Worldwide marine environments are in serious decline and despite their life-supporting role, governance systems have often failed to improve protection of coastal and marine resources. Addressing and changing the drivers behind marine degradation requires enhanced cross-scale and regional collaboration to increase social-ecological resilience and enhance the capacity of ecosystem to generate goods and services for human well-being. However, developing a regional governance system in which a multitude of stakeholder groups can participate is a complex undertaking that will require innovative approaches and modes of collaboration, as well as transformative capacity.

I will present the results from a study of transformability dynamics of marine governance in the Coral Triangle (CT). The CT is a large-scale marine ecosystem at the confluence of the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific that covers all or parts of the Exclusive Economic Zones of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and the Salomon Islands. More specifically the study investigates the emergence of the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI), a multilateral partnership between the abovementioned countries, foreign state agencies and international NGOs that was launched in 2007.

I analyze the development of the CTI and identify key conditions and strategies that enabled the concept of CTI to develop into a multi-stakeholder partnership and two years later culminate in a historic agreement between the six heads of state. I show how the development of the CTI is a multi-phase process and identify key components and drivers of each phase. I will also discuss how the agency of particular individuals and organizations have navigated the broader opportunity context thus enabling the formation of a multi-stakeholder partnership and transformation in the social-ecological system as a whole.