Scale Matters: Institutional Dynamics and Scalar Politics of Conservation Governance in the Pacific Islands

by

Rebecca Lou Blasser Gruby

Nicholas School of the Environment
Duke University

Date:____________________
Approved:

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Lisa M. Campbell, Supervisor

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Catherine Corson

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Larry B. Crowder

____
Xavier Basurto Guillermo

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Michael K. Orbach

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Nicholas School of the Environment
in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

In an era of 'global' oceans crisis, marine conservationists have issued a resounding call to increase the spatial scale of ocean conservation. This dissertation examines the drivers and implications of recent efforts to scale up ocean conservation in places simultaneously celebrated for their revival of community-based conservation: the Pacific Islands region, the Micronesian sub-region, and the nation of Palau. Toward this end, this research engages and advances critical human geography theory on scalar politics and institutional theory on the governance of common pool resources to address the overarching questions: why and how are state and non-state actors rescaling ocean conservation, and with what social, political, and institutional consequences? These questions are approached empirically through a multi-sited case study that ethnographically tracks institutions, actors, funding, and agendas from the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to five Pacific Island nations and territories, revealing the links among macro and micro level processes in diverse political and geographical spaces.

This research conceptualizes the rescaling of ocean conservation as an integral component of social struggles for empowerment. Results illustrate how state and non-state actors pursue their contextually specific goals by working together to scale up the objects of ocean conservation. The means through which they achieve rescaling include discursive framings, performative acts, and institutional changes. Most significantly, these 'scalar practices' have resulted in empowerment of environmental non-

governmental organizations and Pacific Island governments within multi-level conservation governance processes; accumulation of international attention and funding at the regional level in Micronesia; and reduced local autonomy for conservation governance in Palau.

Overall, this work contributes an empirically grounded, theoretically engaged, and policy-relevant analysis of the scalar politics and institutional dynamics that are reshaping the actors, objectives, and institutions of contemporary ocean conservation across multiple levels of governance. Conclusions advance theory on the scalar dimensions of environmental governance by conceptualizing regions as strategically constructed tools of environmental politics; expanding understanding of the form and function of multi-level regimes for the governance of large common pool resources; and advancing constructive theoretical dialogue between critical human geographers and institutional theorists. This work may also inform policy discussions by illuminating complex tradeoffs that result from scalar rearrangements.

Dedication

For my parents, Wendy and Danny,

Who taught me that I can.

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1. Introduction

> *"We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recent liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom." Epeli Hau'ofa (2008, p. 39)*

Are Pacific Islands small? The combined land area of twenty-one countries and territories commonly included within the Pacific Islands region[1] is about 550,000km^2, 84% of which is in Papua New Guinea (Tutangata and Power 2002, p. 873-4). Only ten Pacific Islands have total land areas greater than 700 km^2, while three have less than 30 km^2 (Tutangata and Power 2002, p. 873). Historically there exists a prevailing discourse of Pacific Islands as tiny, isolated, and dependent: "According to this view, the small island states and territories of the Pacific [. . .] are too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated to rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations" (Hau'ofa 2008, p. 29).

On the other hand, are Pacific Islands vast? Their combined 550,000 km^2 of land represents just 2% of the region's total area (Tutangata and Power 2002, p. 873). The remaining 98% is ocean. As a whole, the Pacific Islands region occupies about 5.8%[2] of the Earth's surface (Chasek 2005, p. 127). Moreover, individual Pacific Island exclusive economic zones dwarf their respective land areas, ranging from 120,000 km^2 in Samoa up to 3.1 million km^2 in French Polynesia (Tutangata and Power 2002, p. 874). Epeli

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[1] American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis & Futuna.

[2] This percentage will depend on what entities are included in the Pacific Islands region (see Chapter 2).

Hau'ofa (2008, p.37) has argued that when exclusive economic zones are taken into account, the Pacific Islands of Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, and French Polynesia "are among the largest countries in the world."

This dissertation considers how and why certain Pacific Island governments, together with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are forging new answers to the above questions in the context of a 'global' oceans crisis and associated imperatives to scale up ocean conservation (Gray 2010; Sievanen et al. 2013). Recent research has declared a "worldwide decline of coral reefs" (Bellwood et al. 2004, p.827), concluding that no ocean area is unaffected by humans impacts (Halpern et al. 2008). In the context of society's growing attention to ocean health and governance, the oceans have become increasingly prominent on the global conservation agenda, as reflected by new conferences devoted to marine conservation; investment in oceans research and conservation by major philanthropic organizations and big, international NGOs; and calls for a global network of marine protected areas by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the 2003 World Parks Congress, and the Convention of Biological Diversity's 2010 and 2020 protected areas targets (Gray 2010). In each of these fora, as well as in the scientific literature, one finds resounding imperatives to increase the spatial scale of ocean conservation (Gray 2010; Gaines et al. 2010 ; Roberts et al. 2003; Bellwood et al. 2004; Sievanen et al. 2013).

In this context, state and non-state actors working in the Pacific Islands are attempting to supplant the "belittling" view of Pacific Islands as small, isolated, and irrelevant (Hau’ofa 2008, p. 29) with discursive framings, performative acts, and institutional changes that rescale Pacific Islands into large ocean states and/or regions capable of advancing the global ocean conservation agenda. Rescaling refers to:

> “[T]he process in which policies and politics that formerly took place at one scale are shifted to others in ways that reshape the practices themselves, redefine the scales to and from which they are shifted, and reorganize interactions between scales” (McCann 2003, p. 162).

Specifically, this dissertation examines the drivers and implications of interlinked efforts to scale up the spaces and agents of ocean conservation in the Pacific Islands region, the Micronesian sub-region, and the nation of Palau – places simultaneously celebrated for their “renaissance of community-based marine resource management” and reinvigoration of local marine tenure (Johannes 2002, p. 317; Cinner and Aswani 2007; Aswani and Ruddle 2013). In so doing, this dissertation contributes an empirically grounded, theoretically engaged, and policy-relevant analysis of the scalar and institutional dynamics that are currently reshaping the actors, objectives, and institutions of ocean conservation across multiple levels of governance. While results are relevant to conservation practitioners and policy-makers, they are not prescriptive. The analysis herein conceptualizes the rescaling of ocean conservation as an integral component of struggles for empowerment and control (Swyngedouw 2000), and may inform ocean policy discussions by illuminating complex tradeoffs that result from scalar rearrangement.

1.1 Research Questions

The research presented in this dissertation addresses three overarching questions:

(1) Why are state and non-state actors rescaling ocean conservation?

(2) How are state and non-state actors rescaling ocean conservation?

(3) What are the social, political, and institutional[3] outcomes of rescaling ocean conservation?

I approach these questions through a multi-sited case study that ethnographically tracks interlinked rescaling processes across global, regional, national, and local governance levels, revealing the links among macro and micro level processes in diverse political and geographical spaces:

A. Chapter 2, Global level: What are the incentives for and implications of Pacific Island regionalism in the context of global governance processes relating to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity?

B. Chapter 3, Regional level: How and why has interstate cooperation for environmental governance emerged at the regional scale in Micronesia? How is regional environmental governance functioning within, for, and against participating jurisdictions?

---

[3] Institutions herein refer to the formal and informal rules, norms, and strategies that structure human interactions (Ostrom 2005).

C. Chapter 4, National/Local level: How and why is local environmental governance being scaled up in Palau through a national protected area network?

1.2 Theoretical approach

I conceptualize ocean conservation as a form of environmental governance tied to the global biodiversity conservation agenda (Sievanen et al. 2013). In asking and addressing the above questions, this dissertation draws from and contributes to a growing and multi-disciplinary body of literature on the scalar dimensions of environmental governance. The terrain of literature on environmental governance, including conservation, is large and diverse, ranging widely in core questions, values, assumptions, disciplines (i.e. geography, political science, anthropology, sociology, economics, etc.), and methodologies. However, it is united by a general understanding of environmental governance as a broad suite of formal and informal institutions and processes through which state and non-state actors influence incentives, knowledge, institutions, decision-making, and behavior relating to human-environment interactions (Lemos and Agrawal 2006). A defining feature of research on environmental governance is its attention to agents of influence beyond formal systems of laws and regulation and centralized governments. A review of scholarship on environmental governance offered the following summary:

> “[W]e use “environmental governance” to refer to the set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organizations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes. Governance is not the same as

> government. It includes the actions of the state and, in addition, encompasses actors such as communities, businesses, and NGOs. [. . .] International accords, national policies and legislation, local decision-making structures, transnational institutions, and environmental NGOs are all examples of the forms through which environmental governance takes place. Because governance can be shaped through nonorganizational institutional mechanisms as well (for example, when it is based on market incentives and self-regulatory processes), there is no escaping it for anyone concerned about environmental outcomes. Environmental governance is varied in form, critical in importance, and near ubiquitous in spread" (Lemos and Agrawal 2006, p. 298).

As a result of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s-1990s that emphasized civil society participation in state policy and cutbacks in government resources (McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Keck and Sikkink 1998; MacDonald 2010a, 2010b; Corson 2010; Corson et al. 2013), many environmental governance functions formerly of centralized governments are purportedly shifting up to international and transnational institutions, down to local authorities; and out to non-state actors through multi-level institutions (McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Reed and Bruyneel 2010; Lemos and Agrawal 2006). Human geographers, institutional theorists, political scientists, anthropologists and other scholars of environmental governance are increasingly focused on the concept of scale as they attempt to inform and understand attendant changes in the geographies of environmental governance (Andonova and Mitchell 2010; Bulkeley 2005; Lemos and Agrawal 2006; Reed and Bruyneel 2010). Geographers Bridge and Perreault (2009, non-paginated eBook), for example, identified "re-scaling" as one of six key problematics of the expanding field of research in environmental governance.

While it is true that "[t]he literature on environmental governance has increasingly emphasized the importance of scale" (Andonova and Mitchell 2010, p.256), there is a disciplinary divide in how scale is conceptualized therein. A majority of the literature on environmental governance treats spatial scale as a constant, objectively knowable variable to which governance institutions must be appropriately matched (Andonova and VanDeveer 2011; Silver 2008; Reed and Bruyneel 2010; Cash et al. 2006; Bridge and Perrault 2009). For example, a particularly prominent research agenda within the interdisciplinary "resilience literature" has organized around the problem of fit, defined as the mismanagement that occurs when the spatial, temporal, and/or functional bounds of governance institutions do not match, or fit, ecosystem boundaries (e.g., Cash et al. 2006; Folke et al. 2007; Olsson et al. 2007). This conceptualization of spatial scale as ontologically given is markedly different from that in critical human geography, where scale is understood as socially constructed. For critical human geographers, that is, scale is "continuously being defined, contested, and reconstructed based on power relations between actors" (Silver 2008, p. 925).

These different conceptualizations of scale inform divergent objects of analysis within research on the scalar dimensions of environmental governance. As Bridge and Perreault (2009, non-paginated eBook) summarized:

> "A distinction can be made, however, between research in which processes of re-scaling are the things to be explained (and where scalar outcomes are uncertain), and work in which different scales of governance are already assumed and governance jumps one or more notches in the scale hierarchy."

As an example of the former, this dissertation contributes theoretical and applied understanding of the scalar politics and associated institutional dynamics that are shaping new geographies of ocean conservation. Toward this end, I engage and advance critical human geography theory on scale and scalar politics (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), and institutional theory on the governance of common pool resources (Chapter 4). Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 provide a very brief summary of these literatures; each is reviewed at depth in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Section 1.3 further describes how I contribute to each literature while addressing my overall research questions.

1.2.1 Critical human geography: scale and scalar politics

A growing literature in critical human geography, and more recently, within the sub-discipline of political ecology, has focused on scale as an object of theoretical inquiry (Brown and Purcell 2005; Neumann 2009). In this literature, and herein, scale is understood as “the focal setting at which spatial boundaries are defined for a specific social claim, activity, or behavior’’(Agnew 1997, p. 100). This conceptualization of scale has informed three main principles of scale theory: scale as both fluid and fixed; scale as relational; and scale as socially constructed (Brown and Purcell 2005). Critical human geographers have expanded upon these concepts in scale theory to frame a related body of literature on politics of scale or scalar politics (scalar politics herein) (MacKinnon 2011).

The scalar politics literature outlines an agenda for research on the “scalar practices of social actors” (Moore 2008, p. 212, as quoted in Neumann 2009) in which analytical attention is directed to the ways in which state and non-state actors manipulate scale – through practices of rescaling - to serve particular agendas, including regime formation and change (McCarthy 2005; Brown and Purcell 2005). Rescaling is a powerful tool of politics in governance processes that may lead to significant, though contingent, outcomes (McCann 2003).

There has been a call for closer attention to the environment in the theorization of scale and scalar politics, particularly with regard to environmental politics and governance, non-state actors, and non-human actors (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003; Neumann 2009; McCarthy 2005; Brown and Purcell 2005). An emergent body of work on the scalar politics of environmental governance has demonstrated, for example, that incentives for rescaling environmental governance processes may be drawn from a desire to affect the way environmental compensation is delivered (Cowell 2003), limit access to resources by particular groups (Campbell 2007; Campbell and Godfrey 2010), or redefine the objectives of conservation governance (Sievanen et al. 2013). Sievanen et al. (2013), for example, show how efforts to rescale community-based marine governance to ecoregional and ecosystem scales in Fiji reflect interest in biodiversity conservation as a key governance objective.

With a few recent exceptions, “much of the scale literature focuses overwhelmingly on states and capitals as the major architects of scales” (McCarthy 2005, p. 733). As mentioned earlier, the literature on environmental governance has identified influential roles for non-state actors, including environmental NGOs, in decision-making processes traditionally relegated to states (Keck and Sikkink 1998; MacDonald 2010a, 2010b; Price 1994; Sundberg 1998; Duffy 2006; Betsill and Corell 2008; Sievanen et al. 2013). Neoliberal reforms in the 1990s have been linked to a particularly prominent rise in the role of transnational environmental NGOs in environmental policy-making and governance, where:

> "[E]nvironmental governance [has been diffused] among states, individuals, NGOs, private companies, transnational institutions and local communities. In particular, as the boundaries among the state, private sector and nonprofit worlds have become more porous under neoliberalism, certain NGOs have stepped into the vacuum of state social provision (Corson 2010, p. 579).

For example, Duffy (2006) argues that the increasing influence of international environmental NGOs and the World Bank on national environmental politics and policy in Madagascar has created a "governance state" whereby governments of the developing world "become one partner among a complex array of other actors who operate together to provide specific policy outcomes" (Duffy 2006, p. 740). The influence of environmental NGOs in international decision-making processes has also "escalated" over the past two decades (Betsill and Corell 2008, p. 1). An edited volume on "NGO Diplomacy," for example, demonstrates how NGOs shape policy-making relating to the environment and sustainable development by engaging directly in formal international negotiations (Betsill and Corell 2008). While there is a growing interdisciplinary literature on the diverse roles of environmental NGOs in environmental governance processes (e.g., Jepson 2005; Corson 2010, Price 1994; Sundberg 1998; West 2006; Weber and Christopherson 2002), there has been relatively limited attention to the role of environmental NGOs in the reconfiguration of scale within environmental governance (but see McCarthy 2005; Gruby and Campbell In Press; Gruby and Basurto In Press; Sievanen et al. 2013).

This dissertation engages scalar politics to examine the diversity of actors and agendas driving projects of rescaling within environmental governance processes relating to ocean conservation, as well as the consequences thereof. A key contribution of this dissertation is its "theoretically informed and explicit analy[sis] of how scale and scalar politics are central to understanding human-environment relationships" (as called for in Brown and Purcell 2005, p. 614). Particular attention to the role of environmental NGOs therein is a related part of this contribution.

1.2.2 Institutional theory on the governance of common pool resources

In 1961, V. Ostrom et al. observed that some federalist systems were organized as polycentric political systems with many centers of decision-making, arguing that they could constitute a potential alternative to the theoretical ideal of monocentric systems with a dominant center of decision-making power. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, an empirical research agenda on polycentricism focused on the role of local institutions for the governance of common pool resources. This research resulted in a common pool resource theory that suggested the tragedy of the commons was not inevitable, and that people were capable of self-organizing to supply long-lasting, robust institutions for the governance of common pool resources (Ostrom 1990). Common pool resource (CPR) theory as defined by Elinor Ostrom and colleagues at the Bloomington School (Aligica and Boettke 2011) emerged mainly from research in local, small-scale settings (Ostrom 1990). Today, a critical research frontier is the governance of larger CPRs, which requires analysis of interdependencies among different levels and scales of more complex systems (Ostrom 2009; Heikkila et al. 2011).

Arguably dominated by 'collective action' perspectives (Young 2002) that assume methodological individualism (McCay 2002), common pool resource theory has been critiqued as being apolitical and de-contextualized, focusing on the internal structure of institutions at the expense of the formative context within which they are embedded (Mosse 1997; McCay 2002; Agrawal 2003; Clement 2010). This dissertation responds to this criticism by bringing a "thicker" (or, more ethnographic) historical, political, and geographical perspective to institutional change (McCay and Jentoft 1998, p. 21; see also Geertz 1973). In summary, this dissertation advances the research agenda on large-scale CPR governance by bringing together institutional theories of polycentricity and critical human geography theory on scalar politics to provide a thick, interpretive institutional analysis of recent efforts to rescale ocean conservation in Palau (Chapter 4).

1.3 Chapter summaries and theoretical contributions

1.3.1 Chapter 2: Global level

Global environmental governance meetings are sites of institutional and ideological work that shape ocean conservation around the world. These meetings are thus important not only as venues for negotiating multilateral environmental agreements, but also as stages upon which subaltern states may reshape their positions within and influence on the global processes that impact ocean conservation back home. Chapter 2 examines the process through which a region was enacted and politically mobilized at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This chapter draws on concepts from scalar politics to theorize the enactment of an oceanic Pacific Region as a scalar strategy directed toward transcending the practical and imagined smallness of Pacific small island developing states (SIDS) within the CoP10 meeting context and global imaginations.

This chapter concludes that the Pacific Region construct enhances Pacific SIDS' capacity to participate in CoP10, although their ability to influence decision-making remains relatively limited compared to others. Perhaps more important, the Pacific Region imaginary of a vast ocean space and network of people committed to the CBD and biodiversity conservation positions Pacific Islanders to play a crucial role in conserving a significant portion of the world's oceans. In the context of increasing global attention to marine conservation, the enactment of such a Pacific Region is likely to aid in attracting recognition, attention, and support from NGOs, foundations, and donors. By conveying how and why a diverse group of state and non-state actors enacted an international and oceanic region at CoP10, this chapter contributes understanding of strategic regionalization within the scalar politics literature and further disrupts understandings of an ontologically given, land-based region conceptualized on continental or subcontinental spatial scales.

1.3.2 Chapter 3: Regional level

Chapter 3 re-engages critical human geography scale theory to examine the institutionalization of a region through an instrument of regional environmental governance. Specifically, the chapter presents a descriptive, empirical analysis of the emergence, form, and function of the Micronesia Challenge, an institution for regional environmental governance characterized by cooperation among micro states and territories, thematic breadth, regional conservation targets linked to global ones, and major coordinating and financing roles for environmental NGOs. By outlining the political work that a region achieves through regional environmental governance, this chapter offers related contributions, first, to our understanding of a new and influential form of regional environmental governance outside of Europe, and, second, to the emerging research agenda on regional environmental governance within global environmental politics. Results indicate that, similar to the Pacific Region (Chapter 2), the version of Micronesia that is remade through the Micronesia Challenge is shaped in part by external actors and agendas that both complement and conflict with heterogeneous priorities of individual Pacific Islands.

1.3.3 Chapter 4: National/local levels

Finally, Chapter 4 brings together institutional theories of polycentricity and critical human geography theory on scalar politics to advance understanding of the form and function of nested, polycentric regimes for the governance of large-scale common pool resources. Empirical analysis focuses on institutional changes associated with a national marine protected area network in Palau through which national government and environmental NGOs gain influence in local decision-making processes. This chapter finds that influence is gained in part through an attempt to scale up common-pool resource governance to ecologically-relevant spatial scales in an effort to protect coral reef resilience and biodiversity across Palau. An institutional approach informed by scalar politics brings into focus potential tradeoffs between organizing reform around ecologically versus institutionally relevant scales, including: tradeoffs between governance goals, tradeoffs between jurisdictional nestedness and autonomy, and tradeoffs between biological and institutional diversity.

This chapter concludes that prioritization of ecologically-relevant scales in institutional reform resulted in nested but less polycentric institutional arrangements governing the network, and cautions that less distributed decision-making in the overall nested governance system could threaten coral reef biodiversity and fisheries outcomes in the long-term by constraining institutional innovation and diversity. This chapter also demonstrates the potential for interdisciplinary dialogue to advance the research frontier on multi-level governance for large common pool resources.

1.4 Methodology

This dissertation research undertakes a multi-sited, "distended case-study approach" that embodies the ethnographic tracking of policies, actors, agendas, and/or funding "through globalizing networks and across translocal settings" (Peck and Theodore 2012, p. 22). A distended case study relies on multi-sited research that reveals the links among processes in diverse political and geographical spaces –from a floating marine protected area monitoring outpost off the coast of Palau, to a United Nations policy-making meeting. In pursuing multi-sited research, I join a growing number of social scientists who are challenging traditional understandings of the field as a single, geographically bounded place (e.g., Marcus 1995; Peck and Theodore 2012; McCann and Ward 2012; Freidberg 2001; Brosius and Campbell 2010). Field sites for this dissertation included the 10th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the 17th Micronesian Chief Executive's Summit, and five nations and territories participating in the Micronesia Challenge: the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the unincorporated U.S. territory of Guam, and the U.S. jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Specific methods used to collect data within each of these sites are described in detail in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, and include various combinations of the following: collaborative event ethnography, semi-structured interviews, observation of policy meetings, and review of policy documents, conceptualized broadly to include laws, speech transcripts, meeting minutes and reports, promotional material, fact sheets and other documents (Shore and Wright 1997).[4] Data collection and analysis was guided by constructivist grounded theory, an iterative process of theoretical sampling whereby analyses of data takes place during and after data collection and guides the collection effort (Charmaz 2000). All interviews were transcribed and, along with policy documents and participant observation notes, uploaded to QSR NVivo software for interpretive, qualitative analysis. Analysis included a combination of thematic coding, process tracing (Venesson 2008), and/or conjunctural analysis of the actors and institutions that come together at specific historical conjunctures to produce particular political trajectories (Hart 2004; Corson 2008). Chapter 4 also complements interpretive qualitative analysis with formal institutional analysis (Ostrom 2005).

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[4] Policy documents cited in this dissertation are on file with author and generally are not included in the reference list.

1.5 Dissertation structure

This dissertation is written in a manuscript format. While the chapters are broadly united topically (the scalar dimensions of ocean conservation), geographically (Pacific Islands), and theoretically (critical human geography and institutional theory), each chapter also reflects a coherent, stand-alone research product that draws from a unique combination of methods and theoretical frameworks, the specifics of which are detailed in the chapters themselves.

Chapter 2 is co-authored with Lisa M. Campbell, and is in press in *Environment and Planning A*. Chapter 4 is co-authored with Xavier Basurto, and is in press in a special issue of *Environmental Science and Policy* entitled “Illuminating the Commons: A Special Issue on the Legacy of Elinor Ostrom.” Both are reprinted here with permission.

Chapter 2 was completed as part of a larger, interdisciplinary project that examined global environmental governance processes at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity from a collaborative ethnographic perspective. Our research team was comprised of 17 researchers who worked together to refine research questions, to observe hundreds of events associated with the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity over 12 days, to analyze (shared) data, and to write up results. Although the team approached several broad topics as large groups (e.g. climate and protected areas), the goals of the project included relating our collective work to our more specific, individual research interests, and chapter 2 is one such example.

The overall research design, data analysis, and text within this dissertation reflect my original intellectual work. I collected data individually, with the exception of that collected through collaborative event ethnography.

2. Scalar politics and the region: Strategies for transcending Pacific Island smallness on a global environmental governance stage

The material in Chapter 2 is reprinted herein with permission, and may be cited as: Gruby R., and Campbell L.M., In Press. Scalar Politics and the Region: Strategies for Transcending Pacific Island 'Smallness' on a Global Environmental Governance Stage. *Environment and Planning A*.[1]

In a 1998 essay, *The ocean in us*, Pacific scholar/activist Epeli Hau'ofa encouraged Pacific Islanders to act autonomously within global political-economic systems by acting together as a region. Hau'ofa attempted to counter a view of Pacific Islands as isolated, small, and dependent by outlining a new, "genuinely independent regionalism" distinct from the "imposed" regionalism of a recent colonial past and neocolonial present (Hau'ofa 2008, p. 47). At the center of his vision was a new regional identity characterized not by the smallness of distinct island territories, but rather, the vastness of a shared, unbounded ocean:

> "In portraying this new Oceania I wanted to raise [. . .] the kind of consciousness that would help free us from the prevailing, externally generated definitions of our past, present, and future. I wish now to take this issue further by suggesting the development of a substantial regional identity that is anchored in our common inheritance of a very considerable portion of Earth's largest body of water: the Pacific Ocean" (Hau'ofa 2008, p. 41).

In this paper, we treat regionalization as a scaling process, and contend that something resembling Hau'ofa's Pacific Region is being enacted on the global environmental governance stage.[2] Specifically, Pacific small island developing states (SIDS) are working with environmental NGOs and a regional intergovernmental organization to enact an oceanic region ordered around a "sea of islands"[3] tied together by an extensive ocean space and network of people and institutions committed to global biodiversity targets and a shared, "Pacific" way of life. Like Hau'ofa, we are concerned with the politics set in motion by (and underlying) the scaling of the Pacific Region as a united social and geographical space.

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[1] The authors thank Matthew T. Bowers for map-making assistance, and Luke W. Fairbanks and three anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments.

In this paper, we examine the processes through which the Pacific Region was enacted at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). We bring together concepts from new regional geography and scalar politics to theorize the enactment of an oceanic region as a scalar political project directed toward contextually specific ends. In so doing, we address the questions of whom the Pacific Region was speaking on behalf of at CoP10, and for whom and what is the region being put to work?

Throughout the paper, we use the term "enactment" and a metaphor of performance to convey our focus on the practices through which a particular version of the Pacific Region was strategically brought into existence on the global environmental governance stage set at CoP10 (cf Hajer 2009, p. 7). As such, we treat CoP10 as one context in which to understand how a region was enacted, for particular purposes and in response to particular incentives. Thus, the CBD CoP10 itself is not the focus of the analysis, but important insofar as it shapes or constrains the specific form and function that the region takes, as would other settings in likely different ways.

