free seas may mean that previously inaccessible areas are becoming accessible for navigation by commercial and recreational vessels as well as for exploration and exploitation of natural resources by prospectors (Huntington et al., 2015, 2019; Port Access Route Study: In the Bering Strait, 2010). At the same time, the Arctic marine environment is ‘regulated by not only a patchwork of governance structures and regulations, but navigation takes place both in the territorial waters of Arctic states ... and on the high seas’ (van Tatenhove, 2023, p. 254). Coupled with the possibility of new shipping routes lacking any form of shipping regulations, there is a high degree of risk to navigational safety in these waters that has required urgent attention and the instigation of measures that can adapt to rapidly changing conditions (Savitzky, 2016). Accordingly, since 2010, the United States Coast Guards (USCG) have undertaken a Port Access Route Study (PARS) of the Bering Strait, a narrow strip of water between the Chukchi and Seward Peninsulas in Russia and the United States (Alaska), respectively (United States Coast Guard, 2016c).

We end this paper by shifting from the global scale to the regional, to further show how the approach we have developed, a carefully reflexive approach to the emotional dimensions of governance, may be useful for unpacking examples across scales and locations beyond the one that has constituted the bulk of this paper. This final illustrative example could be one of many and aims to broaden the scope of possibilities for

other scholars to think with emotion in marine governance work. Returning to this concluding example, the USCG determined that establishing a vessel routing system in the Bering Strait could increase navigational safety by increasing the predictability of vessel movement patterns. The USCG may be thought of as a paternal governance agent – where state *concern* directs what is deemed to be *best* and in the interests of all. The deeply gendered paternalistic construct of the state as a ‘fatherly’ or a gendered parental ‘steer’ that balances both ‘care’ and ‘control’ is particularly prominent in the context of environmental governance (Barnett, 2015; Whitehead, 2014). However, while the PARS process operated largely ‘top down’ and within Western power dynamics, it was also remarkable in that the outcome of the study (unlike most governance measures) was not a foregone conclusion. It seemed to balance structured patriarchal control with something close to participation (Siegmund-Schultze et al., 2015).

Following two rounds of open public comment, which identified wildlife, the marine environment, and subsistence activities as key priorities for protection, the USCG conducted ‘a detailed review of current and possible future trends in maritime traffic patterns, vessel casualty history, and significant environmental and cultural sensitivities’ to develop vessel routing measures for submission to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (Niemeyer, 2024; United States Coast Guard, 2016c, p. 12). In 2018, the IMO adopted several vessel routing measures based on a joint US-Russia proposal, which was informed by the research produced by the PARS (International Maritime Organization, 2017a, 2017b). The USCG ‘did not propose specific vessel routing measures but rather sought more general comments on whether vessel routing measures were needed or advisable ... and the identification of important factors to consider if routing measures were to be developed’ (United States Coast Guard, 2016c, p. 6). Deeper research has revealed that the PARS offered an example of reflexive governance in action: the USCG engaging in a repeated consultation process, listening to and then integrating the *concerns* of those who knew the areas in question and would be impacted by anticipated environmental and governance changes (see Niemeyer, 2024 for an analysis of docket responses).

There is evidence, through over a decade of consultation, of some degree of ‘opening up’ of ‘plural understandings’ of the Bering Strait that challenge a top-down, patriarchal mode of governing (Feindt & Weiland, 2018, p. 667). Indeed, the USCG’s (2016c) report on preliminary findings demonstrates an awareness of the ‘numerous stakeholders’ in the region with enduring connections to the marine environment (United States Coast Guard, 2016c, p. 5). Flannery et al. (2018) note that consultation is always fraught with political possibilities for *non-participation*, where refusal becomes a ‘generative’ method of anticolonial practice for communities who step outside of participatory processes that reinforce and perpetuate colonial violences (Liboiron, 2021; Satizábal & Le Billon, 2022; Yusoff, 2018). In general, however, the submitted responses to suggested management schemes revealed a high level of engagement with the USCG, whose pathway of decision-making showed degrees of ‘bending back’ as various concerns were iteratively incorporated into recommended alternative measures for marine protection (United States Coast Guard, 2010, 2014, 2010, 2016b).

Far from being a technical process, emotions appear to *permeate* the development of the scheme, with sentiments of concern – for the environment, the life within it, and the livelihoods sustained by it – shifting the scale from the individual and collective (submissions to the USCG by community members, local organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders) to the national (USCG reports) to the international (IMO measures and guidance). A suffusion of emotion is evident when reflecting back on the docket responses to the USCG consultation. The responses offered by local and Indigenous groups, non-governmental agencies, local industry and individuals all express (to different degrees and for different reasons) a *concern* with increased shipping and its management. Rather than unravelling all these concerns and their rationales, what we aim to unveil, in looking back, is the presence – subtle but powerful – of emotion percolating through the processes and structures of top-down, patriarchal control.

We see this most notably in both the multiple docket responses and the official USCG reports, which use this word to express feelings about changes occurring in Bering (United States Coast Guard, 2010, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Concern is a word arguably less emotive, perhaps, than ‘worry’, ‘nervousness’ or ‘apprehension’. Why, then, might ‘concern’ be so significant? It expresses these emotions with subtlety, which may be more acceptable in governance domains: the way emotions are thus, as we have already noted, harnessed to do specific political work. This representation of emotion, whereby the full emotional feeling a stakeholder

may wish to share becomes constricted or suppressed by language, could be another reason why emotion is so easily overlooked. Yet being reflexive to its presence (and use) helps reveal more of why governance comes to be. Most notably, and linking to our wider argument, in recognising the emotions in the docket responses, we can see *why* people come to care, and in turn, *why* marine management emerges as it does.

In this paper, then, we have reflected on emotions and emotional ‘work’ in the development of management of our seas and oceans, being reflexive *about* governance (considering the development of the Law of the Sea) and showing how governance *itself* is reflexive (the latter short example of the Bering Strait scheme). Through these examples, which range from the global to the regional to the embodied scale, we have demonstrated how emotion is, while not determining, certainly enrolled within and permeating, governance, as well as being a component of governance practice that should be taken seriously, understood, and engaged with further. Drawing on feminist theories, we have provided a conceptual framework that adds emotion to the study of reflexive governance to highlight the structured power dynamics that determine whose emotions matter, and in turn why governance develops as it does. Whilst the ‘reflexive turn’ in governance studies emphasises the ‘how’ and ‘who’ of governance, the ‘why’ (why governance develops as it does) is underexplored. We have asserted that emotions could be crucial to understanding this ‘why’.

While our paper does not measure to what degree emotions are incorporated or how they weigh against other considerations, we do know that they are suffused throughout governance, built into its scaffolding: they are the intangible made tangible, from the words of a passionate speech that started a revolution to the lines carved by ships across the sea. Rather than being an irrational force in the face of technocratic decision-making, emotions permeate governance processes, practices, and arenas. Understanding them, and whose emotions matter, is vital for potentially fostering greater equality and justice in marine governance, not least where structural dimensions may limit the voices heard and perspectives held. To this end, future work could springboard from this paper to consider in greater detail the embeddedness of emotions in governance, using reflexivity as a tool or framework for guidance. This paper has built a theoretical reasoning for emotions to matter, presented the case for a feminist reflexive governance in studies of the seas and oceans, and now urges others to go ahead and use it.

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