

A transformation in the making? Exploring emerging adaptive governance structures in the multi-national Coral Triangle Initiative

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part of panel: Marine transformations and adaptive governance

This presentation will use preliminary results from an ongoing study of the governance of a large marine ecosystem, namely the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), to examine the dynamic evolution of a transformation process. We begin our presentation by outlining the conceptual and theoretical framework we use to characterize and analyze this unfolding transformation of marine governance at a large, international scale. This builds on previous work by Olsson and colleagues and it conceptualizes transformation as occurring in phases. In the initial phase actors with a vision of an alternative trajectory attempt to prepare the system for change by actively tying actors together in networks, promoting a new and shared vision of an alternative governance trajectory and waiting for a window of opportunity to affect change in the system. When such a window appears, these actors attempt to mobilize the resources (social and capital) which have been built up in the preparation phase to affect a change in the direction of which the system is heading; for example towards more adaptive governance with greater inclusion of local stakeholders. In the final phase of a transformation, working to make the new vision and new governance arrangement stick is one of the most important task for change agents.

Using this conceptual model of transformation in social-ecological systems as a lens, we examine the unique effort at governing a large-scale regionally inter-connected ecosystem represented by the CTI. We use preliminary data to examine the first two phases of this unfolding transformation and focus on two aspects (i) identification of the key actors behind the conception and initiation of the CTI; and (ii) the types of strategies and visions employed by these key actors to prepare the system for change and how these interacted with different windows of opportunity. We conclude by reflecting on some of the potential social and ecological trade-offs emerging from this governance transformation at different levels, ranging from the state to the local community.