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Review of the Hackathon on Participatory Science for the Ocean

- News - General news -



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Participatory science serving the Ocean

The NGO OSI (Objectif Science International) and the Université Côte d'Azur, within the framework of the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, co-organized a Hackathon dedicated to participatory science for the Ocean.

From June 3 to 12, participants from around the world with diverse and complementary profiles gathered to co-create innovative projects serving the oceans, with the prospect of an official presentation of their project at the end of these 10 days.

The "Action" dimension of this 3rd edition of the UNOC held in Nice provided a particularly favorable framework for the integration and deepening of participatory science initiatives. It was an opportunity for our participants to expand their professional networks and develop partnerships to enable the realization of their project(s).

Hackathon Week Organization

The recognition of the Hackathon as an official UN off-site side event demonstrates the importance of participatory science in scientific research for sustainable development, here particularly in ocean preservation.

Throughout the week, participants organized themselves into interdisciplinary groups around co-constructed and innovative projects. They sought to bring their project(s) and participatory science to life through a series of diverse modules. For example, participants were able to attend modules on:

- designing tailored engaging adventures and defining participant-centered projects
- organizing a specific initiative within the framework of a long-term project
- participatory science and ecological transition
- funding high-impact projects
- developing partnerships for greater impact projects

Through workshops and networking evenings, they were able to find partners who could support their project(s).

The projects that emerged from the Hackathon will now be presented to policymakers, economic actors, and civil society stakeholders so that each can consider these innovations and integrate them into their reflections. They will also be monitored so that they can be implemented and concretely contribute to ecological/maritime transition action.

Perspectives for Scientific Research

From this Hackathon week, several projects emerged that must now be followed in order to be implemented. Each represents the realization of participatory science serving science and the protection and conservation of the oceans. Six flagship projects emerged from this week of Participatory Science for the Ocean Hackathon:

- The first project, **MyEcoAct**, is a geo-localized digital platform that connects citizens to nearby environmental and participatory science initiatives, aiming to transform eco-anxiety into concrete engagement through collective and territorial action.
- The second project, **EMPEHOS**, uses participatory science by inviting citizens, especially boaters and vacationers, to contribute to microplastic research by collecting samples in the marine depths using innovative technology, in order to better understand and combat this invisible pollution.
- The initiative **C'EST ASSEZ !** is a scientific, educational, and artistic expedition to the Comoros, designed to raise awareness about marine pollution and its impact on cetaceans, blending observations, citizen engagement, and theatrical creation as a gateway to science and collective action.
- **Tourism & Cetaceans** is a [participatory research](#) project that aims to co-construct, with local stakeholders, a sustainable tourism management plan around cetaceans in Egypt, relying on science, education, and citizen engagement to preserve marine biodiversity.
- **Wheels for Ocean!** is a cycling expedition from the mountains to the ocean, combining adventure and participatory science to raise awareness about the protection of natural environments by involving the public in environmental data collection.
- Finally, **The Plastics - From Waste to Value** is a participatory and creative project that invites citizens to handle, analyze, and upcycle microplastics through a journey combining science, art, and education, making the invisible impact of this pollution visible and engaging everyone in concrete and collective action.
- The project **Experiencing interdependency** presented an immersive approach at the heart of nature's cycles through a Scientific Stay Center project in Brazil, where the life of marine and estuarine fish, as well as local ancestral non-invasive fishing traditions, are experienced by participants in a scientific research project serving harmony with Nature.

Perspectives for the Academic and Research World

The contributions of participatory science concern not only scientific research but also the fields of education and responsible entrepreneurship. Moreover, the University has a direct interest in conducting research on participatory science, whether in humanities and social sciences campuses, educational sciences, or information sciences. Similarly, management sciences can advantageously use participatory science to bring academic benefits through practice.

In this respect, it can be said that the Hackathon and its impacts are inscribed in the long term.

Participatory science fosters research innovation and aims to support public decision-making, much like the discipline of *science and society*.

Participatory science is aligned with the issues of the humanities and social sciences (HSS), particularly inclusivity, by integrating a wide audience into the research process, enabling them to contribute to data collection and the construction of scientific knowledge.

