Understanding the ATCM discourse can inform Blue Justice in the Southern Ocean... and help shape future-resilient and equitable ocean governance

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RESEARCH AIMS

- How are justice and equity framed within the ATS?
- How has justice discourse evolved over time?
- Which actors shape justice and equity discourse?
- How can blue justice inform sustainable ocean planning?

METHODS

Literature Review

↓

Justice & Equity Concepts Identification

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ATCM Document Corpus Analysis Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty

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Data Processing, Text & Discourse Analysis R Studio

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Interpretation of Findings

↓

Ocean Planning Implications

A mixed-methods approach analyses over sixty years of official ATCM documentation, examining how justice and equity are framed within the Antarctic Treaty System. Justice and equity-related concepts identified through a literature review guide the analysis, revealing key themes and patterns, possible gaps and changes over time to inform sustainable and equitable ocean planning.

THE DOCUMENT CORPUS

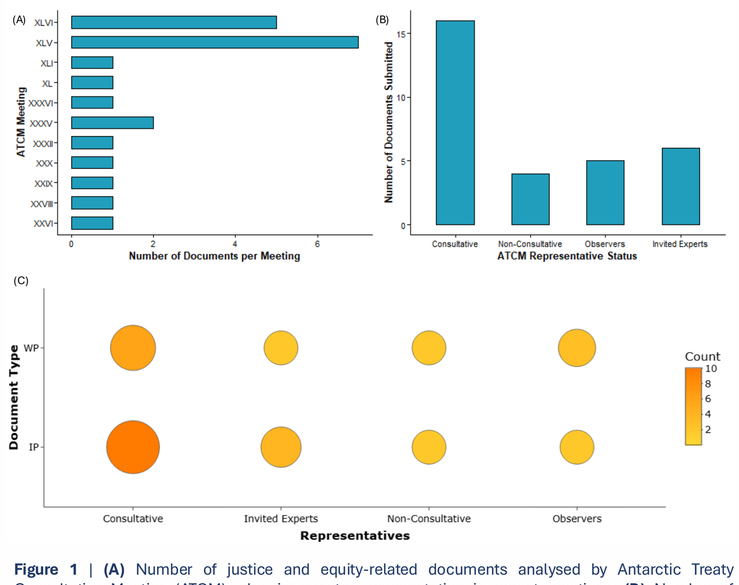

Figure 1 | **(A)** Number of justice and equity-related documents analysed by Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM), showing greater representation in recent meetings. **(B)** Number of analysed documents by ATCM representative status, with Consultative Parties contributing to the largest proportion of submissions. **(C)** Distribution of justice and equity-related Working Papers (WPs) and Information Papers (IPs) by ATCM representative category, showing Consultative Parties as the main contributors. Documents may be associated with more than one representative category due to joint submissions