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[2] We use the term *global environmental governance* rather than *international environmental governance* to refer to the governance process described herein, including that of the UN, in acknowledgment that it includes various state and non-state actors working across multiple scales (Fisher and Green 2004). We adopt the UN term *multilateral* to refer to international agreements.

[3] Hau'ofa (2008, p. 32) coined this phrase in an attempt to break away from the notion of Pacific Islands as small, isolated "islands in the sea".

"Even to begin to confront the question, What is the Pacific?, it is necessary to define our terms by specifying *whose* Pacific --and when" (Dirlik 1998, p. 15). In this paper, Pacific Region refers to that enacted by a network of Pacific SIDS and partners at CoP10, unless otherwise specified.

2.1 Scalar politics and the region

Despite a lingering tendency in human geography to understand the region as a fixed scale between the national and local, treatments of regions as pregiven, bounded spaces have long been challenged (Paasi 2002; Paasi 2004). A new regional geography emerged in the 1980s in which regions are theorized as "historically contingent social processes emerging as a constellation of institutionalized practices, power relations and discourse" (Paasi 2004, p. 540; see also Pred 1984). Critical human geographers have not only questioned the ontological status of regions, but also that of scale (Marston 2000), theorizing scale as a social construction that must be understood in terms of the processes, political agendas, and power relationships that produce it (Silver 2008; Swyngedouw 2000; McCann 2003). Like region, scale is fluid and contingent – even if it may become associated with particular processes, or fixed, over certain periods and in particular contexts (Brown and Purcell 2005; McCann 2003; Sievanen et al. 2013).

The literature on scalar politics argues that scales are strategically reworked in policy processes for political purposes, including regime formation and change (Bulkeley 2005; Neumann 2009; McCarthy 2005; McCann 2003; Sneddon 2003; Swyngedouw 2000). McCarthy (2005), for example, demonstrates how actors can use a variety of scalar strategies to influence the outcomes of environmental governance processes. From this perspective, scale is not just an outcome of social process but also an instrument for reshaping power dynamics (Mansfield 2001). Analytical attention to scalar politics thereby focuses on the processes through which scales are constructed as part of political strategies (Swyngedouw 2000).

Region is seldom explicitly considered in the scale debate, and efforts to relate region and scale have resulted in calls to view the region through "the prism of scale" (Paasi 2004, p. 536; see also Neumann 2010). Here, we answer this call in part by examining the process of regional enactment through the prism of scalar politics, which, we contend, may be achieved by foregrounding the politics driving and resulting from the scaling processes through which a region is (re)constituted over time. We take this approach in our analysis of the discursive and performative practices through which actors enacted the Pacific Region at CoP10 in an effort to enhance their ability to participate in the CBD governance process and increase their visibility among global conservation actors, particularly donors. Our focus on the enactment of the Pacific Region "means constantly trying to relate discursive work [. . .] to situations (settings, stagings). […] It is through this discursive and dramaturgical[4] work that political actors *perform* or *enact* a situation, either reconfirming an existing and powerful way of seeing, or breaking away from it and rendering other perspectives in crisis" (Hajer 2009, p. 7).

As a result, our analysis finds regions to be not only the outcome of historically contingent social practices (Paasi 2004) but, more specifically, tools of a scalar politics that affects developing country and civil society participation in a UN environmental governance process and the position of Pacific SIDS more broadly within global environmental governance. Although we consider some consequences of the scalar politics, both observed and potential, it is the incentives for and execution of the scalar strategies that are of central concern here. By conveying why and how a diverse group of actors enacted a vast international and oceanic region at CoP10 (one both similar to and different than other versions of the Pacific Region), we contribute understanding of regionalization within the scalar politics literature and further disrupt understandings of an ontologically given, fixed, and land-based region conceptualized on continental or subcontinental scales.

2.2 Field site and methods

The CBD is a product of the 1992 UN Earth Summit, and entered into force in

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[4] In common language, the term "dramaturgy" means: "the art of technique of dramatic composition and theatrical representation" (Websters New Collegiate Dictionary 1997, p. 345). As Hajer (2006, p. 48, emphasis in original) contends: "Invoking dramaturgical terms such as 'performativity' and 'performance' actually opens up a dimension to policy analysis that we could not capture with the discourse-analytical tools alone. The dramaturgical terms convey the understand that certain meanings constantly have to be reproduced, that signification must be *enacted*, and that this takes place in a particular 'setting.'"

1993. With currently 193 parties, the CBD is one of the major multilateral conventions on the environment. Since 2002, the CBD has produced global biodiversity targets, but National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans are the principal instruments for implementing the convention. In recognition of the costs to individual nation states tasked with protecting globally valued biodiversity, a mechanism for funding the CBD was established and is administered through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which increases the convention's influence. CBD decisions shape biodiversity conservation ideology and practice in Pacific Islands, as state and NGO actors align their work with CBD priorities to meet conservation targets, secure legitimacy, and access funding through GEF and other sources.

The main governing mechanism for the CBD is the Conference of the Parties (CoP). The CBD CoP convenes every two years, to review progress on programs of work, take decisions on particular issues, and set new priorities. Although only party delegates can vote on CBD decisions, the CoP and all of its meetings are open to observers accredited as members of 'major groups', including business, NGOs, and the scientific community. Observers may participate in proceedings (e.g. offer comments or opinions) unless one third of parties to the convention objects. At CoP10, proceedings included plenary sessions; two concurrent working groups; and simultaneous, smaller 'contact groups' and 'friends of the chair' meetings for negotiating the text of specific decisions on 15 substantive issues ranging from protected areas to the Global Taxonomy Initiative, and 10 procedural issues related to the evaluation and implementation of the

CBD, including the revised strategic plan and associated biodiversity targets.

The CoP is much more than its official proceedings. CoP10 activities included a high-level ministerial segment restricted to senior representatives of signatory states and invited presenters; hundreds of side events organized by NGOs and other civil society actors, to highlight research, examples, or arguments of relevance to decisions before the CoP; exhibit space occupied by interest groups; public events designed to communicate the CBD mandate; and numerous informal gatherings. Thus, the CBD brings together a diversity of actors interested in biodiversity conservation, and "like all international agreements, is more than simply a document; it is an institution that calls into being an active political space" (MacDonald and Corson 2012, p. 167). The CoP10 thus presents a novel opportunity to observe scalar strategies in context, as they are performed in public venues for a specific audience and toward often clearly articulated ends. We treat the meeting as a field site that presents a window into often less visible social processes.

This research stems from a larger project that examines global environmental governance processes at meetings like CoP10, from an ethnographic perspective**.** Large global meetings like the CoP constrain ethnographic approaches by their size and short duration. Our response to these constraints is Collaborative Event Ethnography (Brosius and Campbell 2010), a methodological innovation that brings together a group of researchers working within a shared analytical framework who collaborate to achieve research objectives. Our team was made up of 17 researchers, who worked together to refine research questions, to observe hundreds of events associated with CoP10 over 12 days, to analyze (shared) data, and to write up results. Ethnographic coverage of events involved recording the dialogue, making observational notes, collecting documents, photographing presentation slides and the event setting, and sometimes conducting short interviews with key participants (for more on the CEE method, see Brosius and Campbell 2010).

Although the team tackled several broad topics as large groups (e.g. climate (Hagerman et al. 2012) and protected areas (Corson et al. In Press)), the goals of the project included relating our collective work at CoP10 to our more specific, individual research interests, and this paper is one such example. At CoP10, the first author attended 6 side events specifically related to Pacific SIDS, 2 press briefings, and an "Island Fiesta" party organized by the Global Island Partnership. She was invited to a number of informal events and eventually to the daily strategic meeting of the Pacific SIDS. The Pacific Region was also visible during more formal plenary and working group meetings, and at contact group meetings for specific decisions. These events were covered by the authors, or by other members of the CEE team. The first author complemented CEE data by conducting interviews with 8 of the 13 members of the Palauan delegation to CoP10 while in Palau in July-October 2011, to deepen our understanding of delegate experiences with the enactment of the Pacific Region at the CoP. We further complemented CEE data by reviewing documents that described the strategy of the Pacific SIDS and their partners.

We coded resulting data thematically (using QSR Nvivo software), focusing on the form and function of the Pacific Region and the activities, discourses, and settings through which it was enacted. Although we focus on the enactment of the Pacific Region, we acknowledge that Pacific SIDS delegations and their partners have other strategies to achieve their agendas at CoP10. We also acknowledge and that the Pacific Region was not the only version presented at the CoP10; for example, there were related efforts to enact and draw support for smaller (Micronesia) and larger (Asia-Pacific) regions. Here, we focus on the Pacific Region as the most publically visible enactment at CoP10.

2.3 Setting the stage for the Pacific Region

Recognizing regions as the tenuous products of historicized and contextualized processes, we begin our analysis with an account of post-colonial regionalism in the Pacific and the structural forces that incentivized the Pacific Region as enacted at CoP10: UN institutions and the structure of the CoP10 meeting. In the sections that follow, we unpack the specific practices and discourses through which the Pacific Region was enacted at CoP10.

2.3.1 Postcolonial Pacific regionalism[5]

Regionalism has characterized the economic and social development planning of most Pacific Island governments for more than 60 years (Fischer 2002; South and Low 2008). In historical accounts of Pacific regionalism, some focus on the agency of Pacific

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[5] Though a full review of Pacific regionalism is beyond the scope of this paper (cf. Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer 2006), we highlight arguments about a pre-existing, neo-colonial regionalism as important historical context for understanding the development and function of the Pacific Region.

Island governments in working together to pursue collective diplomatic and development goals (Campbell 2003). More critical analyses argue that contemporary regionalism "is a direct creation of colonialism," beginning in 1947 when Australia, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States established and set the agenda of the South Pacific Commission (renamed the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in 1997) (Hau'ofa 2008, p. 47). Frazer and Bryant-Tokalau (2006) go further to characterize the promotion of regionalism by former colonial powers in the 1940s through the SPC as a self-interested neo-colonial security strategy.

Frustrated with external domination in SPC, indigenous leaders of newly independent Pacific Island countries formed the South Pacific Forum in 1971 (renamed the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in 2000) as an "exclusive club" that did not include Britain, France, or the United States (Hau'ofa 2008, p. 48). Though the PIF was formed "in opposition to colonialism and neo-colonialism" (Fischer 2002, p. 284), the organization's autonomy was arguably also compromised by the involvement of Australia and New Zealand, as they provide most of the funding and direction for the cooperation and thereby "put themselves in the best position to shape regionalism, and use it as a means for securing their strategic interests" (Frazer and Bryant-Tokalau 2006, p. 2). Crocombe (2001, p. 594) has described this arrangement as a "metropolitan/islands regionalism." These two intergovernmental organizations, the SPC and the PIF, have dominated Pacific Island regionalism for decades (Fischer 2002), and it is within this context of a complex and fraught history of Pacific regionalism that Hau'ofa advanced his call for “a new sense of the region that is our own creation,” one that is “anchored in our common heritage of the ocean” (Hau’ofa 2008, pgs. 47 and 55).

2.3.2 UN Institutions

The UN Environment Program’s (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the UN Conference on Environment and Development and the organizations and institutions arising from these have also been described as “driving forces” of regional cooperation in the Pacific Islands (South and Low 2008, p. 576). Initiatives linked to these broader programs and multilateral agreements have institutionalized the broader SIDS grouping at global, regional, and sub-regional levels. Within the UN, the 51 islands considered to be SIDS are defined as:

> “[L]ow-lying coastal countries that share similar sustainable development challenges, including small population, limited resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, vulnerability to external shocks, and excessive dependence on international trade” (UNDESA 2012).

UN sustainable development institutions have long singled out SIDS as a special case in terms of their unique vulnerabilities and relationship to the oceans; for example, Agenda 21, the plan of action on sustainable development adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, encourages SIDS to cooperate with one another and international organizations in support of sustainable development goals. The objectives in Agenda 21 have been translated into specific policy actions through SIDS-specific institutional processes, beginning in 1994 with the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which led to the adoption of the Barbados Programme of

Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Within the CBD, the SIDS grouping was institutionalized mostly notably in 2006 through the programme of work on island biodiversity, which supports the development of national or regional targets to achieve program objectives (CBD CoP 8 VIII/1/8.). UNEP is supporting SIDS participation in negotiating and implementing multilateral environment agreements (including the CBD) in the Pacific, Africa, and Caribbean regions through a four-year multi-million Euro capacity enhancement project funded by the European Union, titled: "Capacity Building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries."

2.3.3 The CBD CoP 10: Setting constraints and incentives

The UNEP project mentioned above stems from understanding that Pacific SIDS' participation in CoP processes is constrained by limited capacity (Key and Peteru 2011). Fisher and Green (2004) suggest the disenfranchisement of developing countries in multilateral regimes for sustainable development is a function of a nation's endogenous human resources, transnational connectivity to policy-relevant information, and geopolitical status. Here, we focus on the constraints posed by the limited endogenous resources (Fisher and Green 2004) of individual Pacific SIDS within the CoP10 meeting setting, to convey specific situational incentives for acting together as a region.

As described above, CoP meetings are large and complex, with many events occurring simultaneously. Informal meetings started at 8 AM, formal events began at 10 AM, and negotiations sometimes ran through the night. The CBD Secretariat provided funding for one delegate from each Pacific Island party to attend CoP10; those countries that sent more than one delegate secured funding from other sources (SPREP NDa), including NGOs and foreign countries. Of the 14 Pacific SIDS parties to the CBD, 13 sent delegations to CoP10. The average delegation was 3 to 4 people and the most common delegation size was a single person. Most of those individuals are responsible for representing their country in more than one multilateral environmental meeting (Key and Peteru 2011). Given the simultaneous events structure of CoP10 and the wide ranging historical, technical, and procedural knowledge necessary to act purposively within that structure, the size of a delegation and the level of knowledge, experience, and training held by individual delegates are determining factors in a nation's capacity to participate. When asked about the challenges that individual SIDS delegations face at the CBD, one Palauan delegate explained:

> "We can't afford to bring many people. And certainly we're limited in terms of technical capacity in all the areas that are discussed at the CoP. And thirdly, the human sustainability within those thematic areas, or maybe the turnover, is so constant here in Palau that there is no particular person that could …follow through, considering the history of the process" (interview, July 2011).

In addition to historic regionalism and broader UN institutional processes, the CoP10 meeting structure itself provides strong incentives for Pacific SIDS to work together. As we will describe, Pacific SIDS enrolled one another and NGOs into what amounted to a regional delegation. Together, the official Pacific SIDS delegations to CoP10 were 52 people, and the UN and EU interest in both SIDS and regionalism meant that funds to support development and enactment of the Pacific Region were available.

2.4 Enacting the Pacific Region at CoP10

Preparations for CoP10 among Pacific SIDS began two months before the event, when the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) brought together eleven Pacific SIDS, four conservation NGOs, environment agencies in New Zealand and Australia, SPC, the University of the South pacific, and UNEP for a Pacific regional preparatory meeting in Fiji on August 16-18, 2010. SPREP is the regional CBD focal point, with the mandate to assist member countries in preparing for CoP meetings and implementing CBD objectives, and an overall mission "to serve as the conduit for concerted environmental action at the regional level." SPREP originated in 1982 as a small program attached to SPC, but was established as an autonomous body through an intergovernmental agreement in 1993.

Organizers of the preparatory meeting provided an overview of the regional and global context of the CBD, lessons learned from past meetings, and a review of the meeting agenda, establishing a transnational connectivity and information flow that is considered to be a prerequisite for overcoming disenfranchisement (Fisher and Green 2004,). Participants in this preparatory meeting laid the groundwork for a coordinated physical and discursive presence at CoP10 by negotiating regional positions on nine CBD issues, and assigning specific delegates to represent the region in negotiations on those issues at CoP10. As a Palauan delegate explained, "we had a lead country and a back-up country, so if the lead country was not there, the back-up country was there prepared with the Pacific position on the issue" (interview, July 2011). Participants also developed a communications campaign – dubbed “One Pacific Voice” or the “Pacific Voyage” – to elevate their visibility at CoP10. The preparatory meeting effectively rescaled the positions, actions, and discourse of Pacific SIDS and their partners from the national to the regional, structuring the Pacific Region within the imaginations of those who would enact it at CoP10 and thereby producing an interdependent regional delegation:

> “The national priorities are still important for the countries, but the [preparatory] meeting helped to facilitate these to a discussion on the regional level, so they can be promoted together as a Pacific Voice at the international level” (Easter Galuvao, Biodiversity Adviser for SPREP, quoted in SPREP 2010a).

Participating Pacific SIDS and their partners solidified their regional delegation at CoP10 through continuous interactions at the event, as they renegotiated their priorities in the dynamic meeting context and coordinated their distribution among simultaneous events. Pacific delegates and partners gathered each morning for strategic meetings, which a Palauan delegate described thus:

> “[E]very morning we would all meet, all the Pacific Islands, and we get to talk about issues that were discussed in the plenary the day before, kind of brief everybody, and … coordinate issues that were coming up, who is gonna say something about it” (interview, July 2011).

Pacific delegates and partners also whispered to one another during formal proceedings and side events, gathered in a designated Pacific hub area, and met in hallways and cafeterias. They kept in touch continuously through Skype, as a Palauan delegate described: “People in different rooms, they were just kind of keeping people up to date on what was happening and there were a couple times that I would say, ok this is happening, should I say anything?" (interview, July 2011). In other words, Pacific SIDS and their partners enacted a Pacific Region in part by acting as a region, depending on one another to represent the group. The first author observed this strategy play out during a marine 'contact group' meeting (October 22) when a Palauan delegate walked into the room, late and out of breath. He scanned the room and upon noticing that the Pacific had representatives in the room, immediately departed, presumably to expend effort elsewhere. Indeed, in formal negotiations, Pacific SIDS delegates often spoke for the entire region: e.g., "we in the Pacific … are concerned about issues related to status of highly migratory species and species vulnerability on the high seas" (Palauan delegate intervention, marine contact group, October 22, 2010).

In addition to conducting "collective diplomacy" (Fry 1994, p. 70), what did this regional delegation do and say with its 'one Pacific voice' at CoP10 to scale and fortify a Pacific Region within the imaginations of other CoP10 participants? We identified three pillars around which a connected, expansive, and engaged Pacific Region was brought into public existence at CoP10: a shared regional identity, a common commitment to global biodiversity conservation, and a large and boundary-less ocean territory.

2.4.1 Performing One Pacific Voice

As delegates, observers, and the first author walked into the side event, "Pacific SIDS: Value Island Biodiversity: It's our life" (Side Event 2215, October 22, 2010), we were greeted by a Fijian woman wearing a flowered dress, a lei, and a flower in her hair. She handed us a necklace of white seashells, and explained that we would be going on a

"Pacific voyage." Surrounded by the vibrant and stereotypically island-themed textiles and dress, we were indeed enrolled into a celebration of (a shared) culture that felt worlds away from the swirl of suits and science that characterized so many of the events at CoP10.

The presenters in the side event were from Samoa, Kiribati, Fiji, SPREP, and the GEF, but they referred frequently to the centrality of biodiversity to the traditions, livelihoods, and institutions of the Pacific people and their shared way of life. The Director of the SPREP, for example, described the meaning of the "Value Island Biodiversity: It's our life" slogan thus:

> "This theme reflects the reality of life in the Pacific – Biodiversity is indeed the lifeblood of Pacific peoples and our island nations. Pacific people have lived in harmony with the land and the sea for thousands of years and have adapted and developed approaches to safeguard the environment and to ensure sustainable use of natural resources. Biodiversity and the Pacific way of life is under threat" (David Sheppard, "Pacific SIDS: Value Island Biodiversity: It's our life" Side Event 2215, October 22, 2010).

A Fijian delegate invoked a similar picture in his intervention to the working group discussion of the protected areas decision (October 19, 2010), when he described the ocean and terrestrial ecosystems of "our islands" as the foundations of "Pacific livelihoods." We are not commenting on the truth-value of these representations, but rather, on the ways they are strategically invoked in support of a particular vision of the Pacific Region. Strategy is suggested by how closely the above statements reflect the message of the "Pacific Voyage" communications campaign:

"As part of the "Pacific Voyage" we ask that you clearly highlight the following

> message at whatever media opportunity you may have available: […] "The Pacific region is working hard to conserve our nature as it supports Pacific livelihoods, culture and way of life, we can do much more if we had more support from the international community" (Pacific Voyage Passport to the CBD CoP10, briefing document, SPREP NDb).

The ocean also occupied a particularly prominent place in the Pacific Region discourse. In contrast to Western and Indian Ocean societies' conceptions of ocean space, some Pacific Islanders have traditionally conceptualized the ocean as territory (Steinberg 2001). Micronesians, for example, "see the world as a web of ocean pathways, connecting places" (Steinberg 2001, p. 54). At CoP10, Pacific SIDS and their partners drew upon such an understanding of ocean space to perform a discourse that assembled island and ocean territories into one oceanic region that, as a whole, supports a large portion of the world's biodiversity.

Presenters in the side event "Pacific SIDS: Value Island Biodiversity: It's our life," (Side Event 2215, October 22, 2010) for example, delivered their talks in front of floor-to-ceiling sized posters boasting a variety of statistics on "One Ocean" (see Figure 1). These statistics situate a group of small islands, together, at the center of a vast, productive, and globally important ocean, to make the case that these islands and the ocean that unites them deserve recognition and support. As David Sheppard summarized, "In this region our biodiversity is of global significance" ("Pacific SIDS: Value Island Biodiversity: It's our life" Side Event 2215, October 22, 2010.)

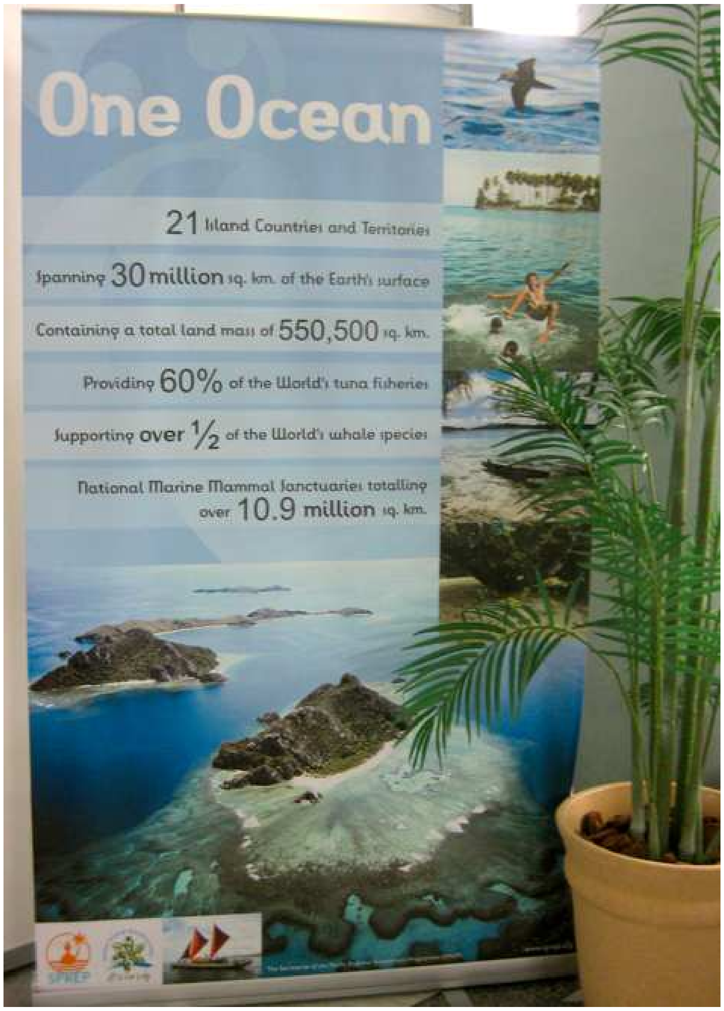
One Ocean
21 Island Countries and Territories
Spanning 30 million sq. km. of the Earth's surface
Containing a total land mass of 550,500 sq. km.
Providing 60% of the World's tuna fisheries
Supporting over 1/2 of the World's whale species
National Marine Mammal Sanctuaries totalling over 10.9 million sq. km.
SPREP

Figure 1: "One Ocean" poster displayed in side events, exhibits, and hallways at CoP10 (Reprinted with permission from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme).

The oceans have long been a focus for Pacific SIDS in global governance processes and otherwise, but they have been eclipsed on the global conservation agenda more generally. In recent years, however, the oceans have become increasingly visible at the global level, as reflected by new conferences devoted to marine conservation (e.g. the International Marine Conservation Congress, first held in 2009); investment in oceans research and conservation by major philanthropic organizations (e.g. the Gordon and

Betty Moore Foundation, the Pew Environment Group) and big, international, NGOs (BINGOs); and calls for a global network of marine protected areas from the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the 2003 World Parks Congress, and in the CBD's 2010 and 2020 protected areas targets (Gray 2010).

As ocean conservation increases in prominence, it brings new actors, institutions, and outcomes to venues like CoP10, and increases space on the agenda therein for small islands with large ocean territories. This is important because, in the context of UN sustainable development processes, SIDS have historically been unable to attract international support (Fry 2005). Given the existing, high-profile commitment to marine conservation by Pacific SIDS[6], the concentration and diversity of marine biodiversity there, and concerns for the impacts of climate change, there is now more impetus for donors, BINGOs, and others interested in marine conservation to recognize, value, and support conservation in the Pacific Islands, particularly when these islands are construed as a region comprising a relatively large ocean space.

Recognizing opportunity, Pacific SIDS and their partners often juxtaposed the large ocean territory of the Pacific Region with the limited capacity of Pacific Islands to manage the portion under their jurisdiction:

> "22% of the pacific ocean is under jurisdiction of 22 small pacific island nations. These countries are very small yet they control such a large part of the world ….

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[6] For example, Pacific SIDS have been at the forefront of large-scale protected area commitments, such as the Phoenix Islands Protected Area in Kiribati, the regional Micronesia Challenge, the Cook Islands Marine Park, and the New Caledonian Coral Sea MPA.

> They also have limited capacity to govern their own exclusive economic zones." (Bernard O'Callaghan, IUCN's Oceania Programme Coordinator, "Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge – A Healthy Ocean for Future Generations" Side Event 2281, October 28, 2010).