As in the HSS, interdisciplinarity was also emphasized in the Hackathon. This Hackathon week, for example, brought together students from all disciplines: computer science, biology, management sciences, as well as scientists, university professors, and shamans...

The objective being to democratize knowledge production by actively involving all citizens and not restricting research to a small group. Finally, the Hackathon, through participatory science, like the HSS, believes in the complementarity of knowledge, methodologies, and ethics in striving toward greater social and environmental justice.

By proposing to solve problems and carry out impactful projects while ensuring economic viability and sustainability, the Participatory Science Hackathon fits into the traditions of management sciences.

UNOC Week Context

Bringing the voice of participatory science to the United Nations

Furthermore, the NGO OSI seized the opportunity of the United Nations Ocean Conference to bring the voice of participatory science to this major international event.

Through its Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC, OSI concretely participated in the discussions held within the framework of the United Nations Ocean Conference.

This dialogue was further strengthened through a collective statement that enabled the establishment of a participatory position. This collaborative writing sought to emphasize the importance of gathering actors from all fields in the ocean transition. It also highlighted the importance of ocean education and the central role of citizen participation and participatory science.

The message of this collaborative Statement was carried to the United Nations. You can now find its content at the following link:

<https://osi-ngo.org/actualites/actualites-generales/article/contribuez-a-la-redaction-participative-de-la-prise-de-position-de-l-ong>

Institutional Presence of the Hackathon in the Blue Zone

At this major ocean diplomacy gathering, OSI was able to engage with government representatives and leaders to advance the cause of ocean preservation, notably by highlighting the essential contribution of participatory science.

Recognized for its expertise, the NGO OSI was invited as a stakeholder during the preparatory consultation phase of the United Nations Ocean Conference. By representing participatory science, it integrated two key panels of the 2025 edition of UNOC:

- Panel 2: Increasing ocean-related scientific cooperation, knowledge, capacity building, marine technology, and education to strengthen the science-policy interface for ocean health
- Panel 8: Promoting and supporting all forms of cooperation, especially at the regional and sub-regional level

You can find the content of these interventions at the following link:

<https://osi-ngo.org/actualites/actualites-generales/article/ocean-2025-presence-et-actions-de-l-ong-objectif-sciences-international-dans-le>

Strongly committed to sustainable development for many years, OSI was keen to be actively present alongside the Université Côte d'Azur in this third edition of the UNOC, whose central objective is to support the implementation of SDG 14: "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development."

Particularly marked by a focus on concrete action, this 2025 edition resonated with the values of OSI and the Université Côte d'Azur. The main theme, "Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans," underlines the crucial role that participatory science can play.

Participatory science constitutes a powerful lever to accelerate action: it facilitates the emergence of innovative solutions by bringing together diverse actors and encourages cross-sector partnerships capable of overcoming structural barriers.

Finally, by nature, participatory science aims to mobilize a wide diversity of stakeholders (scientists, researchers, public institutions, civil society actors), thereby strengthening inclusion, cooperation, and collective impact in ocean governance.

Presence in the Green Zone

To bring participatory science to life, the NGO OSI took full advantage of the exceptional UNOC context and the various events organized in the Green Zone to foster exchanges and enable participants to meet potential partners and funders willing to support their projects.

The NGO OSI was also present at the "Baleine" stand (Green Zone, Palais des expositions) at Atoll 3, where a large citizen fresco of participatory science for the Ocean had been installed. This open and participatory workshop aimed to generate innovations. The Great Citizen Fresco of Participatory Science for the Ocean is in line with the values of participatory science, by including all civil society actors to propose innovative ideas for ocean preservation.

The Hackathon was also present in the Green Zone through multiple interventions from OSI members and partners. Participatory science was highlighted through presentations on scientific trips by Thomas Egli and Chloé Larose (on behalf of OSI) on Tuesday, June 3 (in the central Neptune Agora as well as in the Medusa room).

On Wednesday, June 4, Thomas Egli was present in the Manta Room to present the concept and applications of participatory science to the general public.

Finally, Plan Bleu, as a Hackathon partner, was also represented at the Baleine through the facilitation of an interactive workshop on coastal tourism in the face of climate change and also through a conference on Interreg Euro-MED contributions to the protection of the Mediterranean Sea: the case of the Natural Heritage mission and the Sustainable Tourism mission.