Source ATCM documentation

Period 1961-2025

Content WPs, IPs, BPs, SPs, Final Reports

Focus 11 ATCMS, 22 Documents – 7 WPs, 15 IPs

1. HOW ARE JUSTICE AND EQUITY FRAMED ?

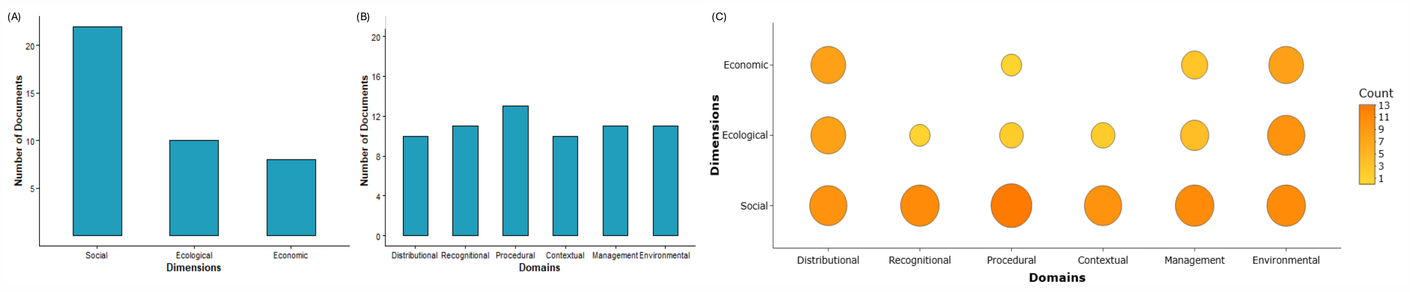

Figure 2 | (A) Distribution of analysed documents across the three blue justice dimensions , with the social dimension most frequently represented. **(B)** Distribution of analysed documents across the six justice and equity domains, with procedural justice being the most frequently identified domain. Documents may be assigned to multiple representative categories, dimensions and domains. **(C)** Co-occurrence of the three blue justice dimensions across the six justice and equity domains, with the social dimension showing the strongest associations across domains. Documents may be assigned to multiple dimensions and domains.

2. HOW HAS THE DISCOURSE EVOLVED?

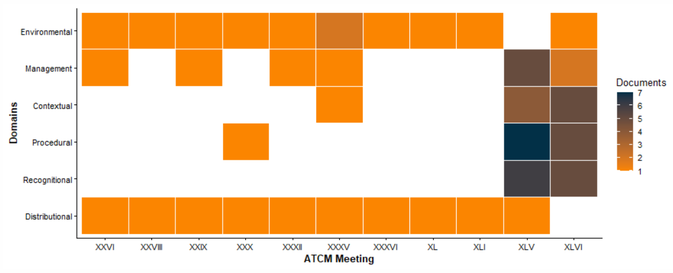

Figure 3 | Distribution of justice and equity domains across ATCM meetings included in the analysis. Justice and equity considerations were identified throughout the study period, with domain occurrences increasing in recent meetings, particularly in ATCM XLV and ATCM XLVI. Documents may be assigned to multiple justice and equity domains.

3. WHO SHAPES THE DISCOURSE?

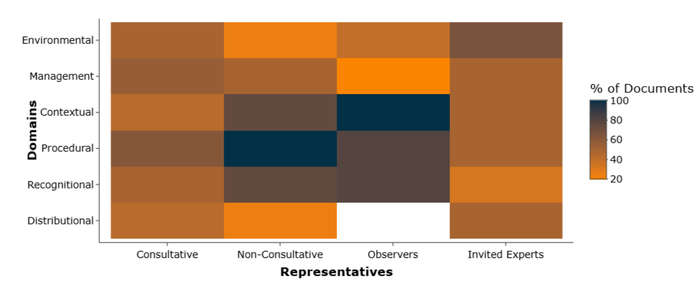

Figure 4 | Percentage of documents submitted by each representative category that address the six justice and equity domains. Percentages are calculated relative to the total number of documents submitted by each representative category. Documents may be assigned to multiple justice and equity domains and representative categories.

4. OCEAN PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

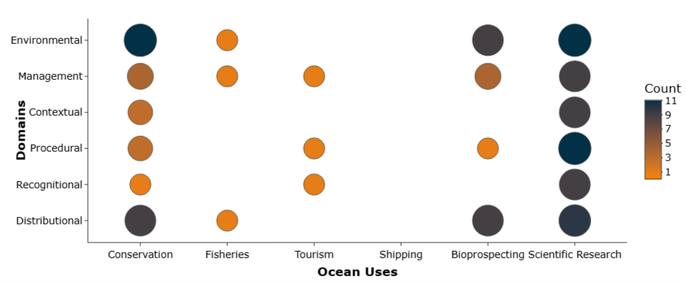

Figure 5 | Distribution of justice and equity domains across Antarctic ocean uses identified within the analysed ATCM documents. Documents may be assigned to multiple ocean uses and justice and equity domains.

KEY MESSAGES

- Justice and Equity are increasingly recognised within the Antarctic Treaty System discussions.
- Governance is addressed through multiple and interconnected domains, with social, recognitional and procedural perspectives being the most prominent.
- Different parties focus on different aspects of justice and equity, highlighting the importance of considering various points of view in Antarctic decision-making.
- Integrating Blue Justice principles in future Southern Ocean planning provides a valuable framework that could support more inclusive, equitable and sustainable governance as pressures on Antarctic marine environments intensify.

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