In other cases, Pacific SIDS and their partners invoked an extensive, shared ocean territory to illustrate their commitment to the CBD, the significance of their conservation achievements, and their relevance to global biodiversity conservation efforts. In the working group discussion of the protected areas decision (October 19, 2010) a Palauan delegate highlighted Pacific-wide progress thus:

> "In the Pacific a number of small islands have taken massive steps toward global goals for marine protected areas. … In order to sustain this type of effort in our Pacific ocean to meet the 2012 marine protected area target, long-term global support will be needed."

This discursive framing signals an attempt to shift attention from the vulnerabilities of SIDS – indeed, as mentioned above, UNDESA defines SIDS in terms of their shared challenges – to their collective role as important constituents of the global marine biodiversity conservation effort.

The examples discussed above reflect the main components of the performative acts and discourses that presented a kindred Pacific people who are both defined and united *spatially* by one ocean and *socially* by their dependence on natural resources, longstanding conservation ethic, and associated traditional tenure and management institutions. Rescaling Pacific SIDS from many small island nations to one large international oceanic region at CoP10 thus meant enrolling not only people, but also territory – a vast ocean territory than unites rather than isolates the Pacific people-asstewards. The Pacific Region therefore embodies a new scalar arrangement on two dimensions: scale as level (in terms of sociopolitical hierarchy) and scale as size (in terms of territorial extent) (Sayre 2009). Rescaling Pacific SIDS on both dimensions proved relatively useful in the struggle to be seen and heard in at the CoP10, a point we return to in our conclusions.

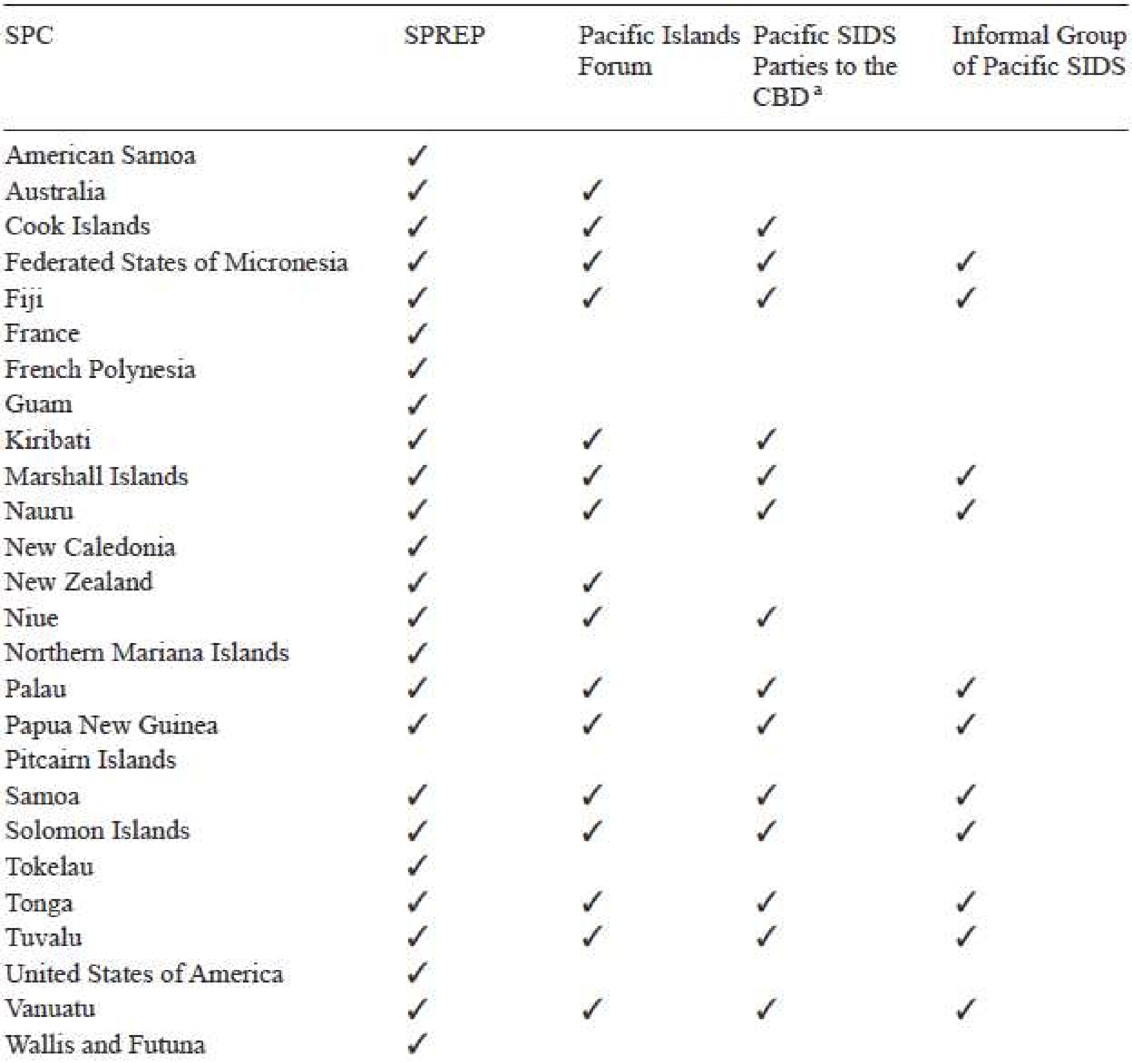
2.5 A contingent and heterogeneous region

In this section, we further support our case that this Pacific Region is a contingent scalar construction by comparing it to other institutionalized forms of Pacific regionalism. Recognizing scale as the product of a historical political process that is "always deeply heterogeneous and contested" (Swyngedouw 2000, p. 70), we also highlight the diversity of interests served, but also ignored or misrepresented, through the Pacific Region.

2.5.1 Pacific Region as unbounded

In 2007, 11 Pacific Island countries with representation in the UN established an informal group of Pacific SIDS to advance common interests within the UN system. This group includes Fiji, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Republic of Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. However, according to the SPREP, there are 14 Pacific SIDS parties to the CBD: the 11 nations listed above plus the Cook Islands, Kiribati, and Niue. It is this larger grouping (minus Niue, which did not send a delegate) that, with partners, participated in the enactment of the Pacific Region at CoP10. These Pacific SIDS groupings, whether 11, 13 or 14, exclude powerful members of pre-existing regional organizations in the Pacific – Australia, New Zealand, France, and the United States – and thus represent a departure from institutionalized regional groupings in the Pacific Islands described earlier, groupings perceived as dominated by former colonial powers. Table 1 shows shifting participation in these different Pacific regionalisms, and illustrates the contingency of a region.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion in groupings of Pacific Islands and non-island countries as of August 2012. Check marks denote inclusion.



SPC	SPREP	Pacific Islands Forum	Pacific SIDS Parties to the CBD[a]	Informal Group of Pacific SIDS
American Samoa	✓			
Australia	✓	✓		
Cook Islands	✓	✓	✓	
Federated States of Micronesia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fiji	✓	✓	✓	✓
France	✓			
French Polynesia	✓			
Guam	✓			
Kiribati	✓	✓	✓	
Marshall Islands	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nauru	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Caledonia	✓			
New Zealand	✓	✓		
Niue	✓	✓	✓	
Northern Mariana Islands	✓			
Palau	✓	✓	✓	✓
Papua New Guinea	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pitcairn Islands				
Samoa	✓	✓	✓	✓
Solomon Islands	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tokelau	✓			
Tonga	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tuvalu	✓	✓	✓	✓
United States of America	✓			
Vanuatu	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wallis and Futuna	✓			

The enactment of the Pacific Region at CoP10 did not make the distinctions discussed above and shown in Table 1. Rather, the boundaries of the Pacific Region were blurred; Pacific SIDS and their partners spoke for and about the Pacific people and territory, and rarely outlined exactly who or what was included or excluded therein. In keeping the boundaries of the Pacific Region blurred, Pacific SIDS and their partners enrolled and simultaneously obscured Pacific Island territories that are not represented at the CBD as independent Pacific SIDS. The effect was invoking more extensive geopolitical support than was directly represented by the 13 Pacific SIDS that attended CoP10. Figure 2 illustrates this discrepancy by highlighting the exclusive economic zones (ocean territories) of the 13 Pacific SIDS that participated in CoP10. Homogenizing interests runs counter to the (perhaps idealistic) vision promulgated by Hau'ofa of a unifying oceanic identity that is something additional to diverse loyalties that should be not only recognized, but embraced (Hau'ofa 2008).

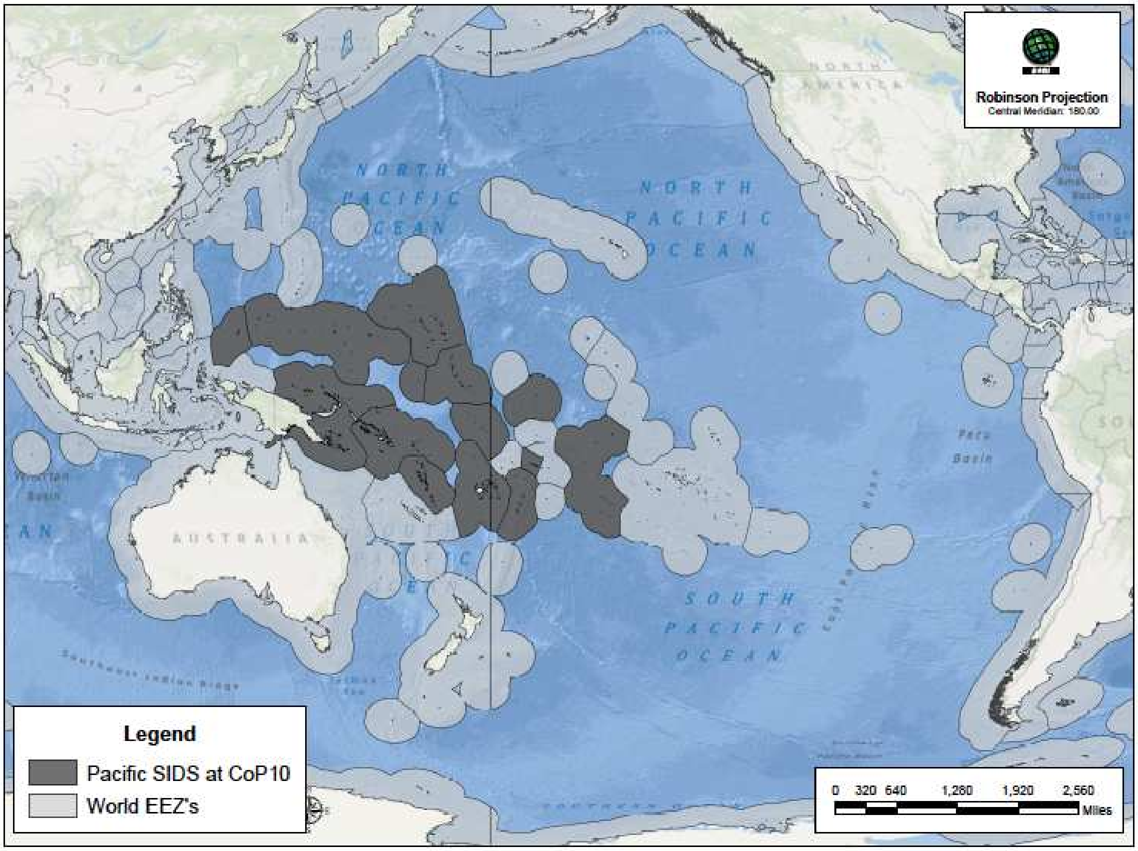

Robinson Projection
Central Meridian: 180.00
NORTH AMERICA
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
Peru Basin
AUSTRALIA
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
Legend
Pacific SIDS at CoP10
World EEZ's
0 320 640 1,280 1,920 2,560
Miles

Figure 2: State exclusive economic zones in the Pacific Ocean.[7]

We observed only one instance of pushback against this representation, during the "Pacific SIDS: Value Island Biodiversity: It's our life" side event (2215, October 22, 2010). When delegates from Samoa and Kiribati highlighted invasive species problems in their presentations, an audience member from Bougainville Island[8] countered that:

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[7] Map credit: Matthew Bowers. Data sources: U.S. National Park Service; VLIZ (2012). Maritime Boundaries Geodatabase, version 6. Available online at http://www.vliz.be/vmdcdata/marbound. Consulted on 2012-07-2. This map was created using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under license.

[7] Bougainville Island is part of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and is not a CBD party (though PNG is). This individual is not listed as part of the PNG delegation; he introduced himself as a representative of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity.

> "In other corners of Pacific, like where I come from, apart from rats and snails [invasive species], people's islands are about to sink. [. . .] While we talk about assistance from international agencies, we need to have these agencies to hear the rest of the Pacific and not just some corners of the Pacific ocean."

Such sentiments may be felt more widely, although we did not observe other acts of contestation at the meeting. Non-participating Pacific Islands could neither contribute to the representation nor contest it.

We can also envision challenges to the unity of the Pacific Region from within, stemming from potential incongruities between national and regional priorities and unequal representation and power among participating Pacific SIDS. The 13 and 9 member delegations of Palau and Papua New Guinea respectively, for example, dwarfed the one-person delegations of the Marshall Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Nauru. Which Pacific SIDS voices were reflected in that of the Pacific Region, and which were subsumed? As a Palauan delegate summarized, Pacific SIDS comprising the Pacific Region had "different levels of concern for different issues [at CoP10], but … were able to come up with something that we all agree on" (interview, July 2011). The compromise we observed as political unity may not always be desirable for all participants. The Pacific Region is also contingent upon the dynamics among 14 countries with diverse histories, cultures, priorities, and post-colonial ties to major world powers (Campbell 2003).

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[8] Bougainville Island is part of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and is not a CBD party (though PNG is). This individual is not listed as part of the PNG delegation; he introduced himself as a representative of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity.

2.5.2 Role of non-state actors

Recognizing that there has been little attention to the scalar politics of environmental NGOs (McCarthy 2005), we also draw attention to the key role that Pacific SIDS' partners played in enacting the Pacific Region. In addition to SPREP's role in orchestrating the groups' activities and discourses as described previously, its work to support the Pacific Region was supported by larger funders, including Fonds Pacifique, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the CBD Secretariat, and the EU (SPREP 2011a). Representatives from national and international environmental NGOs, as well as foundations also worked closely with Pacific SIDS before and during CoP10. In a post-meeting report, SPREP noted that "In addition to the [Pacific Island] Parties, the following agencies and organizations were also present as part of the Pacific delegation to CoP10: SPREP, SPC, Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF, IUCN, Greenpeace and TNC" (SPREP NDa). These groups organized and attended regional preparatory meetings and side events during the meeting, participated in the Pacific SIDS strategic planning meetings in Nagoya, drafted interventions, briefed delegations, joined party delegates at lunch tables, and were active participants in the Skype discussions that kept Pacific SIDS in contact throughout the meeting. In some cases, NGO representatives were official members of Pacific Region party delegations. The Palauan delegation numbering 13, for example, included at least six representatives who either work for an NGO or whose attendance was funded by an NGO. For example, Pew Environment Group, Birdlife International, and SPREP contributed funding for Palauan delegates to CoP10. As one Palauan delegate summarized: “We were huge, but you know what, it wasn’t the Palauan government. It was all different organizations” (interview, July 2011).

Many of the BINGOs that participated in enacting the Pacific Region are already active in individual island states and in other regional conservation initiatives (e.g. the Micronesia Challenge, the Coral Triangle Initiative; see Chapter 3). Thus, NGO interests in promoting a regional vision is not surprising, but here we consider how that support plays out in the context of the CBD. As already explained, most power in the CBD CoP process remains with parties. Thus, NGOs that participated in enacting the Pacific Region as advisors or as delegates on individual state delegations gained a more influential position in the CBD process than they have as observers. Moreover, the influence of NGOs increases as a function of Pacific SIDS influence. While this arrangement may increase the capacity of Pacific SIDS to participate more broadly in the meeting, one Palauan government official described the tensions that accompany mutual gains thus:

> “For small island countries, when we go [to CoP10], we don’t have the resources, we don’t have lawyers, we don’t have scientists …. And SPREP’s role there was actually to help us because when a country would introduce a whole new text and we didn’t have time to review it, I would give it to SPREP and SPREP organized …the NGOs to help … like IUCN, WWF, SPC. … So while I’m at the meeting, SPREP has taken that document, circulated it to our colleagues, the NGOs who are based in the Pacific, they get a chance to review it and they come back and tell us these are the pros and cons, and this is their position. And at the same time I have to determine if their recommendation is it good for my country or is it going to harm my country? …So we have to find that balance because number one we want to make sure that we do justice to our partners, our NGOs,

> that they get something out of it. But number two, the second and foremost, is that whatever we do is not going to harm what's happening at the national level, find that balance" (interview, July 2011).

The official summarized, "half of the time we would say … your recommendation actually contradicts with our national interest" (interview, July 2011).

Although Pacific SIDS are participants in the enactment of the Pacific Region, there is still substantial involvement from external actors and institutions, including a network of non-state actors with their own priorities that include but are not limited to increasing the capacity of Pacific SIDS to participate in the CoP10.

2.6 Conclusions

Muni (2005) has conceptualized an ocean region as a regional identity among countries along an ocean rim. In contrast, this paper develops understanding of an encompassing oceanic region as a tool of a political scaling project. In this paper, taking the region seriously (Neumann 2010) has meant focusing our analysis on the practices through which Pacific Islands, as small and isolated, were rescaled into a Pacific Region at CoP10, and toward what ends.

For Pacific SIDS, the Pacific Region served as a scalar fix (in the sense of problem-solving; see McCann 2003) for two forms of smallness. The first is a practical smallness, referring to the size of Pacific SIDS delegations within the CoP10 meeting setting, and their associated limited capacity to participate as individual delegations. As summarized in SPREP (NDa, p. 4), "a specific success was the strong Pacific delegation to COP10 that was actively engaged in the negotiation processes." Participating as a Pacific Region does empower Pacific SIDS and their partners relative to what they could achieve as independent delegations or observers in the context of the CoP10 meeting setting; as one Palauan delegate noted “this is actually the first time that I can recall in a CoP that Pacific Island countries are actually making interventions; the last CoP, hardly” (interview, October 2010). According to SPREP, Pacific SIDS made 33 interventions on 17 issues; and CoP10 was the first time that designated delegates made opening and closing statements on behalf of the Pacific Islands (SPREP 2011b).

Though this level of participation may have been unprecedented, it is still relatively limited in the context of a 12-day meeting and in contrast to actions by other parties. Pacific SIDS and their partners claim to have successfully participated in the negotiations, but they did not claim influence; still, together, they are a relatively small delegation of 52 representatives from NGOs and 13 states. While a delegation of 52 is a significant increase from the average individual Pacific SIDS delegation of 3 or 4, it is far smaller than other political groupings. The EU, for example, sent 458 delegates – more than 8 times the Pacific SIDS regional delegation. Organizations with observer status also dwarfed the Pacific SIDS; Birdlife International sent 109 people in addition to staff serving on party delegations. Recognizing that influence is not solely a function of delegation size, we note that even as a regional delegation, Pacific SIDS remain at a disadvantage when it comes to influencing negotiations at CoP10.

But clearly, one of the ears that Pacific SIDS and their partners hoped would hear the “One Pacific Voice” was that of donors. Thus, the second smallness that the Pacific

Region fixed is a conceptual one linked to the global imagination of Pacific Island territories and populations as small, isolated, and somewhat irrelevant to achieving global conservation goals. The ocean conservation agenda is not the sole or even main driver of the Pacific Region. However, this context marks contingency in the political life of a region, or put another way, the specific form(s) into which it is brought into being. By collaborating to speak about one ocean as a region with one voice to highlight their collective contributions to marine biodiversity conservation, the Pacific Region sought to be seen, heard, and valued by potential partners and donors, as well as negotiation chairs at CoP10 – an audience increasingly interested in the oceans.

By some accounts, these goals were achieved. SPREP's evaluation of the performance at CoP10 was positive, and a metric used for this success was publicity, visibility, and recognition by development partners (SPREP 2011c.) The Pacific Region imaginary of a vast ocean space and network of people committed to the CBD and biodiversity conservation suggests that Pacific Islanders are willing and able to play a pivotal role in the conservation of a significant portion of the world's oceans. In the context of increasing global attention to marine conservation, the enactment of such a Pacific Region is indeed likely to attract attention and support from donors.

Viewing the region through the prism of scalar politics has enabled us to understand the region not only as a product of social processes, but also as a very deliberately constructed tool for reshaping them. Moreover, our findings are suggestive of an important role for global environmental meetings not only as venues for negotiating policy, but also as stages upon which subaltern groups may have an opportunity to reframe – indeed, rescale – their positions within global imaginations and the global environmental governance agenda. The Pacific Region implicitly recognizes this when it assesses its success in terms of being seen and heard by donors, and the sense of empowerment associated with this, rather than in documenting specific influence on CoP decisions.

However, not all view the Pacific Region as serving their interests. Scales like regions are "institutionalized in complex ways in de/reterritorializing practices and discourses that may be partly concrete, powerful and bounded, but also partly unbounded, vague or invisible" (Paasi 2004, p. 542). It is in unbounded, vague or invisible components of the Pacific Region as enacted at CoP that both gives it rhetorical power – to speak with "One Pacific Voice" – and are potentially problematic. In keeping the boundaries of the Pacific Region large and blurred within the global imagination, participating Pacific SIDS and partners invoke a sense of unity that is useful for some but contested by others, like the representative from Bougainville Island whose interests were spoken for but not fully represented under the Pacific Region banner. Contestation reflects a recognition that "the alliances social groups …forge over a certain spatial scale will shape the conditions of appropriation and control over place and have a decisive influence over relative socio-spatial power positions" (Swyngedouw 2000, p. 70). In the case herein, contestation reflects recognition that the Pacific Region, once enacted, will likely do work at the CBD and beyond, by scaling and rescaling the objects and agents of environmental governance in the Pacific Islands, and by potentially reshaping the nature of the funding, actors, institutions, and ideology already in place (or absent).

We must ultimately ask: Is the Pacific Region a manifestation of Hau'ofa's vision of ocean-centered regionalism that will empower Pacific Islanders to act with autonomy in international processes (Hau'ofa 2008)? Or is the Pacific Region an instrument of that same system, of nations, BINGOS, and funding agencies currently driving the global marine conservation agenda, one that has largely been focused on the creation of large networks of marine protected areas (Gray 2010)? Our analysis indicates that the answer lies somewhere between these extremes. Though the full impact of the Pacific Region is yet to be seen, its enactment by a network of Pacific SIDS, environmental NGOs, and SPREP, does represent a departure from some historic and current experiences with Pacific regionalism as institutionalized through regional organizations like the Pacific Island Forum and the SPC. However, the main organizers of the enactment, SPREP and its funders, are tied to former regionalizations that were seen as undermining autonomy. This autonomy is further undermined by the role of NGOs in not only supporting the enactment, but in participating as delegates for Pacific SIDS.

Thus, although certain Pacific Islanders participate in and perceive benefits from the enactment of the Pacific Region, this version of the region, like the others in Pacific Island history, is not simply their own creation. The alliance we observed at CBD is predicated on the support of partners and the willingness of the Pacific Region to promote itself and be promoted as in line with global concerns for marine biodiversity conservation. What happens to partner support if Pacific SIDS diverge from the marine conservation agenda? In on-going and future work, we will continue to follow the scalar politics associated with the enactment of the Pacific Region to better understand the broader consequences of this particular version of Pacific regionalism. At this juncture, we contend that even if the Pacific Region may help break away from a pre-existing and powerful way of imagining Pacific Islands and Pacific regionalism (cf Hajer 2009), it will likely fall short of Hau'ofa's vision of self-determination.

3. Reconstructing Micronesia through regional environmental governance: What, why, and how is the Micronesia Challenge?

3.1 Introduction

On March 28, 2006, the President of Palau, Tommy Remengesau, introduced the Micronesia Challenge to an international audience of delegates, donors, and conservation organizations in a high level event at the CBD CoP 8 in Curitiba, Brazil:

> "[A]long with my counterparts across Micronesia, I have committed Palau to the 'Micronesia Challenge' - a shared commitment by the countries and territories of Micronesia to a comprehensive system of protected area networks … Not only will this protect our future, it will contribute to global targets set forth at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity for protected areas, island biodiversity and to the sustainable livelihoods of island communities" (Tommy Remengesau, President of the Republic of Palau, High Level Event on "'Islands, Marine Biodiversity and Livelihoods: A Global Island Partnership," CBD CoP 8, March 28, 2006).

The representatives in the room that day included the presidents of Conservation International (CI) and WWF International, the vice president for external affairs of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the executive coordinator of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Minutes after President Remenegsau's announcement, TNC stepped forward with a $3 million pledge of support to the Micronesia Challenge, challenging others to do the same:

> "the Micronesia Challenge is also a challenge to the rest of us. It is a challenge to lend a helping hand; to assist in providing both support and technical assistance to make the Micronesia Challenge a reality. And therefore, we would like to, The Nature Conservancy, TNC would like to issue its own challenge, an NGO

> challenge, to all of you who are represented here. The Nature Conservancy pledges 3 million dollars towards sustainable financing of the Micronesia Challenge” (Nigel Purvis, vice president for external affairs for TNC, High Level Event on “'Islands, Marine Biodiversity and Livelihoods: A Global Island Partnership,” CBD CoP 8, March 28, 2006).

The next speaker on the program was Russell Mittermeier, President of CI, who also publicly pledged $3 million dollars to the Micronesia Challenge, congratulating the region for its leadership in preventing biodiversity loss and meeting CBD targets.

The Micronesia Challenge served multiple functions for a diverse network of policy actors in the context of this carefully staged policy performance at CBD CoP8 (Hajer 2009). For President Remengesau, the Micronesia Challenge was a political tool that could attract the attention of powerful global actors and resources. For TNC, CI, and the CBD secretariat, it was a message to the world that the CBD program of work on protected areas, adopted at the previous CBD CoP 7 in 2004, was gaining traction. For the majority of conservation practitioners, resource owners, and fishers living and working in Micronesia, however, it was a surprise.

This vignette introduces my interest in the Micronesia Challenge as a globally celebrated institution for regional environmental governance with linkages to global processes and actors, as well as local contexts in three countries and two U.S. jurisdictions in the tropical western pacific. Officially, the Micronesia Challenge is an international soft law[1] agreement among the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the

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[1] International soft law is a broad (and debated) classification that is defined by what it is not; most commonly the term refers to “hortatory” obligations that are not legally binding (Guzman & Meyer 2010, p.172).

