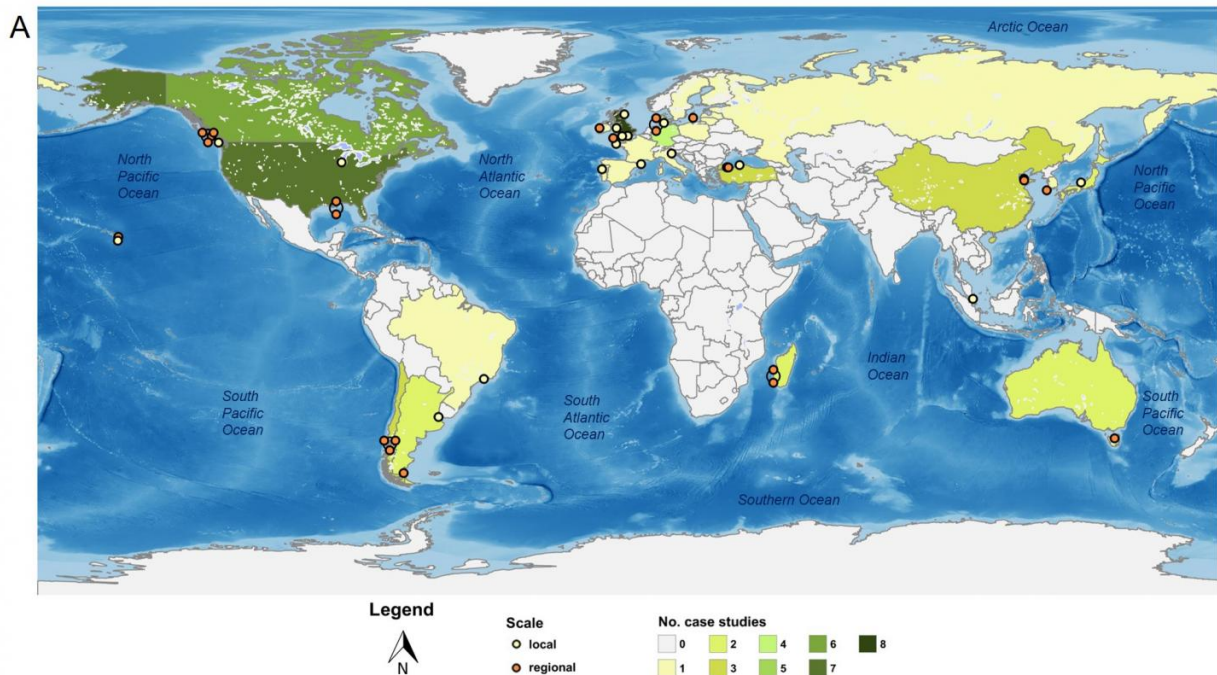


# What could be the importance of marine and coastal cultural ecosystem services

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Geographical location of marine and coastal CES assessments. Credit: Rodrigues et al. 2017

A detailed scientific literature review published in the open access journal [One Ecosystem](#) confirmed that research on marine and coastal cultural ecosystem services is scarce compared to other ecosystem service categories, revealing curious insights and identifying major knowledge gaps.

Available knowledge is not only primarily focused on local and regional sociocultural or economic assessments, but is also mostly coming from Western Europe and North America (USA and Canada). Largely underrepresented, the Global South has only a few studies in South America, Madagascar, and China. Remarkably, no marine and coastal cultural ecosystem services assessments were found in any country of the African continent.

"Such research bias narrows the understanding of social-ecological interactions to a western cultural setting, undermining the role of other worldviews in the understanding of a wide range of interactions between cultural practices and [ecosystems](#) worldwide" explain the study authors led by João Garcia Rodrigues.

In addition to this regional bias, the authors have identified clusters of co-occurring drivers of change affecting marine and coastal habitats and their cultural ecosystem services. Damming, land reclamation, tourism and industrial fishing were among the identified drivers of change.

The main [knowledge](#) gaps found were the lack of integrated valuation assessments; linking the contribution of cultural ecosystem service benefits to human well-being; assessing more subjective and intangible classes; identifying the role of open-ocean and deep-sea areas in providing these services; and understanding the role of non-natural capital in the co-production of cultural ecosystem services. "Research priorities should be aimed at filling these [knowledge gaps](#)" explain the authors.

Overcoming such challenges can result in more balanced decisions that will ultimately contribute to more sustainable interactions between humans and the marine environment. The authors highlight that "cultural ecosystem services are strong motivations for people to embrace sustainability, and hence their inclusion in environmental decision-

supporting mechanisms can contribute to a more sustainable future for marine and coastal ecosystems".

**More information:** João Garcia Rodrigues et al. Marine and Coastal Cultural Ecosystem Services: knowledge gaps and research priorities, *One Ecosystem* (2017). [DOI: 10.3897/oneeco.2.e12290](https://doi.org/10.3897/oneeco.2.e12290)

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