OOSC: One Ocean Science Congress (June 4-6)

The NGO OSI was also present at the One Ocean Science Congress, a special UNOC 3 event dedicated to scientific research in a perspective of marine protection, conservation, and sustainability. By bringing together actors from all fields, the goal of this event was to strengthen interactions between science and society, between action and policy, and to further involve civil society.

OSI contributed to shaping scientific research by bringing the benefits of participatory science to UNOC 3 for governors, states, and society to enable sustainable and resilient decisions and solutions for ocean conservation.

Our institutional presence within the Congress was materialized through two presentations delivered at this global scientific congress that preceded the UN Conference:

- A first presentation on Tuesday, June 3, 2025, delivered by Chloé Larose, which focused on **Participatory Ocean Research Formats: overview of field knowledge and scientific perspectives**
- A second on Thursday, June 5, 2025, entitled **Global Initiative for Ocean Participatory Science: an innovative multi-partner project for ocean data collection and analysis through gamification and citizen participatory science**, presented by Thomas Egli.

By highlighting participatory science at this scientific congress, our speakers invited the scientific community to envision a more inclusive and innovative society, and a science that allows for greater implementation and awareness of environmental challenges.

Ocean Rise and Coastal Resilience Summit / Coastal Cities Congress

The Hackathon and its partner organizations were also present at the Coastal Cities Congress, an event proposing collective organization for the sustainable adaptation of coastal cities and regions in the face of climate change risks. Our partners, Robin Degron on behalf of Plan Bleu UNEP Mediterranean and Jean Eric Aubert representing the International University of the Sea in Cagnes-sur-Mer (as a scientist and former member of international organizations such as OECD and IMF), accompanied us at this important event.

The Saturday, June 7 day, dedicated to the launch of the Coastal Cities Coalition, opened interesting prospects for the development of territorial dynamics around citizen participation, particularly towards youth.

It is conceivable to imagine an annual Hackathon dedicated to students, pupils, and teachers on the theme of Oceans. This event could become a lasting meeting point serving impact entrepreneurship.

Following the announcement of the Coastal Zones Coalition, the City of Nice announced its intention to build its operational secretariat. Moreover, the city expressed interest in repeating experiences such as this Hackathon.

These various elements, still under development, deserve particular attention, as they could ultimately help structure a dynamic local ecosystem around maritime transition.

BEFF Blue Economy Finance Forum in Monaco (June 8)

On June 8, the Blue Economy Finance Forum in Monaco was held, where Robin Degron for UNEP Plan Bleu, Frank Schweikert for the German Ocean Foundation, and Thomas Egli were present.

Thomas Egli presented the A.G.I.L.E tool of the Geneva Foundation for the Future, which was recognized as a “Top Initiative” by the Blue Economy and Finance Forum of Monaco. This recognition followed the presentation of the AGILE tool, an innovative solution dedicated to transforming impact finance.

This tool proposes a paradigm shift. It aims to redirect financial systems to support the regeneration of natural ecosystems rather than their degradation. It is no longer a matter of generating wealth through extraction or destruction, but through the restoration and sustainable valorization of life.

The AGILE tool addresses a major paradox: despite the abundance of capital in impact finance, many high-potential projects remain underfunded. To address this situation, AGILE is based on five evaluation pillars designed to harmonize analysis criteria, avoid fragmentation of frameworks, and establish a common language between investors, philanthropists, and project leaders.

For more information on this subject, you can find the project at the following link:

<https://geneva-for-future.foundation/AGILE-A-tool-that-serves-as-an-operational-response-to-align-finance-and-impact.html?lang=fr>

Conclusion

This 3rd edition of the UNOC focused on action enabled the Hackathon to take root and highlight the importance of participatory science in support of sustainable development and the ecological transition serving the oceans.

In view of the creation of an Ocean COP expected to take place in autumn 2026 in New York, the Hackathon could become a structuring and permanent event, strengthening the link between civil society, research, and decision-makers.

It thus establishes itself as a strategic lever to bring out concrete, inclusive, and replicable solutions, as close as possible to coastal territories and communities.