Republic of Palau (Palau), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (Marshall Islands), the unincorporated U.S. territory of Guam (Guam), and the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), to “effectively conserve at least 30% of the near-shore marine and 20% of the forest resources across Micronesia by 2020” (Micronesia Challenge Declaration of Commitment 2006). Unofficially, the Micronesia Challenge is an institution of environmental governance that means many things to diverse “interpretive communities” (Sayer 1994, p. 374). It is a mobile policy that mutates as it is interpreted and articulated by and for a diverse network of actors in and across local and international contexts (Peck and Theodore 2012). Why and how it emerged, what form(s) it takes and functions it serves, and what it has come to mean to its champions, donors, and dissidents is the focus of analysis herein.

3.2 Literature and key questions

Interstate cooperation for environmental governance at the regional level, or regional environmental governance, is not new to the Pacific Islands (Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer 2006) or ocean environments (Vallega 2002; Vandeveer 2002; Kütting 2000; Skjærseth 2000). Regional environmental governance in marine and coastal environments began more than 35 years ago, for example, with the launch of UNEP’s Regional Seas Programme in 1974, and has influenced international and comparative environmental politics and policy research agendas for more than twenty years (Vandeveer 2002). However, there has been limited and unfocused scholarly attention to regional environmental governance as it relates to emerging scholarship within global environmental politics regarding the diversification of governing authority and multi-level governance (Balsiger and VanDeever 2012). As Balsiger and VanDeveer (2012, p. 2) summarize: “international coordination through governance arrangements that aim at regional rather than universal participation continues to proliferate, largely under the scholarly radar.” This is true not only of the body of work studying global environmental politics but also within the international relations literature, where economic integration and security issues dominate research agendas focused on regions (Balsiger and VanDeever 2012).

In this context, a recent special issue of *Global Environmental Politics* (Volume 12, Issue 3, August 2012) has announced “the rise of the region in global environmental politics” (Conca 2012, p. 127), arguing that “It is time to bring the regional back in to the study of global environmental politics” (Balsiger and VanDeveer 2012, p. 1). In an exploratory effort to explain the recent proliferation of regional environmental governance, one of the contributors, Conca (2012, p. 127), posited: “Clearly, some of the pull of the regional is rooted in the failure of the global.” For Conca, regional environmental governance is emerging as a potential alternative to global environmental governance in the context of “a profound sense of obstruction and drift at the global level” (2012, p. 129). The special issue outlines an interdisciplinary agenda for research on regional environmental governance with intellectual space for realist inquiries surrounding the forms that regional environmental governance takes and the functions it performs, as well as constructivist attention to the question of how regions are made through environmental governance (Debarbieux 2012).

Recognizing that *regional environmental governance* "joins three essentially contested concepts" (Balsiger and VanDeveer 2012), I draw on Lemos and Agrawal (2006) and Balsiger and VanDeveer (2012) to define regional environmental governance here as interstate institutions through which state and non-state actors influence environment-related incentives, knowledge, institutions, decision making, and behaviors across two or more countries.

Within what Balsiger and VanDeveer (2010) have characterized as the emergent sub-discipline of regional environmental governance, most work to date has been focused on the European context, and regimes characterized by narrow thematic objectives, politically-based territoriality, and state actors. Referring to their nascent typology of regional environmental governance (see Figure 3), Balsiger and VanDeveer (2010) have called for scholarly attention to emerging forms of regional environmental governance that address broader thematic issues (e.g. sustainable development), are founded upon so-called natural or ecoregional territoriality, and rely on nonstate actors as principal cooperating agents. This chapter answers their call by focusing on an instrument of regional environmental governance that embodies all three of these characteristics, in representation and/or practice.

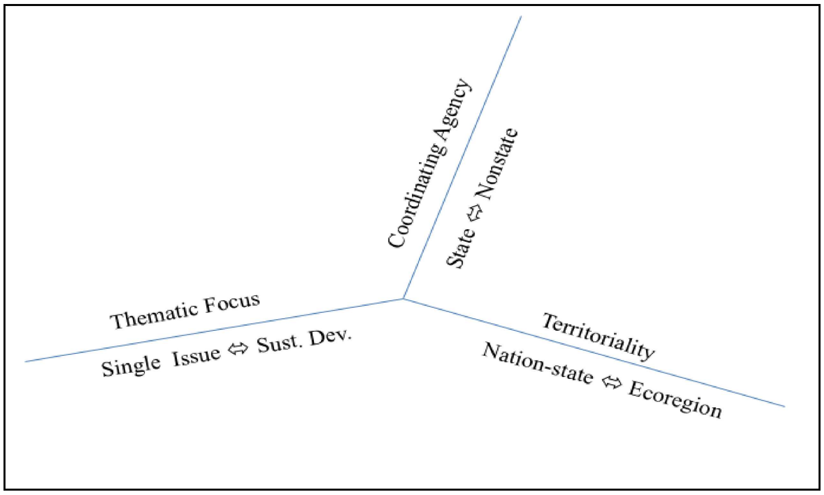

Figure 3: Typology of regional environmental governance (Balsiger and VanDeveer 2010, p. 6183).

In light of the foregoing, there is much to learn from a case study of the Micronesia Challenge, a relatively new model of regional environmental governance that emerged in Micronesia in 2006 and quickly spread to multiple large ocean regions around the world. The Micronesia Challenge is credited as the inspiration for a growing number of similar initiatives, including the Caribbean Challenge (2008); the Coral Triangle Initiative (2007); and the Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge (under development as of 2013). Just four years after the launch of the Micronesia Challenge, a representative of the CBD Secretariat described the "Challenge" policy model – one characterized by interstate cooperation among island states and territories, thematic breadth, multi-million dollar endowments, regional conservation targets linked to global ones, and major coordinating and financing roles for non-state actors – as a movement:

> "One of the most exciting things about the Challenges is that they aren't really isolated. This is increasingly becoming a movement. This is a movement that we

> see is catalyzing implementation of the convention [on biological diversity] in general and is truly an inspirational prospect and hope for our convention" (Jason Spensely, CBD secretariat, Lifeweb Press Conference, CBD CoP 10, October 24, 2010).

With the exception of a few recent studies of the emergence, effectiveness, and institutional structure of the Coral Triangle Initiative (Fidelman et al. 2012; Rosen and Olsson 2013; Green et al. 2011), there has been little social scientific attention to the prolific "Challenge" model of regional environmental governance.

This chapter presents a descriptive, empirical case study of the Micronesia Challenge to offer related contributions, first, to our understanding of a new and influential form of regional environmental governance outside of Europe, and, second, to the emerging research agenda on regional environmental governance. Chapter 2 outlined the scalar politics inherent in the social processes of *enacting* a region on the global environmental governance stage set at the CBD CoP 10. The present chapter re-engages constructivist human geography theory on regionalization to examine the scalar politics inherent in the social processes of *institutionalizing* a region through regional environmental governance. In so doing, I seek to advance understanding of the political work of a region – defined here as in Chapter 2 as a product of "historically contingent social processes" (Paasi 2004, p. 540) – attempted and/or achieved through a popular model of regional environmental governance. Thus, with a focus on the regional within regional environmental governance, this chapter examines three interrelated questions:

(1) Emergence: How and why did the Micronesia Challenge emerge?

(2) Form: What is the territoriality, coordinating agency, and thematic foci of the Micronesia Challenge? How is the Micronesia Challenge made regional, and how regional is the Micronesia Challenge?

(3) Function: How is the Micronesia Challenge functioning within, for, and/or against participating jurisdictions?

In identifying and answering these questions, I seek to understand not whether but how regional environmental governance works; and, by extension, not whether regional environmental governance succeeds, but how success is produced through it (Mosse 2004).

Section 3.5 finds that the Micronesia Challenge emerged through a partnership of state and NGO actors who identified political opportunity in articulating large-scale conservation success in the context of broader institutional processes and agendas. This section argues that the emergence of the Micronesia Challenge reflects a mutually constitutive relationship between regional and global environmental governance. Next, Section 3.6 engages Balsiger and VanDeever's (2010) typology of regional environmental governance to analyze the form(s) that the Micronesia Challenge has taken in both representation and practice. I argue for an extension of the typology to include *governance*, and conclude that that the Micronesia Challenge falls along multiple points of individual axes on the expanded typology. Finally, Section 3.7 describes how local actors, including local environmental NGOs, are putting the Micronesia Challenge to work for highly contextualized functions beyond most traditional conceptualizations of environmental governance. This finding calls into question research foci on regional environmental governance solely as instruments of environmental governance (as traditionally conceived), articulating a need for broader investigations of regional environmental governance as a means to more diverse ends. Before turning to the empirical analysis, Section 3.3 describes case study methods, and Section 3.4 situates the case within the political history of regionalism in Micronesia.

3.3 Methods

A comprehensive analysis of the Micronesia Challenge, as a regional institution linking the global to the local, calls for a distended case study, "sensitive both to movement [. . .] and to those variable experiences of embedding and transformation underway in `downstream' sites of adoption/emulation" (Peck and Theodore, p. 24). As such, the field of research on the Micronesia Challenge necessarily challenges traditional understandings of the field as a single, geographically bounded place. My method for collecting data on the emergence, form, and function of the Micronesia Challenge may best be characterized as a "follow the policy" approach, which embodies the ethnographic tracking of mutable policy "through globalizing networks and across transnational jurisdictional spaces" (Peck and Theodore 2012, p. 22). In the following sections I describe how and why I followed the Micronesia Challenge from the United Nations CBD CoP 10 in Japan (October 19-29, 2010), to the 17th Micronesian Chief Executive's Summit in Guam (March 12-14, 2012), and finally, to local contexts in each of the participating jurisdictions (March 14-April 27, 2012).

3.3.1 Collaborative Event Ethnography: the CBD CoP 10

As part of a larger collaborative event ethnography project (see Chapter 2), I collected ethnographic data at the CBD CoP 10 on the linkages between the Micronesia Challenge and the global project of biodiversity conservation October 19-29, 2010. As a field site, the CBD CoP 10 event allowed me a window into the global processes, institutions, actors, and political agendas that structure relationships and incentives key to the production of the Micronesia Challenge. My primary method for collecting data at the CBD CoP 10 was participant observation at formal proceedings, side events, and informal meetings, including nine events that specifically showcased the Micronesia Challenge and associated policies (e.g. Palau's Protected Area Network). As an observer at the CBD CoP10, I gained firsthand insight how the Micronesia Challenge is articulated on the global environmental governance stage, to what ends, and by whom. On a practical level, the CBD COP 10 also enabled me initiate relationships with a translocal network of actors whom I would later "follow" along with the policy to other regional and local contexts, where they engaged with the Micronesia Challenge on quite different terms (refer to Chapter 2 for a full discussion of collaborative event ethnography).

3.3.2 Event ethnography: 17th Micronesian Chief Executive's Summit in Guam

The chief executives of Guam, CNMI, Palau, Marshall Islands, the FSM, and the four states comprising the FSM (Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae) meet bi-annually through the Micronesian Chief Executive's Summit to coordinate and implement regional strategies and policies, including the Micronesia Challenge. The Micronesia Challenge regional steering committee (described in detail later) organizes a series of policy planning meetings alongside the bi-annual Micronesian Chief Executive's Summits, where a formal update on the status of the Micronesia Challenge is a standing agenda item. I conducted participant observation of the 17th Micronesian Chief Executive's Summit in Guam on March 12-13, 2012 and four associated policy planning and grant review meetings pertaining to the Micronesia Challenge to "follow" the regional-level policy processes through which the Micronesia Challenge is interpreted and translated into plans of work, committees, scientific research agendas, communication campaigns, and island-specific projects.

3.3.3 Interviews in five Micronesian nations and territories

In both Peck and Theodore's distended case study and this one, "[t]he questions of how policies-from-elsewhere are put to work by local actors, and how they are translated, contextualized, and embedded, must always be on the table" (Peck and Theodore 2012, p. 5). Accordingly, I also followed the Micronesia Challenge to local sites of implementation (see Table 2), where I collected data on the emergence, form, and function of the Micronesia Challenge within each participating jurisdiction through a total of 82 semi-structured interviews and collection of policy documents, conceptualized broadly to include speech transcripts, meeting minutes, promotional material, and fact sheets (Shore and Wright 1997; Yanow 1996).

Table 2: Field work schedule in Micronesia Challenge jurisdictions, March 14-April 27, 2012.

Field site	**Dates (2012)**	**Duration (nights)**
Guam	March 14 – March 21	7
Republic of Palau	March 21- April 1	11
Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	April 1- April 8	7
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia	April 8- 14	6
Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia	April 14-18	4
Republic of the Marshall Islands	April 18-27	9
Total		**44**

As revealed in Table 2, distended case study approach embodies an "inescapable trade-off between the situational depth (and connectivity with subjects and settings) achievable in long-duration, single-site ethnographies" and transnational reach (Peck and Theodore 2012, p. 25). However, my ability to approach methodological saturation through local depth and transnational reach was strengthened (though not fully achieved) through my focused scope of research and the enabling logistics of small island contexts. Participating jurisdictions had relatively small and accessible populations of key policy actors, whom I identified through snowball sampling and document review. Government and professional offices were clustered in compact urban centers, with the exception of FSM. Thus, interviewees included a near census of key policy actors historically and currently involved with conceptualizing, communicating, and implementing the Micronesia Challenge in each participating jurisdiction, and they included two heads of state.

Specifically, interviewees were policy actors working for transnational and national NGOs, research institutions, national (or equivalent) levels of government, and other organizations (e.g. the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative). I reference interviewees here using a coding scheme that preserves confidentiality but reveals and calls attention to the situated opinions, interpretations, and experiences of people who would likely self-identify as Palauan or Marshallese, for example, before they would as "Micronesian." Interviewees who live and work primarily within one "home" island are coded and cited as follows: Guam (GM1-GM9); Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI1 –CNMI14); Federated States of Micronesia (FSM1-FSM12); Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI1-RMI16); Republic of Palau (ROP1- ROP16). Interviewees working for international non-governmental or inter-governmental organizations are coded and cited as INGO1-INGO15; this group includes interviewees working for the Global Environment Facility (GEF), TNC, CI, the Micronesia Conservation Trust, the Micronesia Challenge Regional Office, RARE, the Global Island Partnership, and the Micronesian Image Institute.

Semi-structured interviews were tailored to interviewee expertise and involvement. Interviews were designed to trace processes in an interpretivist approach, honing in not only on what occurred but how it occurred, as well as "the preferences and perceptions of actors, their purposes, their goals, their values and their specification of the situations that face them" (Venesson 2008, p. 233). Interviews with key institutional entrepreneurs (Rosen and Olsson 2013), for example, focused on their motivation for institutional change, interactions with other institutional entrepreneurs, the origin of and struggle over different ideas, the structure of policy design forums, the information the interviewee had about their situation, and the broader institutions that were used as models and impetus for institutional design (Ostrom 1990; McCay 2002).

Data collection and analysis was guided by constructivist grounded theory, an iterative process of theoretical sampling where analyses of data takes place during and after data collection and guides the collection effort (Charmaz 2000). All interviews were transcribed and, along with the document research and participant observation notes, uploaded to QSR NVivo software for qualitative analysis encompassing a combination of thematic coding, process tracing (Venesson, 2008), and conjunctural analysis of the actors and institutions that come together at specific historical conjunctures to produce particular policy trajectories (Hart 2004; Corson 2008).

3.4 Case study background

3.4.1 Historical construction of Micronesia

Micronesian lacks concrete definition
An Inadequate
Insufficient
Identity
Misplaced
Bestowed Wrongly
Upon a large and diverse
Pacific Island Population
Who are not under one flag

Who do not speak one tongue
Who do not eat the same food
And most of all who
Do not want to be recognized as one.

-Excerpt, Emelihter Kihleng "The Micronesian Question" 2005 (quoted in Hanlon 2009, p. 99).

Through a series of ill-informed (at best) discussions among a small number of French geographers and explorers in the 1830s, the peoples of the Pacific Islands were named, mapped, and grouped into Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia, meaning the black islands, many islands, and tiny islands, respectively (Hanlon 2009; Campbell 2003; Rainbird 2003). In the earliest efforts to circumscribe Micronesia, Rainbird (2003) and Hanlon (2009) point to a particular absence of experience and knowledge, and an abundance of generalizations that nonetheless have produced "a persisting orthodoxy about a culture region that cannot be sustained as a single entity by any combination of archeological, linguistic, ethnographic, or local historical evidence" (Hanlon 2009, p. 94). While there are anthropologists who would disagree with this assessment (e.g., Kiste and Marshall 1999), the fact remains that the Micronesia "culture region" has been reified, or made real, over the past 180 years through dynamic discursive, political, and institutional regionalizing processes that reflect "Euro-American society's concerns for a neat, manageable, efficient, and logical ordering of the world" (Hanlon 1989, p. 2). It has also been reshaped by these processes. Acknowledging the dynamic, constructed, and contested nature of the term *Micronesia*, this section provides a non-exhaustive review of the shared and distinct political histories of five nations and two U.S. jurisdictions most commonly understood as Micronesia today (hereafter, collectively referenced as “orthodox Micronesia”): the unincorporated U.S. territory of Guam, the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of Kiribati (Kiribati), and the Republic of Nauru (Nauru) (Kiste and Marshall 1999).

3.4.2 Colonial history

This section focuses on dimensions of colonial history that underwrite the particular version of Micronesia that is re-made through the Micronesia Challenge; that is, a colonially delineated Micronesia tied to the U.S., which is one that does not include Nauru and Kiribati. Formal U.S. ties to the region began in 1898, when Spain ceded Guam (along with Puerto Rico and the Philippines) to the United States after the Spanish-American War. After more than 60 years of military rule, Guam became an unincorporated U.S. territory in 1950 through the Organic Act of Guam (Leibowitz 1989). U.S. holdings in Micronesia expanded greatly following World War II. In 1947, after nearly five centuries of colonial rule by Spain, Germany, and Japan, the Japanese-mandated holdings in the Caroline, Marshall, and Mariana Island groups (present day FSM, CNMI, Palau, and RMI) were designated a Trust Territory of the U.S. through an agreement with the United Nations Security Council (McKibben 1990; Leibowitz 1989) (see Figure 4). This “strategic” Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands included 2,000 islands with a total land area of 700 square miles - about half the size of Rhode Island -

spread across an area in the tropical western pacific ocean larger than the continental United States (Leibowitz 1989).

From the outset, the U.S. endeavored to solidify the historically imposed political unity of these islands by treating them as one entity, both in name - formally, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands or informally, Micronesia - and in administration, for example, through the establishment of the Congress of Micronesia, a region-wide legislative body of elected indigenous representatives (Leibowitz 1989). However, as many have since argued, "Micronesia is not an integrated whole and *it never was*" and the United States was to fail in its efforts to permanently impose formal political cohesion (for their purposes of administrative ease) (Leibowitz 1989, p. 503).

At the behest of indigenous leaders and the United Nations, negotiations regarding the future political status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands began in 1969 (Kiste and Marshall 1999). Internal fragmentation quickly emerged between advocates for autonomy and those who preferred a permanent, close political relationship with the U.S. similar to that of Guam. In 1972, the Northern Marianas was the first to request separate status negotiations; they voted for a commonwealth political status in 1975, making the CNMI population American citizens and territory part of the U.S. (Kiste and Falgout 1999). For those aspiring to sovereignty, however, full independence "was never entertained as a serious option by Washington," given Micronesia's strategically valuable location for U.S. military interests (Kiste and Falgout 1999, p. 41).

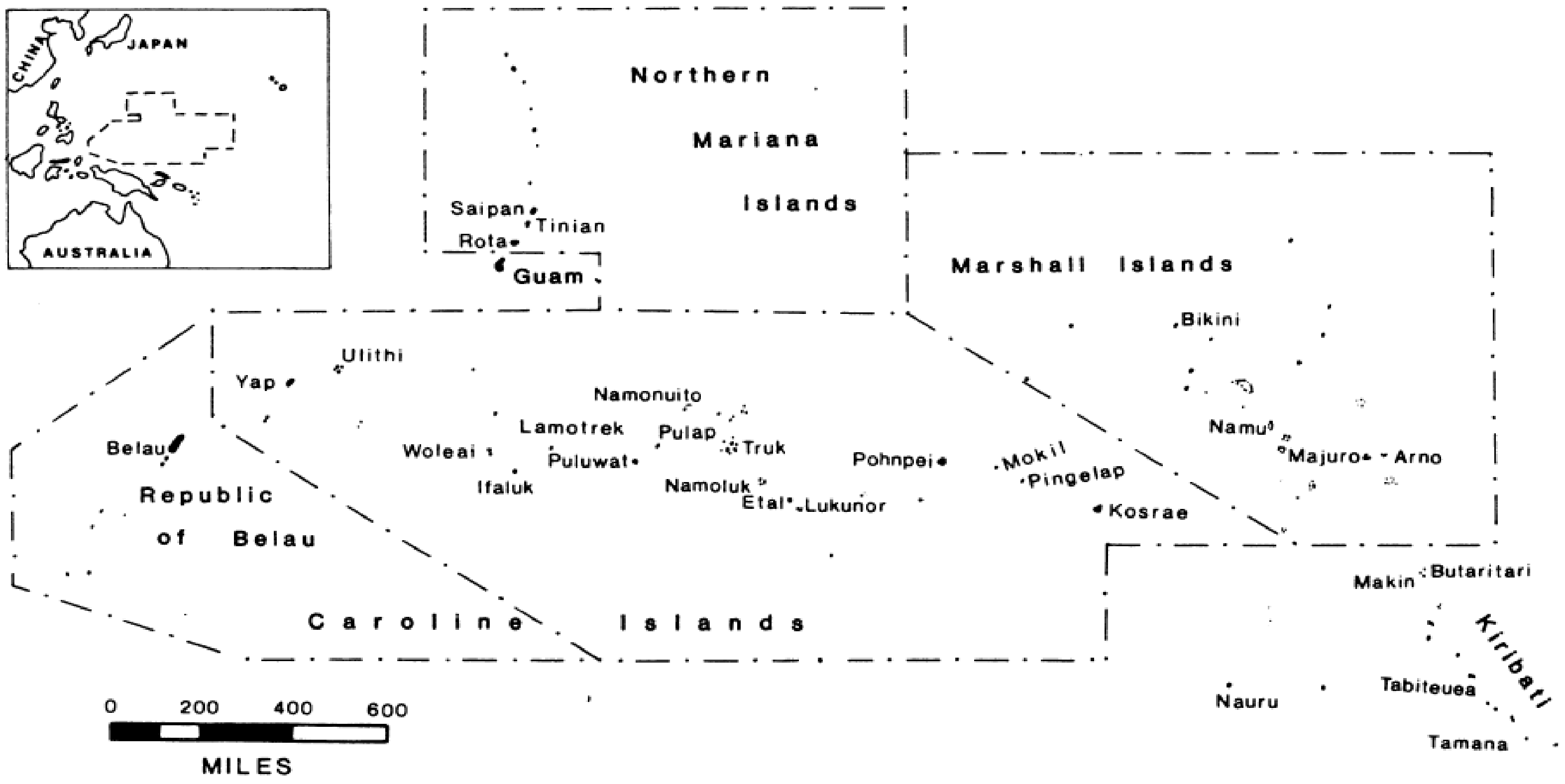
CHINA
JAPAN
AUSTRALIA
Northern
Mariana
Islands
Saipan
Tinian
Rota
Guam
Marshall Islands
Bikini
Namu
Majuro
Arno
Ulithi
Yap
Namonuito
Lamotrek
Pulap
Truk
Woleai
Puluwat
Ifaluk
Namoluk
Etal
Lukunor
Pohnpei
Mokil
Pingelap
Kosrae
Belau
Republic
of Belau
Caroline Islands
Makin
Butaritari
Kiribati
Nauru
Tabiteuea
Tamana
0
200
400
600
MILES

Figure 4: Political entities most commonly accepted as Micronesia, or "orthodox Micronesia." Dotted lines denote island groupings included within the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and the rough boundaries of present day CNMI (Northern Mariana Islands in Figure), Palau (Republic of Belau in Figure), Marshall Islands, and FSM (Caroline Islands minus Palau in Figure). Note that Guam, Kiribati, and Nauru were not included within the U.S.-administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, though they are typically included within maps of "Micronesia."

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Indigenous leaders also recognized the constraints imposed by decades of U.S. economic development policy and aid that placed their islands in a trajectory of "hopeless" economic dependency (Hanlon 1998, p. 158).

The potential for a political status of free association emerged as a possibility in 1971 (Kiste and Falgout 1999). As the negotiations proceeded, U.S. military priorities further enhanced the movement toward political fragmentation among islands of the Trust Territory; those islands of relatively higher strategic military value for the U.S. – present day Palau and Marshall Islands – leveraged their increased bargaining power to negotiate independence while the remaining islands, together, became present day FSM (Leibowitz 1989; Kiste and Falgout 1999). After a protracted, deeply contentious, and sometimes violent series of negotiations, the Marshall Islands and FSM signed Compacts of Free Association with the U.S. in 1986, while Palau signed theirs in 1994 (Kiste and Falgout 1999).

In summary, the five Micronesia Challenge jurisdictions are all currently politically tied to the U.S., and to one another through a variety of U.S. programs and self-organized regional initiatives. As of 2000, they are all members of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (though the freely associated states are non-voting members while Guam and the CNMI are full members), an interagency body established "to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems." Formal self-organized regional cooperation among the "U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia," as they sometimes refer to themselves collectively, re-merged in 2003 through the Western Micronesian Chief

Executives' Summit (Guam, CNMI, Yap, Palau) and the Micronesian Presidents' Summit (FSM, Marshall Islands, and Palau). In 2007, the two groups merged to form one Micronesian Chief Executives Summit. Since 2007, the U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia have met biannually through the Micronesian Chief Executives Summit to "form an emerging foundation of regional cooperation and governance" though "joint communiqués and related resolutions, letters and associated actions and arrangements" (MCSF Web Page 2013). Following a distinct colonial trajectory – one that today defines their exclusion from contemporary regional cooperation among the U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia, and subsequently, the Micronesia Challenge (Table 3) - Nauru, formerly a British-mandated territory administered by Australia, became a United Nations Trust Territory after World War II, with Australia as administering authority, while Kiribati (formerly the Gilbert Islands) remained a British colony from 1915 until becoming independent in 1979 (Campbell 2003).

Table 3: The signatories to the Micronesia Challenge all U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia, representing a subset of "orthodox Micronesia" that excludes the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru.

