

## **Beyond fragmentation, towards polycentricity: Can informal networks help integrate issues affecting marine governance at the global scale?**

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This presentation takes a global perspective on marine governance challenges and possibilities for transformation. It poses the question: what role can informal partnerships and networks play in transforming current trajectories and integrating divergent issues affecting marine governance at the global scale?

Marine processes are intimately intertwined with what happens on land, and in the air. Issues relating to pollution, excess nutrient loads, increasing carbon dioxide levels and ocean acidification, as well as biodiversity and food security are all interlinked, presenting a challenging governance complex. Given this complexity, what governance structures can hope to address this issue complex at the global scale? Governance scholars have debated this issue extensively, often in terms of fragmentation or polycentricity, but largely with a focus on formal institutions. Our ongoing work, following a current partnership network for integrating marine governance issues, shows that these types of informal networks could play a potentially important role in bridging and integrating different policy fields, such as biodiversity, ocean acidification, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and global food security - which at the global scale have traditionally been dealt with largely as silos. In other words, they could play an important role in addressing some of the challenges of marine governance and thus contribute to transformation.

Based on preliminary data we map the initiation and evolution of the informal network which forms the partnership referred to by themselves as 'climate fish'. We look at how the characteristics of this network and the diversity of actors, both in terms of organizational focus and scale of operations, has contributed to address the interaction of the multiple policy fields that affect marine governance at the global scale. In doing so we attempt to show (albeit preliminarily) how these types of cross-scale (in terms of the organizations involved), globally spanning networks can play a role in marine governance transformation by providing structures which can i) bridge poorly connected policy fields and arenas and play an important role in integrating the divergent issues threatening marine environments, and ii) function as platforms for learning across regional initiatives, with potentially synergistic effects in terms of spread of new ideas, transfer of lessons learned etc.