Orthodox Micronesia	U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia / Signatories to the Micronesia Challenge
Guam	Guam
Republic of Palau	Republic of Palau
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Federated States of Micronesia	Federated States of Micronesia
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Republic of the Marshall Islands
Republic of Kiribati	X
Republic of Nauru	X

3.4.3 Contemporary status of Micronesia Challenge jurisdictions

The Compacts of Free Association negotiated between the U.S. and FSM, the Marshall Islands, and Palau (herein referred to collectively as freely associated states) have been described as forced marriages (Aldridge and Myers 1990) that "offer a constrained almost neocolonial future" for the Freely Associated States (Hanlon 1998, p. 217). While the unique details of these arrangements are beyond the scope of this paper, in simplest terms, the Compacts of Free Association tie the FSM, Marshall Islands, and Palau to the U.S. through unique packages of economic aid and U.S. federal services (i.e., postal, weather, aviation, defense) in exchange for specific and exclusive territorial use rights for U.S. military facilities and operations. Freely associated states operate under their own constitutions and associated governments and citizenship requirements. Their populations are not U.S. citizens. Officially, the FSM, Marshall Islands, and Palau may conduct their own foreign affairs, including entrance into treaties and agreements; however, they must "consult" with the U.S. government before doing so. The freely associated states are all members of the United Nations (FSM and Marshall Islands since 1991, and Palau since 1994) and parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Their geopolitical power is relatively limited, however:

> ""Microstates" face severe disadvantages in their dealing with the rest of the world owing to low bargaining power and high fixed costs of negotiation. Owing to their small size, microstates do not usually possess the needed human and physical capacities to unilaterally conduct the various bilateral and multilateral negotiations that are typical for developing nations" (Andriamananjara and Schiff 2001, p. 42; see also Chapter 2).

Populations within the freely associated “microstates” range from about 21,100 in Palau, to 70,000 in the Marshall Islands, and 106,000 in FSM (CIA 2013).

The governments of FSM, Palau, and the Marshall Islands are all federations. Traditional leaders and laws are also supported and exercised to varying degrees. In the Marshall Islands, local atoll governments have jurisdiction over inshore marine resources within five nautical miles, “but decisions are often made under the guidance of traditional leaders” (Baker et al. 2011, p. 2). In Palau, sixteen small state governments hold exclusive ownership of the ocean and its resources from the land to 12 nautical miles seaward, but the Palauan constitutions grants equal authority to statutes and traditional law such that states may not impair traditional fishing rights (Constitution of the Republic of Palau). Ownership and governance of land and marine areas varies among the four states of FSM; traditional tenure remains particularly strong in Chuuk and Yap.

In contrast to the freely associated states, the political relationships between the U.S. and Guam and CNMI are closer to that of U.S. states (Leibowitz 1989). Before the passage of the Guam Organic Act of 1950, the U.S. navy exercised complete control over Guam (Quimby 2011). The Organic Act brought U.S. citizenship to Guam’s population, as well as a “modest degree” of self-government that includes a local government comprising executive, legislative, and judicial branches (Quimby 2011, p. 359). The ultimate governing authority is the U.S. congress, though the territory is represented in the U.S congress by one non-voting delegate. The head of state is the U.S. President while a locally-elected governor is the Head of Government.

Customary governance akin to that still present in the freely associated states has long since eroded on Guam (Loerzel 2013). Similar to the U.S., governance of public land and marine areas is the task of local and federal government agencies. Near-shore marine areas from 0-3 miles offshore are managed by the territorial government's Department of Agriculture, Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resource, while the 3-200 miles offshore is under the jurisdiction of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, a quasi-federal agency under the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The territorial government controls approximately 20 to 25% of land on Guam, while the US federal government holds 32%, 29% of which is military bases (Quimby 2011). The United Nations regards Guam as one of the world's 16 remaining non-self-governing territories, and, as such, in need of independence and self-determination (Quimby 2011). Indigenous Chamorro activists, including the current Governor, have led controversial decolonization and cultural renewal movements in Guam since the late 1960s (Quimby 2011).

The *Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America* entered into force in 1975, granting the people of CNMI American citizenship (Leibowitz 1989). The Commonwealth status confers greater autonomy than the territorial status of Guam through "a contradictory mixture of confederation and federation under a quasi-independent guise, but without providing either union with, or independence from the U.S." (Statham 2002, p. 328). With exceptions, the U.S. legal system applies to the locality, though the CNMI also operates under its own constitution (since 1978) and a locally elected head of government and legislature. Similar to Guam, the U.S. President is head of state, the CNMI is permitted one non-voting delegate in the U.S. congress, and the U.S. has "full authority" over foreign affairs (Leibowitz 1989, p. 67). All waters from 0 to 200 miles surrounding CNMI are considered federal, though marine and coastal governance is coordinated among both CNMI and federal government agencies, including the CNMI Coastal Resources Management Office, the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality, and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. Because the United States is not a signatory to the CBD, neither Guam nor CNMI are parties, unlike the freely associated states. See Table 4 for an expanded summary of the information presented in this section.

Table 4: Basic statistics about Micronesia Challenge signatories (Population, political status, land area, per capita GDP, and language data from: CIA 2013.)

Micronesia Challenge Jurisdiction	Population	GDP Per capita[2]	Languages	Land Area	Political Status	Party to the CBD	Governing Authority for Near-shore Marine Areas
Palau	21,108	$10,500	Palauan, English, Sonsoralese, Tobian	459 km^2	Constitutional government in free association with the US	Yes	Local government/ Traditional leaders
Federated States of Micronesia	106,104	$3,000	English, Chuukese, Kosrean, Pohnpeian, Yapese, Ulithian, Woleaian, Nukuoro, Kapingamarangi	702 km^2	Constitutional government in free association with the US	Yes	Various
Marshall Islands	69,747	$3,200	Marshallese, English	181 km^2	Constitutional government in free association with the US	Yes	Local government/ Traditional Leaders
Guam	160,378	$28,700	Chamorro, English	544 km^2	Unincorporated territory of the US	No	Territorial government
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	51,170	$13,600	Chamorro, English	464 km^2	Commonwealth in political union with the US	No	Territorial government/ US Federal government

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[2] Lower GDP per capita within Palau, FSM, and Marshall Islands, in part, reflects the higher prevalence of subsistence lifestyles.

3.5 Emergence of the Micronesia Challenge

I approach institutional emergence as a political process shaped by the situated rational choices of policy actors who are embedded in particular historic, cultural, and political situations in which "money, power, or influence 'talk'" (Mccay 2002, p. 384). In applying the concept of embeddedness (Polanyi 1944), I draw attention to both agency and structure in the process of institutional emergence. However, recognizing that "policy ideas are important less for what they say than for *who* they bring together" (Mosse 2004, p. 649), the following account of the evolution of the Micronesia Challenge focuses on key institutional or policy entrepreneurs (Rosen Olsson 2013) and their synergistic, albeit diverse, motivations as shaped by historical, institutional, and political processes. I rely heavily on quotations to tell the story of emergence primarily from the perspective of those individuals who experienced it.

3.5.1 Incentives for regional cooperation among the U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia

The emergence of the Micronesia Challenge centered around two high-level policy–making events that took place within a four month period: the 14th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting in Palau in November of 2005, and the CBD CoP 8, in Curitiba, Brazil in March of 2006. The 14th meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force was to be the first one held in a freely associated state. High-level representatives from U.S. federal grant-making agencies, among others, would be travelling across an ocean to Palau, and the President of Palau, Tommy Remengesau, "knew that he needed to come up with something big, you know, [for them] to come all the way to Palau" (INGO11). Around that same time, TNC was gearing up for the biennial CBD CoP 8 in 2006, where a new program of work on island biodiversity was to be adopted. At the previous CoP meeting in 2004, the CBD CoP7 had set a target of protecting 10% of the earth's ecological regions by 2010, and adopted an associated program of work on protected areas for guiding implementation (CBD/CoP7, Decisions VII/30; VII/28). TNC was heavily invested in the formulation and adoption of the program of work on protected areas, and was looking for implementation success stories to highlight at the upcoming CoP 8, "to put some muscle into the COP7 program of work, because most countries weren't even paying attention to it" (INGO11).

As these two meetings approached, there was shared understanding among a very small network of key policy entrepreneurs based primarily in Palau – specifically, the President of Palau, Tommy Remengesau, his top advisors, and a handful of TNC staff – that "there was an opportunity to essentially give the president something to launch or announce" (INGO14). More specifically, from the perspective of the Palauan government, these upcoming meetings represented international stages upon which to "enhance Palau's abilities in the international arena, in the regional arena, and at home to protect environment" (ROP3).

The "thing to launch" would coalesce around the agendas of key policy entrepreneurs, protected area targets set by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and the CBD, historically institutionalized regionalism, and pre-existing conservation efforts in the freely associated states of FSM, Marshall Islands, and Palau. One of the key objectives for the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force is "to protect at least 5% of all coral reefs and associated habitat types in each major island group and Florida by 2002; at least 10% by 2005, and at least 20% by 2010" (National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs 2000, p. 20). Progress toward these targets in the U.S. mainland was lagging and "Tommy, you know, thought, well, we could offer Micronesian states, so they could meet their goals. And of course, then you know, this was kind of backroom talking in DC" (INGO11). TNC was similarly interested in a target-driven initiative that could also demonstrate globally significant progress toward CBD protected area targets and associated program of work on protected areas: "We needed something to say the program [of work on protected areas] is working, cause everybody was saying oh, the COP7 plan was a total waste of time …. we needed something in 2006 to make a splash" (INGO11).

The incentive to construct a regional level initiative was thus drawn from externally generated pressure to convey progress at a globally significant spatial scale. From the perspective of TNC,

> "[The region] was a larger slice of the planet, and there is a certain amount of attention that gets paid when you know, dealing with global resources and actions of global significance, when you can define a large area or a significant slice of biodiversity or a significant number of people" (INGO14).

The Palauan government similarly

> "[R]ealized the reality that we were talking about a small percentage of the Pacific Ocean resources, and that a more effective voice would be to do it on a regional basis, and from a regional we could go international" (ROP10).

Here, the ability to "go international" is shorthand for leveraging financial resources from the international donors:

> "If we were to go to GEF, the UN, like the Global Environmental Fund, or approach The Nature Conservancy or these NGOs [as individual jurisdictions], they could probably give a minimum amount here, a minimal amount there, you know. But, our goal was a bigger goal. It was something that was not just limited to a small entity" (ROP10).

As another official summarized,

> "[T]here was potential for bigger money would come if we make it a regionally effort, instead of just a Palauan effort so to speak, so the more support that we got for it not only regionally but internationally, the more support and more in terms of funding, so that is where the thought of Micronesia Challenge began" (ROP15).

Of course, the idea for regional level cooperation on environmental issues did not arise in a vacuum. As many interviewees emphasized:

> "[The Micronesia Challenge] didn't just appear out of nowhere – there was already some regional effort going on on the part of the government and other organizations that were working with them" (INGO6).

In particular, interviewees highlighted the contemporary platform for cooperation among the U.S. affiliated states of Micronesia – one built on the enduring legacy of shared colonial ties—to which the Micronesia Challenge could be conveniently attached. This included the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force; the Micronesians in Island Conservation peer-learning network supported by TNC and the Packard Foundation (Bruton-Adams et al. 2011); and the summits - the Western Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit and the Micronesian Presidents' Summits, which would merge in 2007.

While there are examples of more inclusive institutionalized regionalism in orthodox Micronesia (such as the Micronesian Games, a quadrennial international multi-sport event that brings together athletes from Palau, Guam, CNMI, Marshall Islands, FSM, Nauru, and Kiribati), political cooperation through the Micronesia Challenge was built upon an existing foundation of existing political and institutional infrastructure. That the Micronesia Challenge originated from a U.S. freely associated state in connection with the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meant that there was no serious consideration of including Kiribati and Nauru within the Micronesia Challenge in the earliest stages of its development. As one policy entrepreneur reflected:

> "[A]lthough [they are] quote, Micronesian, there's really almost never any political coalition discussion with Kiribati or Nauru [. . .]. We just wanted to keep it in our tight regional group and that probably had something to do with practicalities. We know each other, were already doing the [Micronesian] Chief Executive Summits" (ROP3).

The other practicalities interviewees referenced included shared currency, and especially, the geography of transportation infrastructure. The U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia are serviced by a major U.S. airline, making travel among them relatively direct and affordable. Kiribati and Nauru are excluded from this route and thus air travel across the colonially-delineated boundaries is exceedingly expensive (often prohibitively so (see Bruton-Adams et al. 2011)), and circuitous. The exclusion of Kiribati and Nauru from the Micronesia Challenge thus reflects another component of the historically contingent and contested social processes through which regions are reconstructed, and maintained over time. Though politically and logistically practical, according to a few interviewees, the exclusion of Kiribati and Nauru from the *Micronesia* Challenge "has really deepened that line in the sand [between the U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia and Kiribati and Nauru]" (ROP9). While most interviewees matter-of-factly explained the exclusion of Kiribati and Nauru with reference to practicalities – i.e., "it just made sense" (INGO7) – a small minority characterized the act as a quiet and enduring source of tension:

> "The implications of what that did, what that single mishap or that move or lack thereof did to our relationship with Kiribati and Nauru has really been underplayed [. . .]. It's like the white elephant in the room between us now. If we were really trying to get support in the [wider Pacific] region for the Micronesia Challenge at a SPREP meeting or we're trying to really go to the Pacific Islands Forum it's a little bit uncomfortable right? Because we're going 'blah blah blah' and we've [got] two of our cultural siblings in the room kind of going, 'yeah well we're not [part of that]'. So, you know, we're not going to do a song and dance for that because you kind of dissed us'" (ROP9).

3.5.2 A regional target-driven initiative is born

For the policy entrepreneurs, the task at hand was to build on pre-existing regional cooperation and local conservation initiatives to produce conservation success stories for the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, the UN CBD, TNC, and the Palauan President. With funding from TNC's "Early Action Grants" in support of the CBD program of work on protected areas, nascent protected area networks (PANs) were already under development in FSM, Marshall Islands, and Palau. Of the three, Palau was by far the most developed, with a national Protected Area Network Act in place since 2003. As the two international meetings approached, key policy entrepreneurs engaged the Palau Conservation Society to identify a set of regional area-based conservation targets that were within reach for Palau and other U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia. At the same time, they strategically chose targets higher than those in other international environmental agreements:

> "[T]he idea was we go beyond what anyone else was committing – we show that we, the dispossessed islands of the world, who have more to lose in all of the issues of biodiversity and climate change, are ourselves going to make these commitments as an indicator to you the rest of the world that you should do this too" (ROP3).

The regional targets ultimately agreed upon reflected an internal calculus of progress underway, particularly in Palau:

> "For Palau it was, those are very low, in fact we already met them, but we had to consider Guam, Saipan, FSM, and Marshalls. [. . .] The thing is we wanted this to succeed, not be something with an unrealistic goal only to fail later" (ROP10).

With the confidence of guaranteed success, President Remengesau stood up at the 14th meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and declared that he would protect 30% of Palau's reefs and 20% of their terrestrial areas, publicly challenging his Micronesian colleagues in the room to do the same (INGO11). In that moment, the situational pressure to at least informally accept this challenge loomed large:

> "You have all these big shots from DC there, and um, [Tommy Remengesau] stood up and he said, and 'I declare the Micronesia Challenge, you know, and I challenge everybody else at the table to do the same.' So, you know, I think the Vice President of the FSM was there, the Chief Minister…from the Marshalls. And they were kind of caught […] And what are they going to say, no? [. . .] I mean the governors of both [Guam and CNMI] were [also] sitting there. And it would have been very embarrassing for them to go, 'no, we're not going to.' So, the NOAA [U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] head [. ..] was there, and you know, and the head, number two guy at DOI [U.S. Department of Interior] was there and [….] [Guam and CNMI] get major money

> from NOAA and DOI. And obviously NOAA and DOI were on this thing" (INGO11).

Others described the decision to verbally acquiesce in that moment with reference to "peer pressure" (GM5), "solidarity" (CNMI7; RMI13), "brotherhood" (CNMI8), and the "nice island way" (ROP3), all of which one interviewee summarized thus:

> "if I go to your homeland [and] you ask me for something, if I say no, I am disrespecting you [. . .]. Island culture 101, I don't come into your house and disrespect you, I come to your house and I say I will do everything" (GM5).

After the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting, TNC drafted text for the formal declaration of commitment. The diplomatic task of leveraging oral, informal agreements from FSM, CNMI, Guam, and Marshall Islands into a formal, signed declaration of commitment before the fast approaching CBD CoP 8 fell largely to the administration of Tommy Remengesau, who had long-established personal relationships and political suasion within the community of Micronesia leaders. My use of the term community is deliberate and empirically grounded. Multiple interviewees stressed the critical political outreach undertaken by Tommy Remengesau, which was enabled in part by the personal and political ties among leaders in U.S. affiliated islands of Micronesia, several of whom attended boarding school together and served together in the Congress of Micronesia (INGO11; RMI8; INGO14). The expediency and success of Remengesau's diplomatic effort was further aided by financial incentives, which some described as a major "selling point" (ROP3). While there was no formal commitment of funding to support the Micronesia Challenge until the CBD CoP 8, "behind the scenes there might have been some, you know, expectations raised" (INGO14).

In their rush to announce the Micronesia Challenge at CBD CoP 8, policy entrepreneurs did not consult the government agencies, conservation NGOs, resource users, and resource owners who would be tasked with interpreting and implementing the Micronesia Challenge commitment:

> "[T]hey didn't consult with the conservation community really at all. They just sort of did it in a vacuum and yeah, they came up with the language themselves. None of us were asked to even look at the language before they finalized it" (ROP7).

As one interviewee reflected,

> "[I]f we'd gone through all the, the proper channels it may not have actually come out in time [. . .] So we knew, all of us knew that our colleagues are going to be kind of burned" (INGO11).

This was a prescient insight, as the top-down approach to policy development would indeed strain local engagement with the Micronesia Challenge in the participating jurisdictions. In the four months between the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting and the CBD CoP 8, however, the decision to press forward was a calculated one tied to a specific historical conjuncture and associated political interests of policy entrepreneurs. As one interviewee put it, "there was a lot of opportunity to connect all these things and I think there are sometimes you do have the perfect storm … and that was it" (INGO14). Indeed, TNC knew "Curitiba [CoP 8] is coming up, so we can do a high level side event and invite the world, and that was the thinking" (INGO14). On the part of participating governments, a sense of urgency was also drawn from fear of losing international resources and attention to other large ocean regions with higher biodiversity and larger populations:

> "I think there was a sense of urgency because had they waited they might lose the support of those big agencies and also other regions might be the ones who do it, and because of our size. If you look at the population of Micronesia it's 200,000 people, that's it. And despite its size when you compare it to Coral Triangle, Indonesia alone is 300 million, Caribbean is even bigger, so it was trying to race against others doing it first because whatever leverage we can have will be because we are first. So I think those things had a big influence on the decision to announce" (INGO6).

The Palauan government delivered a signed declaration of commitment, TNC lined up pledges of financial support, and the Micronesia Challenge was announced to the world in the celebratory high-level side event described in the introduction to this chapter. For Palau, the announcement at CBD CoP 8 was

> "[A] way to get ourselves on the map and then to be known internationally as someone moving forward in the right direction. It's very difficult to do that when you're in Micronesia, no one even knows where you are or who you are" (ROP3).

For some at TNC, the announcement was more broadly aimed at energizing the global conservation agenda: "it wasn't about making a splash for Micronesia, [. . .] it was a way to get the CoP 7 network moving" (INGO11). On his speech during the high-level side event at CBD CoP 8, the vice president for external affairs for TNC positioned the Micronesia Challenge as an example of successful implementation for the CBD program of work on protected areas:

> "This is what the protected areas plan of action should be – the Programme of Work should be this collaborative effort between political commitments on the

> one hand by governments and support from all of their partners. We very much hope that the pledges that have been made today, both political and financial, will stimulate an even greater effort at the next Conference Of Parties, with more challenges by many more governments" (Nigel Purvis, vice president for external affairs for TNC, High Level Event on "'Islands, Marine Biodiversity and Livelihoods: A Global Island Partnership," CBD CoP 8, March 28, 2006).

3.5.3 Discussion

From the moment it was borne, the Micronesia Challenge had enrolled the support of a network of powerful international policymakers and donors – including high-level Micronesian leaders, TNC, CI, GEF, the CBD Secretariat, and U.S. agencies within the Coral Reef Task Force – for whom it produced success and legitimacy, instantly, simply by virtue of its existence. This insight challenges nascent explanations for "the rise of the region in global environmental politics," which identifies regional environmental governance as a substitute for failed global environmental governance (Conca 2012, p. 127). While this may be true in some cases, this empirical analysis of the emergence of the Micronesia Challenge offers a somewhat different explanation that instead highlights the mutually constitutive relationship between levels of environmental governance. Where the regional is the Micronesia Challenge and the global is the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the pull of the regional is rooted not in the failure of the global, but rather, in the production of its success. It is also rooted in a foundation of institutionalized regionalism along post-colonial political boundaries, a close partnership between the president of a microstate and an international conservation NGO, and the political-economic aspirations of key policy entrepreneurs who opportunistically pursued them through higher level policy processes, agendas, and stages.

3.6 Form

> *"Early on the Micronesia [Challenge] is more just for gesture, [a] commandment to help sustain certain things, and it's just nice. But I just, I'm just saying that over time as the Micronesian Challenge evolves, it will probably lead to real policies, you know? And when those policies start coming, then we'll start to get in some tension from the departments" (CNMI8).*

In the context of its emergence, the Micronesia Challenge may be understood as a symbol of progress and legitimacy that aligns the interests of powerful actors through the production of conservation policy success. This section continues to answer the deceptively simple question of: what is the Micronesia Challenge? Specifically, this section and the next consider how the Micronesia Challenge has taken shape during the implementation phase, when, as the introductory quote and Mosse (2004, p. 664) suggest, "all the diverse and contradictory interests that were enrolled in the framing of an ambiguous policy model and project design, all the contests and contradictions that are embedded in policy texts, are brought to life." Toward this end, I engage Balsiger and VanDeever's (2010) typology of regional environmental governance to broadly characterize the form of the Micronesia Challenge with reference to its (1) territoriality (political, with nature-based representations), (2) thematic focus (multi-issue, dynamic), and (3) coordinating agency (critical role for environmental NGOs). My analysis includes attention to both representation and practice, given that both, together, constitute policy (Yanow 1996). As in Chapter 2, my attention to representation, especially in the subsections of 3.6, is not intended to expose or criticize, but rather, to enhance our understanding of the myriad social processes through which regional environmental governance takes shape.

My focus on the regional within regional environmental governance, and my interest in the (re)distribution of authority and responsibility through multi-level environmental governance has also led me to the related questions of: how is the Micronesia Challenge regional, and how regional is the Micronesia Challenge? (see Debarbieux 2012, who poses this question more generally in his article, *"How Regional is Regional Environmental Governance?"*). In other words, which governance activities are being regionalized, and which have been delegated to participating jurisdictions, and why? In order to flag the locus of decision-making as an important focus for analysis and future comparative research, I propose the addition of *governance* to Balsiger and VanDeever's (2010) typology, with a descriptive continuum ranging from *regionalized* to *decentralized* (Figure 5). Again, I use the term *governance* to encompass the broadest range of activities and actors through which the work of regional environmental governance is carried out, including both state and non-state actors and their interventions of research, communication, decision-making and agenda-setting, convening, reporting, fundraising, etc. (Lemos and Agrawal 2006).

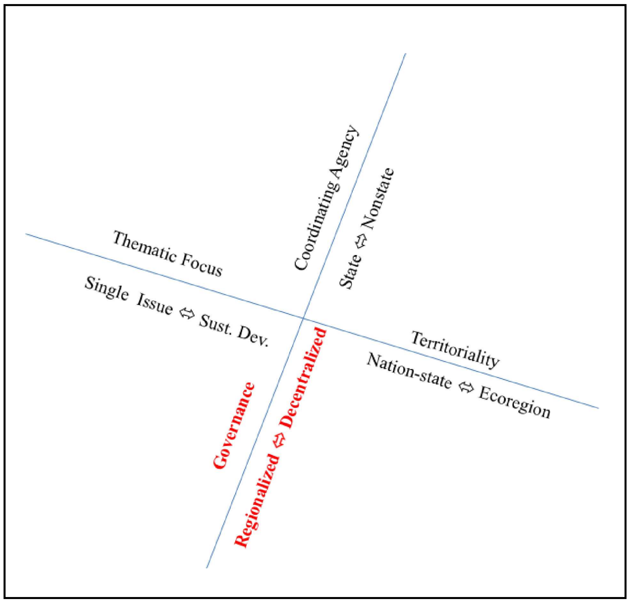

Coordinating Agency
State ⇔ Nonstate
Thematic Focus
Single Issue ⇔ Sust. Dev.
Territoriality
Nation-state ⇔ Ecoregion
Governance
Regionalized ⇔ Decentralized

Figure 5: Modified typology of regional environmental governance, with the additional descriptor of governance on a continuum between regionalized and decentralized. (Modified from: Balsiger and VanDeveer 2010, p. 6183).

3.6.1 Territoriality

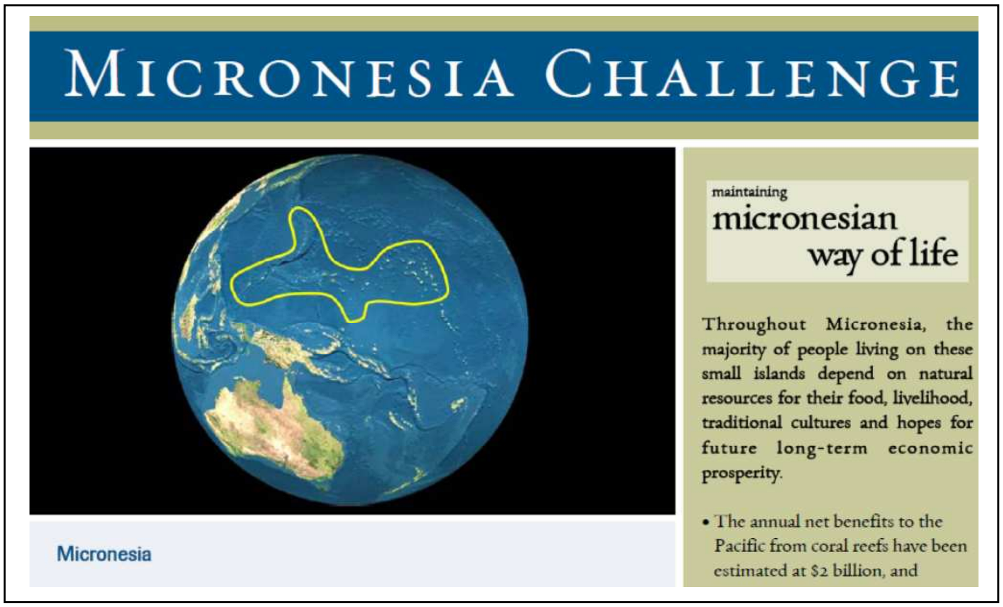
The territoriality variable in Balsiger and VanDeveer's (2010) typology concerns the basis for delineating the geographic scope of cooperation – with political boundaries on one end of the spectrum, naturally delineated ecosystem boundaries on the other, and space in between for various amalgamations. While Balsiger and VanDeever (2010) take a realist approach to territoriality, I take a more constructivist approach that calls attention to representations of territoriality, and the politics inherent in the scaling of conservation territories along the boundaries of apparently natural systems such as watersheds, ecosystems, or eco-regions (Campbell and Godfrey 2010; Cohen 2012; Sievanen et al. 2013). As described in Section 3.5, the territoriality of the Micronesia Challenge was shaped along historical and contemporary political boundaries as opposed to natural ones. As one interviewee aptly summarized, “I don't think there was even any consideration originally about ecological [boundaries]” (GM2). However, this does not mean that current Micronesia Challenge policy actors aren’t considering the possibility for biologically significant regional connectivity, or representing their connected geographic space as an ecologically relevant basis for cooperation.

While there is a large literature examining connectivity in marine and island systems (i.e. via coral and fish larvae, migratory species, etc.) (e.g., Palumbi 2003; Almany et al. 2007; Cowen 2000; Cowen 2006), there have been very few scientific studies of ecological connectivity among the Micronesia Challenge jurisdictions (interviewees referenced one unpublished study demonstrating genetic connectivity among populations of unicorn fish between FSM and Guam). While interviewees with scientific backgrounds acknowledged, “I don’t know if we are tied ecologically” (ROP13), they also generally assumed at least some degree of connectivity. As another interviewee suggested,

> “I mean we know there’s connectivity between jurisdictions but there hasn’t been a whole lot of work done on how many species do travel that distance across the oceans from Chuuk to Guam or whatever the case may be. [. . .] Even though we don't know for sure all of them, we can assume that there are going to be some kind of connectivities” (GM2).

Regardless of the scientific unknowns, interviewees recognized strategic value in leveraging assumptions of natural connectivity into representations that articulate with global conservation discourses that prioritize the maintenance of ecological connectivity over large spatial scales through marine governance approaches such as ecosystem-based management, protected area networks, and ecoregional conservation (Sievanen et al. 2013). One may readily find representations that resonate with global conservation agendas both implicitly and explicitly in the outreach materials produced to advertise the Micronesia Challenge to potential donors. The glossy brochure produced by the Office of the President of Palau states: "Recognizing this regional connectivity and the need to address the problems across borders spurred the birth of the Micronesia Challenge" (2007). A more common representation is implicit, however, in maps and statistics that boast the "unprecedented scale" of action, and global significance of the region's collective biodiversity (Micronesia Challenge Fact Sheet 2011). Though the Micronesia Challenge commitment explicitly applies only to near-shore marine resources, representations of the geographic scope of action include contiguous polygons on global maps (Figure 6) and associated statistics boasting that the Micronesia Challenge covers "6.7 million square kilometers of ocean" and "represents more than 20% of the Pacific Island region - and 5% of the largest ocean in the world" (Micronesia Challenge Fact Sheet 2008). A 2011 fact sheet similarly reflects a geographical unity by reporting the aggregate biodiversity across the region: "The Micronesia Challenge spans 2.5 million square miles of ocean, an area nearly the size of the continental U.S. that supports the livelihoods of: 650,000 people and protects 66 threatened species on the IUCN Red List, 480+ coral species & 1,300+ reef fish species, 85 bird species & 1,400 plant species" (Micronesia Challenge Fact Sheet 2011). Similar representations may also be found in project documents. The project document for the $6 million GEF project "The

Micronesia Challenge: Sustainable Finance Systems for Island Protected Area Management," for example, states that "The coral reefs of Palau are part of a massive interconnected system that ties together Micronesia and the Western Pacific" (2010, p. 11). In summary, the territoriality of the Micronesia Challenge is simultaneously political (in emergence) and ecoregional (in representation). Though the territoriality was decidedly political at the onset, in the context of global conservation agendas and the relative subaltern status of Microstates therein (Chapter 2; see also Fry 2005), representations of territoriality during later implementation stages are strategic, elaborating on the geographic and ecological basis of cooperation.


MICRONESIA CHALLENGE

Micronesia

maintaining
micronesian
way of life

Throughout Micronesia, the majority of people living on these small islands depend on natural resources for their food, livelihood, traditional cultures and hopes for future long-term economic prosperity.

- The annual net benefits to the Pacific from coral reefs have been estimated at $2 billion, and

Figure 6: Representations of the large and connected geographic scope of cooperation through the Micronesia Challenge (Micronesia Challenge fact sheet 2008).

3.6.2 Thematic focus

The declaration of commitment for the Micronesia Challenge is simultaneously broad, vague, and specific. The text includes objectives relating to biological diversity, livelihoods, cultural protection, sustainable development, and references to global targets set forth in the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Mauritius Strategy for Small Island Developing States, and relevant Programmes of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity (see Figure 7 for an excerpt).

> We the Chief Executives of Micronesia, in order to:
>
> - Sustain our unique island biodiversity;
> - Ensure a healthy future for our island people;
> - Protect our unique island cultures;
> - Guard the foundations of our future development, our pristine island environments;
> - Sustain the livelihoods of our island communities;
> - Contribute to global targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Mauritius Strategy for Small Island Developing States and the relevant Programmes of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity; and
> - Expand our commitment to preserve our marine and terrestrial environments,
>
> Agree to “*effectively conserve at least 30% of the near-shore marine and 20% of the forest resources across Micronesia by 2020.”*

Figure 7: Excerpt from Micronesia Challenge Declaration of Commitment (2006).

While the 2006 declaration commitment may have included “pretty much everything in the kitchen sink” (INGO4), there were two notable omissions. The first, climate change, would be formally incorporated in 2012 without contest. In the context of increasing global attention to and local concern for climate change, especially in the low-lying atolls comprising the Marshall Islands, the thematic breadth of the Micronesia Challenge formally grew to encompass objectives of climate adaptation and resilience:

"Micronesia Challenge was all about biodiversity conservation, but we said, and the other thing is we want to do this as an adaptation, to build our adaptation, adaptive capacity to impacts from climate change. So they were like, 'ahh, that's a big one'" (RMI1). A workshop on "Climate Change and the Micronesia Challenge: Ways forward in Collaboration and Adaptation" was convened in the Marshall Islands in 2009, and the chief executives adopted a resolution in 2012 at 17th Micronesian Chief Executives Summit "To Address the Global Environmental Impact of Climate Changes in Micronesia and to Coordinate and Implement into the Micronesian Challenge our Region's Response to this Challenge" (Resolution No. 17-03).

The second omission would become a subject of debate and a source of conflict, particularly in Guam and CNMI. While the declaration text "recalls" the "targets and timetables agreed to under the Convention on Biological Diversity to establish comprehensive systems of protected areas by 2010 for terrestrial and 2012 for marine habitats," it does not explicitly commit signatories to establishing protected areas or protected area networks. Recall from the introduction to this chapter that President Remenegsau characterized the Micronesia Challenge at the CBD CoP 8 as "a shared commitment by the countries and territories of Micronesia *to a comprehensive system of protected area networks*" (Tommy Remengesau, President of the Republic of Palau, High Level Event on "'Islands, Marine Biodiversity and Livelihoods: A Global Island Partnership," CBD CoP 8, March 28, 2006; italics added). TNC publicized a similar characterization on its website years later, in 2011: "The Challenge calls for a network of effectively managed protected areas linked across the region" (TNC "Micronesia" webpage, accessed September 15, 2011). Although key policy entrepreneurs initially envisioned the primary implementation mechanism for the Micronesia Challenge to be just that, the broad and vague commitment to "effective conservation" left room for debate:

> "[D]on't kid yourself, it was always about protected areas whether Guam, CNMI and others want to see it differently, the intent was protected areas [. . .] when the thing was launched the percentages meant protected areas. They talked about effective conservation because they were trying to soften it a little but it was always about protected areas" (INGO4).

Drawing on Bruno Latour, Mosse (2004, p. 646) observes that the process of translating policy text into some form of established order relies on "authoritative interpretations." These observations are perhaps especially true for a policy text with the thematic breadth of the Micronesia Challenge. As many interviewees would suggest, the Micronesia Challenge language can encompass just about anything: "Anything you do could be implementing the Micronesia Challenge" (RMI12). As another put it,

> "The Micronesia Challenge is such a comprehensive concept that all projects that have to do with the resource management, climate change, or sustainable development sort of fall under that framework. [. . .]. Like I can't think of a project that I worked on prior to the Micronesia Challenge that wouldn't qualify as a Micronesia Challenge initiative" (INGO5).

This means that in practice, the thematic foci of the Micronesia Challenge are continually under negotiation by a diverse network of policy actors ranging from the GEF to the Guam Fishermen's Coop. The focus of attention and resources on particular 'themes' – fisheries, biodiversity, climate change, sustainable development, and protected areas –

through the Micronesia Challenge is contingent on context, and continually negotiated through more or less authoritative interpretations that are "made and sustained *socially*" through the enrollment of actors into a supporting interpretive community (Mosse 2004, p. 646). Later sections explore how the broad thematic mandate of the Micronesia Challenge is functioning in practice across multiple levels of governance, demonstrating how thematic breadth can become a source of opportunity and conflict.

3.6.3 Coordinating agency

Balsiger and VanDeever (2010) use coordinating agency to broadly refer to the nature of actors who are cooperating through regional environmental governance arrangements, conceptualized on a continuum between exclusively state actors and exclusively non-state actors. I employ a more specific interpretation of coordinating agency focuses on the principle actors who sustain cooperation at the regional level over time.

In December of 2006, nine months after the Micronesia Challenge was announced at the CBD CoP 8, 80 representatives from across the region and beyond gathered in Palau for a "Micronesia Challenge action planning meeting" to negotiate the formal organizational structure of the Micronesia Challenge. Participants represented government agencies, research and education organizations, traditional leadership, local and international conservation NGOs (i.e. Palau Conservation Society, TNC, CI), international foundations (ie. Packard Foundation), and Pacific-wide regional organizations (i.e., Pacific Islands Forum, Secretariat of the Pacific Community). As a result of decisions taken at this meeting, the Micronesian chief executives endorsed the establishment of five new regional working groups over the next few years to coordinate the regional-level work of the Micronesia Challenge, including the Micronesia Challenge Communications Working Group; Micronesia Challenge Measures Working Group; Micronesia Challenge Regional Support Team[3]; Micronesia Challenge Steering Committee; and the Micronesia Challenge Regional Office. All except the Micronesia Challenge Regional Office included participation from both state and non-state actors who have full time jobs elsewhere. In 2007, an NGO based in FSM, the Micronesia Conservation Trust, was designated the host for the regional sustainable finance mechanism – a single regional endowment comprising financial pledges from TNC, CI, GEF, and matching funds from Palau, FSM, and Marshall Islands (endowment funds were not pledged to Guam and CNMI). The designation of an NGO to manage the endowment was deliberate, based on state actors' understandings of donor preferences:

> "You have to have an effective vehicle like the Micronesia Challenge that donors are going to be comfortable that they're putting their money into a system that directly makes a difference. That Micronesia Challenge is the vehicle. That the governments, the Micronesian governments, that were going to put in their money in there. It's the donors that were going to put their money in there. It's the international organizations that were going to put their money in there, knowing that it's effective, foolproof; governments were not going to dip their

---

[3] Comprised of regional, international, and U.S. federal agencies and organizations that provide technical and policy advice, and in some cases, funding: TNC (Chair), CI, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, RARE International, Palau International Coral Reef Center, the Global Island Partnership, the Pacific Marine Resources Institute, the Locally Managed Marine Areas Network, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Programme, the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Environment Protection Agency , the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service , the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and the local conservation NGOs in each island (A Report on Progress to Implement the Micronesia Challenge 2006-2011).

> hands into that money to fund other things. [. . .] That was the critical component" (ROP10).

Officially, the overall coordination bodies are the interlinked Micronesia Challenge Steering Committee and the Micronesia Challenge Regional Office, the characteristics of which I sketch below to convey intended roles for state and non-state actors:

(1) Micronesia Challenge Steering Committee:
  - Comprised of state and non-state actors: five "focal points" designated by the chief executives from each of the participating jurisdictions (all government officials at the time of writing), the executive director of the Micronesia Conservation Trust, and the chair of the regional support team (TNC at the time of writing).
  - Official mission: "leading regional coordination and communication, securing sustainable funding, linking leadership with stakeholders, engaging policy makers, and enabling jurisdictional staff and partners to engage and support communities in their effective resource management" (Micronesia Challenge Steering Committee and Regional Office Strategic Action Plan 2010).
  - Meets biannually alongside the Chief Executive Summits to review and reporting progress, and set priorities for the regional level activities of the Micronesia Challenge.
  - Focal points are also responsible for overseeing the development of jurisdictional level implementation strategies.

(2) Micronesia Challenge Regional Office
  - A legally designated intergovernmental agency that is supported by participating governments ($10,000 each per year, decreased from $22,000, which was too burdensome).
  - Functions as a semi-autonomous body in support of the Micronesia Challenge Steering Committee.
  - Staffed by one or two full time regional coordinators since its inception in 2008.

In practice, two non-state members of the Micronesia Challenge Steering Committee – TNC and the Micronesia Conservation Trust – are widely recognized as the key drivers for sustained regional coordination. TNC unofficially served as the Micronesia Challenge secretariat before the Micronesia Challenge Regional Office was established in 2008 (INGO11). TNC in particular has played and continues to play a critical role in organizing, facilitating, and raising funds for meetings of the regional organizations mentioned above. The two NGOs have also contracted consultants to formulate and carry out marketing and “branding” (INGO1) for the Micronesia Challenge, and to produce sustainable finance plans for each jurisdiction and the region. Both TNC and the Micronesia Conservation Trust are also the main fundraisers for the Micronesia Challenge. They apply for grants on behalf of the participating governments and themselves, and even broker the exchange of votes from Palau, FSM, and the Marshall Islands in UN policy-making processes for foreign aid in support of the Micronesia Challenge, as one individual explained:

> “[T]his year we were visited by several countries including Belgium, who told [the Micronesia Conservation Trust] to submit a proposal for up to 1.5 million dollars in support of the Micronesia Challenge in return for a vote [for a seat on the UN security council] [. . .] from all three [countries]” (INGO6).

The critical role of NGOs in sustaining regional cooperation was emphasized by many, as reflected in the following:

> “They really, really, really are the backbone to this operation. [. ..] The concept of what it would take it terms of developing a business model, developing the sustainable financing plan, and developing the strategies, and creating the workshops, understanding measures, having them really look for the funding for that [. . .] is really what I think is the what is the, what is keeping…they're the glue really” (GM1).

Though the signatories to the Micronesia Challenge are exclusively heads of state – specifically, the presidents of Palau, FSM, and Marshall Islands, and the governors of Guam and the CNMI – non-state actors maintain an influential, arguably critical, role in sustaining regional cooperation.

3.6.4 Governance

> *"The biggest challenge is that all of the countries and all of the states are very, very different [. . .]. The environments are different, the resource is different, the people are different, how they use [resources] are different" (INGO10).*

The cooperative governance tasks explicitly agreed to in the declaration of commitment are fairly general, and include: reviewing progress on a biennial basis at the chief executive level (at the Micronesia Chief Executive Summits); sharing experiences, tools, and techniques; establishing a regional financing mechanism; and engaging Pacific Island programs and facilitates to help with regional coordination and financing (Figure 8). Importantly, the text also sanctions local, national, regional, and international activities as appropriate means of implementation. This section focuses on the key implementation activities that coordinating agents are attempting to regionalize and decentralize in practice.

In order to implement this Micronesia Challenge, we further agree to:

- **Undertake and follow through on local, national, regional and international conservation strategies and plans, including National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs);**
- Establish and expand local partnerships between Government agencies and NGOs engaged in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
- Expand communication and interaction with local communities and traditional leadership;
- **Share experience, tools and techniques among Micronesian officials, conservation practitioners and community leaders;**
- Establishment sustainable financing mechanisms for the conservation and sustainable use of island biodiversity;
- **Engage the region's development and trading partners as well as NGOs and private foundations in appropriate financial and technical support to ensure the effective implementation of the Micronesia Challenge, including through a Regional Financing Mechanism;**
- **Further engage Pacific Island programs and facilities, such as the Pacific Island Forum and associated organizations such as the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to optimize regional coordination and financing**; and
- **Agree to review progress to achieve the Micronesia Challenge on a biennial basis at head of government/chief executive level**

Figure 8: Implementation activities agreed to in the text of the Micronesia Challenge Declaration of Commitment (2006). Cooperative implementation tasks are bolded.

3.6.4.1 Regionalizing governance

In practice, regionalized activities have included most of those agreed to in the declaration text and more: biannual reporting of progress from the Micronesia Challenge Steering Committing to chief executives at the Micronesian Chief Executive Summits; sharing of experiences, tools and techniques, particularly as they relate to the development of regional monitoring protocols and indicators of collective progress toward the Micronesia Challenge targets; and the development of regional financing mechanisms and associated marketing campaigns. Attempts to regionalize governance activities fall within three interrelated categories: finance, communications, and monitoring/evaluation.

Finance: In the first Micronesia Challenge planning meeting in 2006 "the group highlighted the importance considering of *truly regional options for fundraising* for the Challenge" (Micronesia Challenge action planning report 2006, italics added). Six years later, interviewees would conclude:

> "trying to bring two types of different jurisdictions together within a single region to move forward, with totally different abilities to raise funds and to share funds? Very, very complicated" (ROP3).

As it happens, there are few *truly regional options for fundraising* due to the differential political status and associated eligibility for international funding between the U.S. jurisdictions of Guam and CNMI on the one hand, and the freely associated states of FSM, Palau, and Marshall Islands on the other. Thus far, the "regional" finance mechanism falls into two categories that almost exclusively serve Palau, FSM, and the Marshall Islands: (1) the regional Micronesia Challenge endowment, and (2) large "pass-through" grants that TNC and Micronesia Conservation Trust apply for and redistribute on behalf of the governments of freely associated states. Below I briefly describe the details of these two finance mechanisms because they are an important point of reference for some perceived functions (and dysfunctions) of the Micronesia Challenge described that arise in Section 3.7.

TNC and the Micronesia Conservation Trust, often together, apply for "pass-through" grants from foundations and foreign governments in support of the

Micronesia Challenge. The Micronesia Conservation Trust redistributes these funds through calls for proposals, which are primarily focused on the development and management of protected areas within the three freely associated states (Table 5). The largest of these is a $6 million GEF project that provides some pass-through funding to the Micronesia Conservation Trust to redistribute in support of national protected area networks (PANs) within the freely associated states, identifying PANs as their "primary strategy for achieving the goals of the Micronesia Challenge" (the majority of that grant, $5 million, is invested directly in the regional endowment, however, as described below). The stated objective of the GEF project is: "to establish sustainable finance systems and policies to provide long-term core resources to support Protected Area Networks that are well coordinated within and between the three country proponents of the Micronesia Challenge." Thus far, the on-the-ground projects that are funded through pass-through grants focus on protected areas and biodiversity conservation :

> "It has to relate to protected areas so [. . .] I mean invasive species is fine [. . .] but as it relates to a protected area. So I mean its most, yeah, I would say it's all, its biodiversity conservation. That's the big thing. But all as it relates to protected areas. So like we're doing, we just launched, started doing all this climate change stuff. But it's still as it relates to protected areas. Like our main message from the climate change is that why we can't actually mitigate or stop climate change, the best thing we can do is make sure that our resources are as healthy and resilient as they can be in order to withstand the impacts of climate change. And by doing that, if you create…a network of protected areas, you have a better chance of doing that. And so in the end it's still protected areas" (INGO8).

Table 5: Examples of Micronesia Challenge "pass-through" grants that are redistributed by the Micronesia Conservation Trust to fund protected area related projects within Palau, FSM, and the Marshall Islands (Source: Micronesia Conservation Trust, May 2012).

Grantor	Grant Title	Total Grant	Example sub-award
U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration	Building sustainable coral reef monitoring and management capacity for the Micronesia Challenge, and Beyond	$1,380,000	Advancing the Micronesia Challenge through Community-Based Management of Marine Resources in Piis-Paneu, Chuuk ($30,797)
German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (through the CBD Lifeweb Initiative)	Advancing the Micronesia Challenge through new protected areas: Reducing ecosystem vulnerability to climate change and sea-level rise through a new network of resilient, locally managed conservation areas across the islands of Micronesia.	€1,551,739	Capital purchases and telecommunications for Nimpal Marine Conservation Area and Ngulu Atoll Marine Conservation Area ($37,746)
Margaret Cargill Foundation	Advancing the Micronesia Challenge by strengthening and sustaining management of local protected area networks across Micronesia.	$250,000	Advancing the Micronesia Challenge through an increased and efficient network of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia ($49,760)
David and Lucile Packard Foundation	To expand sustainable financing mechanisms for protected area networks in Micronesia	$500,000	Training in Monitoring Birds in Terrestrial and Marine Protected Areas ($9,700)

The regional endowment hosted by the Micronesia Conservation Trust is envisioned as a permanent sustainable finance mechanism for Micronesia Challenge activities. Thus far, pledges of support have come from TNC ($2 million to Palau, $1 million to FSM, $0 to Marshall Islands, Guam, and CNMI) and CI ($1 million each to FSM, Palau, and Marshall Islands, $0 to Guam and CNMI). All pledges required a two to one match by recipient countries. A regional GEF grant supplied FSM, Palau, and the Marshall Islands with $1.68 million each toward their matching requirements, which left Palau to raise $4.32 million, FSM to raise $2.32 million, and the Marshall Island to raise $320,000 to trigger the full pledges from TNC and CI. As of March 2013, the partially capitalized endowment totals $11,628,164.69, and country matches have come from a variety of domestic and international sources, including a tourist departure fee and foreign aid from Taiwan (Palau) and domestic coffers (FSM and Marshall Islands).

Although the Micronesia Conservation Trust tracks three country-specific sub-accounts to account for the differential financial commitments to and from the FSM, Palau, and the Marshall Islands, there is one single endowment invested as a whole for the sake of efficiency and economies of scale:

> "[T]he Micronesia Conservation Trust would house the endowment so we could invest together so we could have enough money to actually get a good investment rather than each country start their own trust fund which would take years, and we'd all be investing separately and we wouldn't get the great interest" (INGO11).

With the exception of RMI, the countries are still in the process of raising their matching requirements and none have yet accessed interest from their sub-accounts. According to memoranda of understanding between the Micronesia Conservation Trust and the freely associated states, future disbursement of interest from the endowment will be subject to guidelines and strategies that each country may individually establish in conjunction with the MCT, as well as any donor guidelines attached to their pledges. For example, the memorandum of understanding between Palau and the Micronesia Conservation Trust states:

> "The Republic of Palau will develop a Country Program Strategy, inline with the adopted MC sub-regional strategies, which will serve as the overall guiding policy for the management and disbursement of Palau's portion of the MC endowment fund by the MCT" (Memorandum of Understanding between the Micronesia Conservation Trust and the Government of the Republic of Palau 2008).

At the time of writing, none of the freely associated states had prepared formal disbursement guidelines or strategies (though these were informally specified to varying degrees), and the Micronesia Conservation Trust was planning to contract this task to a consultant.

A regional plan for sustainable finance was officially endorsed at the 17th Micronesian Chief Executives Summit (Resolution No. 17-02). The plan identifies financing gaps and potential sources for all five jurisdictions, including Guam and CNMI, to estimate a total regional funding gap and fundraising target. However, there has been no endowment funding yet committed to or by the two U.S. jurisdictions. Guam and CNMI have not substantially benefitted from "regionalized" fundraising. In addition, their inclusion in the Micronesia Challenge has complicated international fundraising for the FSM, Palau, and the Marshall Islands:

> "[W]e're not successful in getting China to give their stimulus grant toward the endowment, that was unsuccessful but that's again because of politics with the U.S., that's a case where having Guam and CNMI in the Challenge actually hurt us because no matter how many times we can confirm to them that none of this

> money goes to Guam and CNMI for some reason I don't know if that was the only sticking point but it was a sticking point" (INGO4).

__Communications:__ In 2008, the Micronesia Challenge Communications Working Group developed a regional communication plan "that emphasizes the unique nature of the Challenge and garners further financial and technical support internationally, regionally, and at the jurisdictional level" (Micronesia Challenge Communications Plan 2008). Toward this end, the plan advocated the "branding" of a regional identity:

> "The need for regional branding or identity is widely acknowledged by the Communications Team and associated Support Team members. [. . .] the MC requires a strong identity that jointly promotes the goals of the MC [. . .]. It is agreed that the regional identity needs to capture the 'essence of Micronesia'" (Micronesia Challenge Communications Plan 2008, p. 3).

TNC contracted a marketing firm, the Micronesian Image Institute, to implement the plan, which it has since achieved through a "One Micronesia" fundraising and awareness campaign that endeavors to "distill the mission of the Challenge" (INGO1) through a message of unity, both in identity and territory:

> "The message [of the One Micronesia campaign] is one of unity. That even though Micronesia spans over 6.71 million square kilometers of the Pacific, we are a singular community of island nations with one oceanic legacy" (Micronesia Challenge Web Page N.D.). (See also Figure 9.)

For external audiences, this representation conveys administrative simplicity and an opportunity to make a large impact investment:

> "I think they feel like they're going to maybe get more bang for their buck, right? Like if you're helping this, you're contributing to the improvement of this whole region as opposed to just one specific island. I think that that is uh…donors like to see that" (INGO10).

Thus, the regional Micronesia Challenge communications are shaped in part by an objective of being seen and heard by an international donor community that has a particular agenda and a number of incoming messages competing for their interest.

The message of "One Micronesia" is directed not only outwards, but also inwards, to an audience including "The Native Micronesia Islander" (Micronesia Challenge Web Page N.D.) This inward marketing was motivated in part by recognition that unity doesn't exist. As Hanlon (2009, p. 103) has convincingly argued,

> "Local conceptualizations or reconceptualizations of identity focused on the island environment, the past, and the larger ocean world, for example, suggest far more complex and diverse realities than the term *Micronesia* can accommodate."

Notwithstanding diverse and complex local conceptualizations – or perhaps, more accurately, because of them – the goal of the "One Micronesia" campaign is, as one interviewee explained,

> "[P]robably more intended to combat than it is to convey. I think it's sort of a no brainer that you know, Micronesia is what it is, you know, geographically and politically, but what I think it hopes to combat is this idea that you know, Chamorros [indigenous people of Guam] can work together with Chuukese [from the FSM] because just socially speaking there's a lot of tension that exists" (INGO1).

The Micronesia Challenge communications campaign raises a number of interesting questions regarding the incentives for and means through which regions are constructed. For the purposes of this section, however, I focus on the critical role of scale and region within the regional communications campaign. Much like the Pacific Region described in Chapter 2, the concept of a large oceanic Micronesian region - united spatially and socially - is being put to work to garner support for the Micronesia Challenge at all levels.

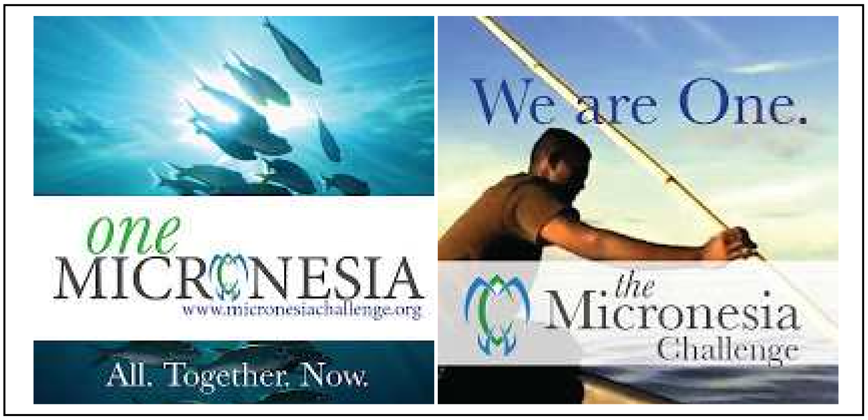


Figure 9: Images associated with the One Micronesia Campaign (Micronesia Challenge Web Page ND).

Monitoring/Evaluation: The last key governance activity that coordinating agents are attempting to regionalize is the monitoring and reporting of collective progress toward the goal of effectively conserving 20% of forest and 30% of near-shore marine resources across Micronesia. The rationale for regionalizing evaluation is to be able to communicate and document regional progress, especially to donors: "at the regional level lots of people have given money at that scale and want to know sort of what's happening" (INGO4). As another interviewee similarly explained,

> "I think for the kind of results that [donors] wanted, they didn't just want good results in one place they wanted good results in a region. I mean in terms of measuring the success I think you're better off with regional success than with individual success. And that's the whole idea to catch fire with this concept" (ROP10).

Although most donations have in fact been at the sub-regional level, the regionalization of evaluation is being pursued as a summation of jurisdictional level progress across all five participating jurisdictions. The regionalization of evaluation included developing minimum common definitions for the terms effective conservation, terrestrial resources, and near-shore marine resources (Micronesia challenge action planning meeting report 2006). Notably, the agreed upon definition of effective conservation stresses sustainable use, and does not specify a particular implementation mechanism:

> "Effective Conservation entails the Social, Traditional, Biological, Financial, and Legal Terrestrial aspects of sustainable use of at least 30% of our Marine Resources and 20% of our Terrestrial Resources keeping in mind the overall management of surrounding areas, and finding a right balance between resource utilization by communities to sustain their cultural values, socioeconomic development, and prosperity" (Micronesia Challenge action planning meeting report 2006).

The Micronesia Challenge Measures Working Group is also in the process of developing a set of broad terrestrial, marine, and socio-economic indicators of effective conservation that can be monitored according to a standard protocol within each jurisdiction. The ultimate goal is to house this data in a regional database.

Tensions have arisen throughout the attempt to regionalize evaluation, stemming from diverse environmental and social contexts, jurisdictional priorities, and especially, capacity. For example, the initial set of indicators that the Micronesia Challenge Measures Working Group were deemed to be "extremely ambitious and may not be possible for all jurisdictions" (A Report on Progress to Implement the Micronesia Challenge 2006-2011). As a result, the Micronesia Challenge Measures Working Group is working to define a more narrow and basic set of indicators for measuring collective progress. That has meant that for jurisdictions with higher technical and scientific capacities, such as the CNMI and Guam,

> “[I]t’s almost asking us to slow down. You know, it’s like okay, don’t necessarily, you know, do what you’ve been doing. [. ..] we're in weird situation because, the monitoring program I coordinate is actually not at all, what they want. It has a different purpose and [. . .] It's designed in a way that is more statistically robust and requires a lot more capacity than most of the jurisdictions have” (GM2).

3.6.4.2 Decentralized governance

Two key governance tasks have been decentralized to the national or equivalent levels of government. First, as already mentioned, the freely associated states have to raise matching funds to trigger financial pledges from CI and TNC to their endowment subaccounts. Second, the governments of FSM, Marshall Islands, Palau, CNMI, and Guam independently identify and implement on-the-ground conservation activities that count toward the effective conservation targets within each of their jurisdictions. As one interviewee reflected,

> “[T]hat actually came out very early on, all five of them originally said *we* want to make the decisions locally, we’re not making decisions regionally on how we’re going implement this, we will make those at our jurisdictional level” (INGO4).

This is not to say that regional processes don’t influence local implementation mechanisms in practice – as mentioned, regional funding is being used to support protected areas throughout the FSM, Palau, and Marshall Islands, for example – but rather, that there is no explicit regional approach to reaching “effective conservation.” As I will discuss in Section 3.7, the scope for localized interpretation (and conflict) in practice is arguably widest in Guam and CNMI, where CBD targets and regional funding has little influence and where I found the most vociferous interpretive debate.

3.6.4.3 Discussion

Before turning to the localized sites of interpretation and implementation, I briefly return to the interlinked questions: how is the Micronesia Challenge regional, and how regional is the Micronesia Challenge? In characterizing the form of governance attempted through the regional environmental governance, I do not advocate for pinpointing a position on a continuum between regionalized and decentralized. Rather, I suggest using the continuum as a point of reference for conceptualizing the different ways in which regional environmental governance is and is not regional, both in practice and representation. I conclude that the Micronesia Challenge has regionalized environmental governance in practice, in particular, through the development of a formal intergovernmental coordinating body, multiple regional working groups and associated decision-making, goal-setting, standard-setting, and fundraising processes. The Micronesia Challenge has also been made regional through representations that invoke shared regional identity and a comprehensive, coordinated system of resource management.

However, regional diversity resists the institutionalization of regional environmental governance at every turn. The regionalization of fundraising is challenged by political diversity. The regionalization of evaluation is challenged by diverse scientific and technical capacities. The branding of “One Micronesia” is inherently challenged by the reality of culturally diverse peoples, some of whom *"Do not want to be recognized as one"* *(*Emelihter Kihleng "The Micronesian Question" 2005, as quoted in Hanlon 2009, p. 99). Participating jurisdictions blocked formal regionalization of conservation strategies for meeting the Micronesia Challenge targets from the beginning (though regional fundraising is supporting and in some cases, asserting, protected area-based approaches within the freely associated states in practice). In representations, however, this diversity is glossed. The Micronesia Challenge presents regional progress toward a collective goal by a version of "One Micronesia" that external actors have long found "administratively convenient" (RMI11), or legible (Scott 1998). In summary, the regionalization of the Micronesia Challenge in practice is uneven and tenuous, while the external representation thereof is absolute, and strategically so. Section 3.7 offers further evidence for this assertion.

3.7 Function

Finally, this section attends to the localized engagement and experiences of policy actors who are embedding, defending, and/or contesting the Micronesia Challenge within the five participating jurisdictions. The analysis highlights two aspects of functionality within each jurisdiction: (1) the delineation of "local" implementation mechanism(s) for meeting the Micronesia Challenge targets, (2) the contextually specific ways in which policy actors envision regional cooperation through the Micronesia Challenge to benefit, burden, and/or undermine local practice and priorities. I characterize the latter as functional "interplay," drawing attention to the cross-level interactions between regional and local institutions and priorities. This analysis reflects the most salient experiences and interpretations of the relatively small number of state and non-state actors within the participating jurisdictions who are actively engaged in the interpretation and implementation of the Micronesia Challenge. It is important to recognize that the Micronesia Challenge was not widely known or debated among the local publics at the time of this research.

3.7.1 Palau: Local Implementation

Palau is the only jurisdiction to have a legally specified implementation mechanism for its commitments to the Micronesia Challenge: a national protected area network (PAN) established through the national PAN Act of 2003. As discussed earlier, Palau's PAN predated, and to some extent, motivated and shaped the regional regime. While there has been debate in Palau concerning the form and function of the national PAN itself (see Chapter 4 for a detailed analysis of Palau's PAN), there was little question as to whether it would serve as Palau's national implementing mechanism. Later amendments and regulations to the 2003 PAN Act reference and endorse the Micronesia Challenge, and there is widespread agreement among national government officials and locally-based NGOs that, in Palau, "the PAN is the Micronesia Challenge" (ROP6), and that the regional initiative should not and does not change local priorities and policy.

While Palau's "country program strategy" for disbursing interest from their Micronesia Challenge endowment sub-account has not yet been formalized, there is a shared assumption that it will be the PAN: "the PAN was always assumed to be a primary component of [. ..] channeling funds from the Micronesia Challenge to communities" (ROP3). This means that it is likely that community owned and managed protected areas (a historical norm in Palau) must be enrolled in the national network to access Palau's Micronesia Challenge endowment funds, as is the current requirement for them to access to the national "PAN funds" generated locally through a visitor departure tax called the "Green Fee." Enrollment in Palau's PAN is voluntary, and despite pervasive hesitation, most communities are moving forward to join the national program, primarily to access financial resources (these dynamics are explored in depth in Chapter 4). Multiple interviewees suggested that the Micronesia Challenge targets have given more directed impetus to the PAN: "what it does is sort of like put a number there, like a vision [for the PAN]" (ROP1). For those who are critical of the PAN, this impetus was not especially welcome:

> "no, actually, Micronesia Challenge wasn't designed to [. . .] change policy. It was designed to attract donors. But because of the commitment that we put in under the Micronesia Challenge, the 20% terrestrial and 30% marine by 2020, we've been forced to move forward with some conservation measures [such as the PAN] so that we can meet our obligation under Micronesia Challenge by 2020" (ROP5).

As of March 2013, Palau's subaccount within the Micronesia Challenge endowment totaled $11.6 million; TNC's pledge of $2 million has been awarded in full, with matching funds sourced from foreign aid ($500,000 from Taiwan), Palau's Green Fee ($1.4 million), and the GEF ($1.68 million). Palau will need to raise another $2 million to trigger the $1 million pledge from CI. At the time of research, Palau's national congress was considering a controversial amendment to PAN regulations that would direct 5% of the Green Fee plus any unallocated Green Fee funds to Palau's subaccount within the Micronesia Challenge endowment for future exclusive use toward the PAN.

3.7.2 Palau: Functional interplay

When news of the Micronesia Challenge declaration first reached resource owners (also referred to as "states" and/or "communities", see Chapter 4) and conservation practitioners in Palau, it was not met warmly. While most resource owners in Palau had little awareness of the Micronesia Challenge, prominent traditional leaders expressed dismay on their behalf:

> "[There was] not much done on the ground in terms of Micronesia Challenge to educate local people in, people who owns the resources that they're committing to preserve by 2020. Rather, they took this initiative and ran outside of Palau, and went all over the world selling it [. . .]. Good, we find ways to look for funding to support our local effort. But when we start to talk about conserving 20 and 30 percent of local resources, which are owned by local people, without even come to them and then get their nod on the idea, it's a little bit, to me, an awkward move. And I kind of took that back as, 'hmm, how can you sell my, my resources without even coming to me first?'" (ROP5).

Another traditional leader articulated a similar reaction:

> "[T]he water is owned by the states. The constitution provides that water, nonliving and living, within 12 miles is the property of the states, not the national government. And here you are giving one third of the water to the MC and you have not consult the states! [. . .] [the national government is acting] as if we are still in the trust territory days." (ROP2).

Conservation practitioners, too, expressed dismay at the lack of consultation:

> "[I]f they had just been open enough and respectful enough to call one meeting with all of us that you know are in resource management and conservation just to get some feedback. Just a 'hey, here's a draft of the declaration, what do you guys think?' [. . .] It would have been I think very, very different but it didn't happen that way" (ROP9).

Despite initial hostility and some lingering resentment, these same individuals also seem to recognize opportunity in the Micronesia Challenge, conceding "I have to see the positive side" (ROP5); or describing their feelings toward the Micronesia Challenge as "tough love" (ROP9).

Most interviewees in Palau interpreted the Micronesia Challenge foremost as a tool for mobilizing international resources: "it was mainly like a marketing tool, um, to raise awareness about Micronesia and our conservation efforts, mainly as a marketing tool to get financial support" (ROP7). The Micronesia Challenge is primarily understood as a "fundraising gimmick" (ROP6) that could attract donors who are interested in "bigger" (ROP1) spaces. As another interviewee summarized, the main function of the Micronesia Challenge is "to attract donors by regionalizing" (ROP5).

There was less agreement about how regionalized marketing and fundraising through the Micronesia Challenge would affect Palau specifically. A high level government official explained his hesitations with reference to Palau's recently attained independence: "it sort of contradicts our move to be separated and now we're going back again" (ROP8). While all interviewees recognized that the "benefits" of regionalized fundraising would accrue locally to support the activities of the PAN, several people also felt that Palau could successfully raise their own resources unilaterally, and that regional cooperation was being mobilized primarily to the benefit of others:

> “I think Palau alone would have been able to send Palau to outside world and get funding for it because people know already where Palau is. People know the biodiversity values of Palau. It's for these other Micronesia jurisdictions, which has lesser biodiversity values” (ROP6).

Other interviewees agreed: “we’ve been really successful at getting money. [. . .] We’re sort of helping. That’s my perception anyway. We’re helping them [other islands in MC] out” (ROP7).

The idea that the region needs Palau more than Palau needs the region came connected to a concern that regionalizing fundraising would crowd out local fundraising efforts:

> “So, that was another big worry [. . .] it’s going to actually make it more difficult for us to get conservation [funding] now because everybody’s like, ‘we’re already giving to the Micronesia Challenge,’ you know” (ROP7).

As will be described later, interviewees in the FSM and the Marshall Islands raised similar concerns about the (re)distribution of international resources first ‘up’ to regional NGOs and then ‘down’ to local organizations and governments. Regional coordinating agents are aware of this potential, and counter with the argument that they avoid competing with jurisdictions by targeting larger sources of funding that may otherwise be inaccessible to Micronesian governments:

> “What TNC has tried very hard not to do is take the low hanging fruit you know. [TNC has] tried to focus on the bigger multiyear regional grants that perhaps wouldn’t, that the others are not eligible for or not potentially capable [of applying for]” (INGO4).

> “I think we’ve kind of gotten past the real dangers of competing with partners kind of phase now, and we’re kind of at a [. . .] level where you know, we’re, we’re going after things that our partners don’t really have the capacity to go for” (INGO10).

When there is competition, however, the region typically “wins”:

> “[I]f like MCT [Micronesia Conservation Trust] apply and PCS [Palau Conservation Society] applies, MCT usually beats them out because we’re achieving so much more work in so many different places and theirs [PCS] is more specific” (INGO10).

Locally based NGOs, however, are not only concerned about competition. There is also some concern about being forced to align priorities with the Micronesia Challenge and calls for proposals from the Micronesia Conservation Trust, which some view as an unwelcome “middle man” (ROP7). One interviewee summarized this issue thus:

> “The anti-Micronesia Challenge argument I just heard from within Palau, within organizations where they say ‘look you we have this conservation thing going ourselves and now we are being…our fundraising efforts are being crowded out or overshadowed by the Micronesia Challenge and its going to be harder for us as a conservation organization to raise funds because we’ve got overshadowed by this huge regional thing…there’re taking up all of the attention span of the donor base out there and we can’t get anything we have to get now through Micronesia Challenge.’ I think that the counter argument to that is that again ‘ok fine but the Micronesia Challenge is going to bring far more funding into this region then your efforts along could ever bring. And so the Micronesia Challenge is a great vehicle for you to get funding. You just have to make sure that you are aligned with the Micronesia Challenge and maybe that’s the big problem. If you don’t want to be aligned with it, then…’” (INGO12).

3.7.3 Republic of the Marshall Islands: Local Implementation

While the $6 million GEF project delineates national PANs as the local implementation strategy for the Micronesia Challenge within the freely associated states, local policy actors within the Marshall Islands and FSM are responding with more complex, locally specified visions. Prior to the declaration of the Micronesia Challenge, a group now known as the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC) – an ad hoc working group comprising national government and locally based civil society organizations[4] – had been supporting the development of community-based conservation areas throughout the Marshall Island atolls. The group has served as a gatekeeper of sorts, defining the bounds of regional influence on local practice and the Marshall Islands' terms of engagement with the Micronesia Challenge.

Initially, CMAC leaders felt that representatives from TNC were attempting to impose their vision for a national PAN as the local implementation mechanism for the Micronesia Challenge in the Marshall Islands:

> "[L]ook, the name [PAN] is a negative. It was negative before. Cause I think a lot of very, very committed, I say committed environmentalists, wanted it done. Nevermind what [local] people thought. They just wanted it done [. . .] it was presented like that. Kind of like, uh, 'the way you implement the Micronesia Challenge is…through PAN'. And we're like, 'who are you to say that to us?'" (RMI12).

The CMAC group reasserted their control over the local interpretation of the Micronesia Challenge, expressing their willingness – even eagerness – to engage with the Micronesia Challenge and its regional coordinating agents on their own terms:

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[4] Including: Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority, Marshall Islands Environmental Protected Agency, College of the Marshall Islands, Marshall Islands Visitors Authority, Office of Enviornmental Planning and Policy Coordination, Marshall Islands Conservation Society, and Natural Resources Assessments Surveys Marshall Islands (Reimaanlok: National Conservation Area Plan for the Marshall Islands 2008)

> "[W]hen they talked about the Micronesia Challenge, it was nothing new to us. It was something that we were already doing. But, it was exciting because they were willing to raise funds to support the work we were doing. So one of the first things that we wanted to explicitly state to TNC was that 'we're doing this, we're already doing this, we will support it, we will get our governments excited and support this, provided you're raising funds and you're helping us, supporting the work we're doing on the ground, not bringing in your own idea on how we should do it'" (RMI1).

The strong commitment to developing a "Marshallese" implementation mechanism was drawn in part from past experiences with foreign consultants:

> "[W]e want to learn from mistakes we've had before. We had a number of consultants coming here, preparing…documents that were put on the shelf. It wasn't done of the people, the Marshallese people. It was done… you know, there was no benefits" (RMI12).

It was also linked to perceptions that TNC was too heavy-handed in the development of PANs within the FSM and Palau:

> "TNC sort of driving what protected should be in FSM and Palau. For RMI we told them [. . .] I said 'look, you support me or get the fuck out. I don't want an office here, I don't want a TNC office here. Support me, support the local effort, support the NGOs, but don't come. Let me do it my way'" (RMI1).

Local actors successfully asserted their vision of the Micronesia Challenge as "a commitment of ensuring that we continue to do the things that we've been doing all along" (RMI12). In 2008, the CMAC group formally documented 'what they had been doing all along' in the "Reimaanlok: National Conservation Area Plan for the Marshall Islands," a legible national strategy for achieving the Micronesia Challenge:

> "[T]he Reimaanlok, the process had already been developed. It wasn't documented but it was already developed, so in 2006 when the MC was launched you know when we came together to say we need a conservation area plan and document all our work" (RMI1).

Interviewees describe the Reimaanlok ("Looking to the Future" in the Marshallese language) as a process for community engagement and "people-centered" conservation planning. This is echoed explicitly in the document itself:

> "[T]his plan does not attempt to identify specific sites for conservation areas, but rather, develops the principles, process and guidelines for the design, establishment and management of conservation areas that are fully owned, led and endorsed by local communities based on their needs, values and cultural heritage" (Reimaan National Planning Team 2008).

The document includes a locally specific definition of "effective conservation" and an explicit goal of achieving the Micronesia Challenge targets for effective conservation "of at least 30% of Near-shore Marine Resources and 20% of Terrestrial Resources ***on every atoll"*** (Reimaan National Planning Team 2008, p.27). The application of the Micronesia Challenge targets at the atoll level was intended to affect socially meaningful conservation in inhabited areas:

> "The Micronesia Challenge just became an overarching goal for us, but we had our own goals [. . .] It's so easy to reach 20/ 30 [targets]. One, because we don't have much land area. So, we can just set aside one atoll and say we've met our 20 percent. But we wanted to make sure that conservation was improving the lives of people – not conservation being a hindrance to people's prosperity and security, but conservation meaning something to the people" (RMI1).

Despite initial resistance to adopting a PAN in the Marshall Islands, interviewees now seem to be acquiescing to regional pressure to do so:

> "[Micronesia Conservation Trust] wants to use these, the established PANs as another leverage to try and get additional funding support for these islands. And we all understand the need for PAN, and each country and each jurisdiction has their own perspective of what their protected area should look like" (RMI1).

As another interviewee explained,

> “[I]n order to make the Micronesia Challenge more effective and more efficient we, I think, kind of agreed that it would be better if we [the Marshall Islands] got a, one integrated system for dealing with all of the protected areas” (RMI6).

The Micronesia Conservation Trust and TNC are currently facilitating learning exchanges between Palau and the Marshall Islands to support the development of similar national level PAN legislation in the Marshall Islands:

> “Palau is now a model for how the Micronesia challenge can be effectively managed and so we’re using the Palau experience to ask sort of a guideline as how we establish the necessary legal framework in FSM and Marshalls to ensure they are successful in their Micronesia Challenge” (INGO6).

The national legislation is in early draft form, but most interviewees envision the PAN as an eventual mechanism for dispersing funding from the Micronesia Challenge endowment to support the Reimaanlok-related activities. As of March 2013, the Marshall Island’s sub-account within the Micronesia Challenge endowment totaled $2.6 million; they have met their matching requirements through the $1.68 million GEF grant, and $265,000 from foreign fishing licenses, allocated by the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority. CI has dispersed half of their $1 million pledge thus far.

3.7.4 Republic of the Marshall Islands: Functional Interplay

The Micronesia Challenge is understood as a means to diverse ends for the Marshall Islands. Similar to Palau, almost all interviewees viewed the Micronesia Challenge as a tool for mobilizing international resources to support pre-existing conservation initiatives: “it is a commitment of ensuring that we continue to do the things that we've been doing all along" (RMI12). The Micronesia Challenge has already enabled the Marshallese to access new sources of biodiversity-focused funding:

> "[A] lot of donors also fund areas with high biodiversity and RMI [Republic of the Marshall Islands] is kind of an outlier in terms of their biodiversity significance when you compare them to the coral triangle and Palau and FSM are just kind of right outside that. So in fact Packard has never really funded any RMI focused projects but the only reason that they're getting Packard money is because they're lumped into the Micronesia Challenge so in that way they're benefitting from the Micronesia Challenge. [. . .] And if the countries have not come together, Packard money would never have gone to RMI because they're not part of their portfolio" (INGO5).

At the same time, however, one interviewee raised a concern similar to that in Palau: "one of the downside of doing a regional [fundraising] because you sort of give up most of your bilateral leverage for the greater cause of the region" (RMI1).

In addition to fundraising for local conservation initiatives, interviewees articulated visions for an even broader function for the Micronesia Challenge as a means for focusing international attention on two major domestic concerns: the legacy of U.S. nuclear bomb testing in the Marshall Islands and climate change. As one interviewee summarized: "[the Micronesia Challenge] gave us new forums to bring up unfinished business, the environment as it affects humans rights" (RMI11). Other interviewees similarly reflected, "I think the Challenge has an opportunity, if used wisely, to talk about these other issues" (RMI1).

Between 1946 and 1958, the U.S. military conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands; the most powerful explosion was the infamous "Bravo" test on Bikini atoll in 1954, which was roughly equivalent to 1,000 Hiroshima bombs. Most of the atolls within the country received some radiation from the fallout, and the small island nation is still seeking reparations in multiple venues – from the U.S. congress to the United Nations Human Rights Council – primarily to fulfill outstanding personal injury claims from damages incurred due to U.S. nuclear testing. Two interviewees suggested that the Micronesia Challenge offers a mechanism to direct international attention to the "unfinished business" (RMI11) associated with historic nuclear testing. According to a high level official in national government,

> "[T]he problem with trying to reach closure on the nuclear issue is that there is not enough public knowledge of it outside. There is not enough conscious knowledge of it on the part of the American public, for example, about what was done here and what it cost. In order to get the powers that be to turn their heads, you've got to have this upwelling of conscience, of not just information, but information that moves the heart and the mind to do something. And what I'm saying is that, in terms of the environment, overall environmental issues - and of course the nuclear issue is one of them - Micronesia Challenge provided that overall and overlapping avenue" (RMI11).

The power of the Micronesia Challenge in this context lies in its positive image:

> "[T]he Micronesia Challenge allows us to approach these very scary issues without becoming threatening. It's a cleanliness, it's the health, it's the sustainability and restoration that we're after. Not the blame or the liability or the legal you know, culpability" (RMI11).

He continued,

> "[I]t's sexy to the big guys, it really is. [. . .] the approach that we've made to world with Micronesia Challenge is it's not going to harm anybody. It's a friendly, eco-friendly but also people friendly, *big country friendly* challenge. It's not going to expose your dirty fingers and dirty hands and what all that stuff that you've been doing. It's going to give you an opportunity to reverse it" (RMI11).

Local actors also identified potential in leveraging the Micronesia Challenge to draw attention to domestic climate change concerns. According to multiple interviewees, the Marshall Islands has also been "using the Challenge to advocate for better understanding and awareness on the impacts that these small islands are having from climate change" (RMI1), particularly within United Nations policy-making processes. In this context, interviewees envision leveraging regional ties to the FSM and Palau through the Micronesia Challenge into geopolitical strength:

> "[A]t the bilateral level, you're not as effective as if you had more friends , like-minded friends, saying the same thing. And saying it louder. Because, say at the UN General Assembly, instead of just the Marshall Islands readying a prepared statement on climate change and the importance of the Micronesia Challenge, now we have, Marshall Islands, FSM, and Palau all saying and singing the same tune at the UN" (RMI10).

The "tune" that the Micronesia Challenge enables something like a "moral high ground" (RMI10) that allows the Marshall Islands to say:

> "[T]his is what we are doing. But, you know, if you are not doing your part, then you know… our islands will be covered with water. Where are we going to live? And we use the Micronesia Challenge, you know, because …we are doing the best we can to protect our environment" (RMI5).

In short, the rationale is to leverage the Micronesia Challenge to shame others into action:

> "[L]ook, we small countries, no money, little people, little contribution to the emission, and this is what [we're] doing [. . .] So what do you do? The rest of the world, what are you doing?" (RMI1).

In summary, at the broadest level, the Marshallese interpret the Micronesia Challenge as "a way for us to get the attention of the world" (RMI11). The concerns interviewees raised were few and muted. One person mentioned that there was initially some debate about re-regionalizing, similar to that in Palau: “there were people who said hey we separated from these guys before. Why are we getting back together?” (RMI11). Another point of concern related to the uneven allocation of endowment pledges from TNC and CI throughout the FSM, Palau, and Marshall Islands. The Marshall Islands received the smallest pledge ($1 million total), which created a lingering “sore point” (RMI6) that did not go unnoticed: “my only concern was, why is that Palau got the big share of the lion’s share? For a smaller country” (RMI10). In general, however, interviewees within the Marshall Islands were quite supportive of the Micronesia Challenge, arguably because they had been able to strategically identify ways by which to put it to work for their local priorities.

3.7.5 Federated States of Micronesia: Local Implementation

Despite the authoritative declaration within the GEF project document of a national protected area network as the implementation strategy for the Micronesia Challenge in the FSM (and Palau and Marshall Islands), there is as yet no coherent local implementation mechanism conceptualized or institutionalized within the FSM. As one interviewee summarized: “So we’re struggling, we don’t have a strategic plan or a document, a process in place” (FSM11). Unlike in the Marshall Islands, however, the struggle in the FSM is largely internal. Recall from Section 3.4.2 that the FSM as a nation represents a tenuous amalgam of the relatively less powerful islands comprising the former U.S. Trust Territory that failed to negotiate independent political status. Today, the FSM is a federation of four semi-autonomous states (Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap, and

Chuuk) comprised of more than 600 islands spread out across a vast swath of ocean, and united loosely under a weak national government. Discerning what the Micronesia Challenge means to and for the FSM as a collective political unit has not surprisingly been "a little bit tricky" (FSM8).

As in Palau, the top-down announcement of the Micronesia Challenge from a weak national government was not met warmly by those who control natural resources in the FSM, namely, the state governments, traditional leaders, and/or communities:

> "[T]hey feel like they should have been given more time to say what they thought of it before signing on, the states did. I know Kosrae was like why didn't they do consultations before entering into this?" (FSM5).

Resource owners were particularly concerned about how the Micronesia Challenge targets could affect their rights to access their resources:

> "[Y]ou know MC just says ok 20% terrestrial, 30% near shore marine. And some of the islands, say Yap or Kosrae, their terrestrial areas are like, tiny compared to some of the larger islands so it's like, wait a minute that's like almost the whole island for one place. And so it worries, it worries the local communities and some of the state leaders" (FSM5).

Resource management agencies at the national and state levels, too, were critical of a national directive for what they perceived to be extra work for them:

> "[I]n the beginning a lot of our resource management agencies thought that was extra work for them. They didn't like the idea that we're going to be giving them another program of work. And they were like saying no" (FSM1).

In this context, and despite continuing efforts by TNC and Micronesia Conservation Trust to invest in the development of a national PAN, the national FSM government apparently has had a limited ability and/or desire to authoritatively delineate a specific implementation strategy – through a PAN or otherwise: "To be realistic with you, FSM is not in a position to....I think [we] have to be very conservative" (FSM1). Interview data also suggest that national officials are more interested in how the Micronesia Challenge may contribute to sustainable development and food security than biodiversity conservation through protected areas:

> "[T]o us? It's sustaining the livelihood. At the end of the day our people look at the resources it's not for the species alone but it's also for their livelihoods them as also another species [. . .] if we keep just focusing on protected areas, you sometimes lose sight of the bigger picture. And for most of us, I can't speak for the other countries but for FSM it's all about sustainable development although sometimes development side supersedes the sustainable issues which becomes a problem we have do work on" (FSM1).

As one interviewee echoed, "you can tell [the PAN is] not something that they're passionate about." (INGO5).

When asked how the FSM is meeting its Micronesia Challenge commitment, policy actors cite a broad slough of pre-existing activities, including but not limited to protected areas, and suggest that "everything that we do, it'll just feed into the Micronesia Challenge"(FSM11) or that "for FSM it's really a mixed bag" (FSM1). Similar to those in the Marshall Islands and Palau, interviewees shared the interpretation that the Micronesia Challenge is "not something new" (FSM1). As another put it,

> "[N]othing that we speak of in the Micronesia Challenge in my view is all new stuff, these are all things that we, it's part of the way that we live, but you're just naming it a little bit differently" (FSM8).

At this point it is unclear how the FSM portion of the Micronesia Challenge endowment will be spent. As one interviewee suggested, this decision should inform discussion as to whether the FSM should move forward with a PAN:

> "[W]hat exactly is the PAN for? Because it's been talked about prior to launching the Micronesia Challenge, but one thing that we need to figure out in the FSM is the mechanism in which the funds that are being raised for the Micronesia Challenge is going to actually get down to the community where the work is being done. So if the PAN framework is that mechanism, then it makes sense for us to actually invest our time in creating the PAN. But if that's not the mechanism, then why are we doing it?" (FSM11).

Despite the lack of clarity, the FSM government has been willing to allocate $300,000 (generated through bilateral aid) to their subaccount within the regional endowment, which along with their $1.68 million from GEF, will trigger the $1 million pledge from TNC. As of March 2013, the FSM endowment totals about $2.4 million. They will need to find $2 million to trigger the $1 million pledge from CI. Similar to the Marshall Islands, interviewees in the FSM mentioned the "unfair" distribution of financial pledges from CI and TNC:

> "[W]e never got any formal justification as to why there was that distribution, but the initial, like informal discussions we got from TNC was the fact that it was Palau that steered it in the beginning, so they should be the ones to [get the most], but that's not a good enough justification for, you know, because this is an equal, no we're all gonna be trying to meet that threshold that we committed, so this challenge is for all of us, so why is it that some are getting more than the others? But that was after the launch that we found those kind of issues" (FSM10).

3.7.6 Federated States of Micronesia: Functional interplay

Interviewees within the FSM, similar to those in Palau, interpreted the Micronesia Challenge foremost as a marketing tool for mobilizing international resources, including funding and technical expertise:

> “[I]t’s just giving it more of a, I guess a marketing term for it sort of to profile our work, showcase and also like bring their resources to us [. . .] it highlights the communities needs and issues at a high scale, a more of a global scale” (FSM1).

Other interviewees similarly concluded,

> “So in a way Micronesia Challenge, if you could put it as that, you could put it as an initiative to attract or leverage resources [. . .] FSM can try any kind of idea, and it wouldn’t score as well as the Micronesia Challenge. But the attraction is by having all the region band together and go out and, I guess if you want to say market it or market our approach to those who are willing to give money to conservation” (FSM8).

Interviewees focused on how the region enables a “visibility” the FSM could not achieve on its own. When asked what a regional environmental governance arrangement could achieve for FSM that a national arrangement could not, for example, an interviewee replied:

> “[M]ore visibility, and a bigger area, more visibility, I guess people will take you seriously. And if they treat you like one group of islands, you know Pohnpei and Kosrae, it’s just a drop in the ocean. Through the Micronesia Challenge, they will say, wow it’s about as big as the continental US as an area. It’s bigger than Europe [. . .] Because it’s a bigger group, hopefully we can have more leverage in accessing funding” (FSM2).

Another interviewee similarly suggested, “a region, fundraising is more effective than just one site in Yap … or one site in Palau, Guam, CNMI, RMI [Republic of the Marshall Islands], FSM” (FSM11).

At the same time, local NGOs in the FSM have experienced competition with coordinating NGOs for funding. One interviewee cited an example in which his organization agreed not to submit a grant that the Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) was applying for on behalf of the three freely associated states, even though his organization would have received more funding unilaterally than it would as part of the regional grant:

> "MCT was competing with us by combining all the states and the other jurisdictions to go in as one. So for CSP [Conservation Society of Pohnpei] competing with MCT we kindly backed down" (FSM6).

He continued:

> "[B]ut the fact that we're now part of the entire territory the money is, so it has to split evenly [. . .] [so the money coming to the Conservation Society of Pohnpei would be] much much less through the partnership with MCT" (FSM6).

Despite this experience, this person still felt that, overall, the Micronesia Challenge expanded rather than restricted his organization's access to donors:

> "[J]ust by using the Micronesia Challenge as our, one of our pitch, it helps. [. . .] For Conservation Society of Pohnpei, definitely yeah we got exposed to various donors through MCT [Micronesia Conservation Trust] and just by that we started to… not only leaning on MCT to reach those donors, we can now go directly to those donors instead of going through MCT because of the work that we've done and you know the lessons, successes, and I would say that goes also to the other NGOs in FSM" (FSM6).

Another interviewee similarly explained how local NGOs are leveraging the Micronesia Challenge to attract resources:

> "You know, we would write grants and say how we're connecting to the Micronesia Challenge, and how our efforts are directly contributing to the Micronesia Challenge efforts. And that attracts donors" (FSM8).

3.7.7 Guam: Local Implementation

The delineation of a local implementation strategy for the Micronesia Challenge in Guam has been deeply controversial, resulting in divisive and enduring conflicts among representatives of resource management agencies and fisher organizations, including the Guam Coastal Management Program, the Guam Fisherman's Cooperative, the Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council, and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The conflict has focused exclusively on the 30% near-shore marine target. Guam's implementation strategy for the terrestrial target is area-based and a political non-issue because it focuses on improved management of the 22.12% of terrestrial resources that had already been slated as conservation areas prior to Guam's commitment to the Micronesia Challenge:

> "Although on paper, Guam has reached the goal of 20% for terrestrial resources, these areas are not yet under effective conservation and may be considered for development to support the DoD [Department of Defense] expansion. Strategies to strengthen and expand terrestrial resource protection include conservation improvements of recreational parks, restoration of native flora and fauna, watershed planning, conservation easements, and incorporation of green infrastructure in developed areas" (Report on progress to implement the Micronesia Challenge 2006-2011).

Although Guam is not a party to the CBD, and thereby not tied to global protected area targets, five marine protected areas were established there in 1997, with enforcement ramping up in 2001. Initial assessments of Guam's implementation status were based on the spatial extent of MPA coverage: "we first sat down we really, we started off with an area based approach too, like some of the other islands" (GM4).

Implementing agencies concluded that 15.45% of Guam's near-shore marine resources were under protection and that "To reach the goal of 30%, placement of the additional 16% of near-shore marine resources under effective conservation in Guam will require a variety of strategies" (Micronesia Challenge action planning meeting report 2006).

While multiple interviewees suggested that the addition of new MPAs was never a realistic option in Guam – e.g., "I think Guam always had a recognition that any new protected areas, new marine protected areas would be an uphill battle and unrealistic" (INGO4) – there was at least some initial consideration of expanded marine protected areas as a potential component of their local implementation strategy. As one interviewee reflected, "initially we were thinking, similar to other places, with protected areas or whatever" (GM1). An undated document entitled "Guam's Strategy for the Micronesia Challenge" lists seven strategies for meeting the 30% target, including the following: strengthen existing MPAs, strengthen MPA enforcement, identify areas for infrastructure improvements, explore new strategies to address recreational overuse, explore new strategies to facilitate positive use of marine resources, and identify additional areas for possible MPA establishment.

As in the other jurisdictions, resource users were not part of the conceptualization of the Micronesia Challenge: "when they created this Micronesian Challenge, we were flabbergasted, we were freaking out, where did this come from?" (GM3). Representatives of the Guam Fisherman's Cooperative quickly became vocal public opponents of the Micronesia Challenge, interpreting the initiative as a "top-down" mandate for marine protected areas that would further restrict indigenous fishing rights in Guam:

> "Yes they had every intention of creating more preserves because the marine preserves only accounted for 13% of the coastline" (GM5).
>
> "Our sense is that they're trying to take away limited fishing resources we have left" (GM8).

One vocal opponent, who publicly refers to himself as the "challenged Micronesian," similarly explained:

> "I use the term challenged Micronesian because it's not a bottom up approach, it's a top down approach. It's government telling us that this is good for us. And every time we have a meeting all we talk about is, hey, we have conservation that is already in place, you guys, we gave you five MPAs" (GM4).

These perspectives were sometimes associated with distrust of international conservation organizations and their connection to the Micronesia Challenge (note that this interviewee misidentifies The Ocean Conservancy as Conservation International):

> "I feel that the Micronesia Challenge is just another effort that The Nature Conservancy and other NGOs who care not about the indigenous people, but to further their resource grab to further their cause of acquisition at the least cost to themselves. Just imagine that the TNC total investment for the Micronesia Challenge is only $3 million as The Ocean Conservancy [TOC] chipped in the other $3 million to fulfill the $6 million commitment. This $6 million in exchange for 30% of the near-shore and 20% of the Terrestrial resources of Micronesia. This is tantamount to the purchasing of the island of Manhattan for some beads. The TNC and TOC will now use this achievement to raise more money for their coffers as if they didn't already have enough. The real losers are the islanders who have had the access to the resource and their livelihood and culture taken away from them" (GM5).

Supporters of the Micronesia Challenge in Guam on the other hand, felt that is a misrepresentation of the Micronesia Challenge:

> "I think that they've totally misrepresented, intentionally, what the MC is, and use it as a way to make people fear you and what you're doing. Immediately set people against you" (GM2).

The interpretive debate surrounding the local implementation mechanism for the Micronesia Challenge in Guam eventually led to the removal of additional MPAs from the implementation strategy text,

> "Guam's Micronesia Strategy was recently updated to ensure that it reflects the need to effectively conserve our resources for future generations while balancing the needs of the community. One of the major changes from the original strategy and the updated strategy is the removal of increasing of marine conservation areas. The Guam MC strategy does not support any additional marine conservation areas or MPAs" (A report on progress to implement the Micronesia Challenge 2006-2011).

Instead, implementing agencies have delineated a non-spatial "watershed approach" to meeting the targets:

> "We're going to be doing it from a watershed approach. Guam has five protected areas, three of them are under the jurisdiction of Guam. But we are nowhere near going to, in terms of like, if we take the geographic area of these places, that 30 percent is not going to be met through the marine protected areas we have now. But we don't want to open up new MPAs, we don't establish new MPAs, we don't want to do any of that things because of right now we're having a real struggle with fisherman saying 'oh you're preventing us from fishing' [. . .] So that's our approach is from a more of a watershed approach in terms of restoration to improve coral reefs and marine resources" (GM1).

The watershed approach focuses on reducing pollutants, including land-based sources of sediment, into coastal waters:

> "It is clear that the people of Guam are not in favor of establishing additional MPAs. In light of this, Guam's strategy focuses on effectively conserving marine resources by reducing pollutants, including sediment, into Guam's coastal waters in order to enhance the habitat and health of coral reef ecosystems" (A report on progress to implement the Micronesia Challenge 2006-2011).

Committing to a politically benign watershed approach has led some interviewees to conclude that local implementation of the Micronesia Challenge in Guam has “stagnated” (GM4) or that “we're in a little bit of a slump” (GM2). As mentioned earlier, Guam currently has no sub-account within the Micronesia Challenge regional endowment.

3.7.8 Guam: Functional interplay

Perhaps the most conspicuous function of the Micronesia Challenge in Guam is conflict. Some interviewees interpreted the Micronesia Challenge exclusively as a source of local conflict: “I mean, what benefit? There’s only been detriments” (GM5). Interpretations among Micronesia Challenge supporters, however, were more diverse.

Fundraising is not a local priority for Guam, which enjoys a guaranteed source of funding for environmental management from the U.S. federal government:

> “[W]e have enough money right now [. . .] We're not asking for any money [. . .] Our concept is to utilize the existing funds to do the work necessary for the Challenge” (GM1).

Some supporters interpreted the Micronesia Challenge as a tool for resource mobilization for others, concluding that other jurisdictions stand to benefit more from the Micronesia Challenge:

> “I think FSM and the Marshalls probably have, probably FSM to tell you the truth, has probably the most to gain from the Challenge. [. . .] And I think Palau is benefiting too, but Palau already had kind of harnessed a lot of benefits and attention already, so I think that they were already fairly well placed, even without the Challenge, [. . .] but FSM probably has the most to gain from the

> whole project. I think Guam and CNMI have something to gain from it, but I don't think it's gonna be the same level as some of the others" (GM4).

What does Guam stand to gain from the Micronesia Challenge? Interviewees envisioned mobilizing regional cooperation through the Micronesia Challenge to serve two key local priorities relating to self-determination goals.

First, multiple interviewees envisioned mobilizing horizontal ties to the freely associated states – nations that are members of the United Nations – to represent Guam's interests within global environmental policy-making fora in which the U.S. does not provide locally relevant representation. The Guam Strategy for the Micronesia Challenge articulated this potential function thus:

> "Through the Micronesia Challenge Guam will receive help from others working throughout the Micronesian region to achieve our conservation goals. Such linkages allow Guam to participate in global activities with our neighbors in matters which are not of such interest on the U. S. national level but are more important to Guam. [. . .] It is most appropriate for Guam to be involved in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals from the perspective of a resource-limited small island, not the perspective of a world economic and political leader, the United States. Greater involvement in regional organizations and appropriate representation in such global groups will result from Guam's participation in the Micronesia Challenge" (Guam Strategy for the Micronesia Challenge, ND).

This potential function also came up during interviewees:

> "[T]hrough the Micronesia Challenge and through the region, the regional partners, they can get points across into those kind of venues, so I think, like I said, one of the big benefits of the Micronesia Challenge is just tying everyone in the region a little closer together on those issues like climate change, and CBD, and other things. And maybe Guam and CNMI won't have a seat at that table because we're overshadowed by the U.S. and we're still U.S. territories, but it does allow some of the challenges from the region to be voiced and the regional

> partners can voice for those two jurisdictions as well. [. . .] Climate change is going to affect Guam and CNMI too, but we're stuck behind the U.S. in those conversations" (GM4).

Interviewees also suggested that regional cooperation institutionalized through the Micronesia Challenge could contribute to related movements of self-determination and cultural renewal. One interviewee explained that former Governor Camacho was attracted to the Micronesia Challenge because he wanted to "be back part of Micronesia, see Guam as Micronesia again" (INGO4). Reinvigorating ties to other Micronesia Islands was described as part of a local strategy for "tapping into cultural identity and increasing the sense of ownership and pride for the resources, which I think that we're lacking here" (GM4). The Guam Strategy for Implementing the Micronesia Challenge similarly states:

> "Micronesian's (sic) from outside of Guam have kept stronger ties to their natural resources in their daily lives and can help revive the awareness and understanding of our environment among the people of Guam."

This re-imagined regional relationship was perceived not only in Guam but also in other jurisdictions such as Palau:

> "[F]or the first time Guam was actually more as a partner instead of a big brother, that's always been a historical problem Guam being sort of this obnoxious big brother who thinks he's better than the younger brother and you're not quite ready to deal with me, but Governor Camacho was very good at trying to act as an equal, and so it was building it back" (ROP3).

3.7.9 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Local Implementation

The CNMI has outlined a non-controversial area-based approach to meeting the terrestrial portion of the Micronesia Challenge targets, committing to effectively conserve “at least 20% of total land area containing priority terrestrial types” within each island of the archipelago (Report on progress to implement the Micronesia Challenge 2006-2011). Priority areas are defined as those with “high biodiversity” or “high level of ecosystem services” (A report on progress to implement the Micronesia Challenge 2006-2011). Similar to Guam, “the marine is a little bit more controversial” (CNMI1). In fact, the CNMI experience in delineating a local implementation strategy for the near shore marine targets very closely parallels that of Guam, with divisive interpretive conflict emerging among representatives of locally-based resource management agencies and environmental NGOs. Unlike in Guam, however, the conflict in CNMI was expressed through a scientific debate about measures of progress, and associated differential conclusions as to whether or not the CNMI had met the targets with pre-existing policies.

CNMI had already established a number of controversial marine protected areas prior to the declaration of the Micronesia Challenge. Representatives of the CNMI fisheries management agency, the Division of Fish and Wildlife, resisted what they viewed as the interpretation of the Micronesia Challenge target that was expected of them: an imperative to establish additional marine protected areas. As one interviewee summarized,

> “[J]ust within the government, there was some disagreement about how we’re going to go about managing resources, because, if you don’t know, Micronesia Challenge was mainly an area based type proposal. Well that’s what we were thinking was being expected of us. And we didn’t necessarily agree that area management was the only way to go in respect to getting to this so-called 30% that everybody wanted to put in as a good percentage to reach [. .. .] We, we had to show a different perspective on how resources were being managed and it’s not necessarily always area based. And, because the Micronesia Challenge was based on that, it made it seem that that was the only way to manage resources” (CNMI4).

A few interviewees specifically identified TNC as a source of pressure for interpreting the Micronesia Challenge targets as spatial:

> “[A TNC representative] tried to force her version, her thoughts about what the Micronesian challenge was, on us. And so we butted heads big time and said we’re doing it this way and that’s it, we’re not following her MPA route, we didn't want to do that. We want to look at it in a different way” (CNMI7).

As another interviewee pointed out, the CNMI (and Guam) was already implementing non-spatial forms of marine management:

> “Guam and the CNMI are U.S. We have a shitload of federal laws and regulations that we are, that we have to comply with. [. . .] Effective conservation is a big deal for RMI [Republic of Marshall Islands], ROP [Republic of Palau], and FSM. For Guam and CNMI, we’re almost there already. We’ve got the CZM [coastal zone management] program. We’ve got EPA [environmental protection agency]. Even in CNMI, we’ve banned scuba with spear, we’ve banned net fishing. But yet, the environmentalists, oh no, we want 20% MPAs. And there’s been a big fight here in the CNMI. There’s two groups of people here in the CNMI. And we’re at each other’s throats all the time” (CNMI9).

The Division of Fish and Wildlife decided “to approach [the Micronesia Challenge] in a different way” (CNMI7) in an effort to preempt further restriction of fishing through additional marine protected areas. Specifically, the agency developed a complex model that qualitatively estimated effective conservation of near-shore marine areas as a function of diverse management approaches, including marine protected areas, fisheries regulations, moratoria, and public awareness in the most populated islands, including Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The model incorporated management measures in place and qualitatively estimated how much of a conservation benefit they provided. The model concluded that the CNMI was effectively conserving 22-32% of marine resources and thereby meeting the Micronesia Challenge commitments without a need for additional marine protected areas or changes to local marine management. The model attributed effective conservation success largely to gear restrictions on nets and scuba, and supported the Division of Fish and Wildlife's argument that the CNMI fishery stock is healthy despite some localized depletion.

The results of the Division of Fish and Wildlife's model complemented a conviction among several high level government officials that the Micronesia Challenge was not designed to change local policy but rather, to quantify pre-existing success:

> "[I]t is not so much designed to change policy [. . .] The policy exists, conserve, we know that. It simply gives a quantification that had not existed" (CNMI3).

> "[T]he Micronesia Challenge at least for us is that it's not really asking us to do anything new, you know. [. . .] it's almost more of a political show game, the Micronesia Challenge, it seems like, than it is on-the-ground active conservation. You know?" (CNMI5).

However, there was another interpretive community of resource managers in the CNMI who felt that the Micronesia Challenge provided political impetus to transform local management, including through the addition of new marine protected areas:

> "I did see it as a policy in order to get conservation done. I saw it as a tool to actually push for more conservation" (CNMI6).
>
> "I do see setting up networks of marine preserves that encompass 30% of the reef would be an ideal thing" (CNMI14).

This group argued that the aforementioned model and its conclusions were flawed, and that the CNMI had work to do in order to meet the Micronesia Challenge near-shore marine targets

> "[The Division of Fish and Wildlife] felt that CNMI has already met the Challenge and in terms of like marine. But [others say] we haven't met the challenge. They [Division of Fish and Wildlife] can say all they want about fish and all the laws that they've implemented, but looking at our data, I think we're only 18%, you know. We still need to do more work to effectively conserve our near-shore marine." (CNMI1)
>
> "I have a ten year data set on thirty regions of CNMI that shows major declines in like 40-50% of them. 10 years of scientific data. You cannot argue a declining trend" (CNMI14).

Conflicting interpretations about the state of marine resources and how to measure effective conservation eventually led local resource management agencies to split the marine target into "fisheries" and "benthic corals" groups, largely corresponding to the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality respectively, which would pursue separate local implementation strategies:

> “So what they did was they split up the fisheries and the benthic corals, and so fisheries are saying that they’ve met it while the benthic coral side said no, we still have deficiencies” (CNMI1).

> “It’s been really hard because we had to basically draw yet another line [. . .] What the positive side is, what the people doing the Challenge or implementing it has been to basically, unfortunately, just ignore the other side and move forward” (CNMI14).

The “benthic group” is not currently pursuing additional marine protected areas, given the context of political opposition in CNMI. Similar to Guam, they will undertake a watershed approach that articulates with pre-existing management efforts and focuses on reducing land-based sources of pollution to coral reefs in priority watersheds. As mentioned earlier, the CNMI currently has no sub-account within the Micronesia Challenge regional endowment. There is, however, interest in building an endowment that could support locally-based environmental NGOs.

3.7.10 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Functional interplay

The most conspicuous function of the Micronesia Challenge in the CNMI, as in Guam, has been conflict. Many interviewees in the CNMI understood the Micronesia Challenge as a tool for mobilizing resources for others, questioning the uneven benefits accruing to participating jurisdictions. Compared to the freely associated states, the CNMI and Guam arguably “don’t need a huge amount of new resources” (INGO4) because they “can access a lot of funding sources for conservation and marine and terrestrial lands from NOAA or from US Fish and Wildlife Services” (CNMI2). However, several interviewees felt that their engagement with the Micronesia Challenge through regional and local activities was a drag on their agency's resources, without recompense or just cause:

> "[I]t took up a lot of our time. It was one of those things, it was another one of those things [. . .] these people coming in from the outside, trying to get us to do something they want to do on our time. You know, it's a drag. So it was a deficit, definitely for Fish and Wildlife, and probably for other agencies too" (CNMI7).

In this context, multiple people expressed resentment that the CNMI would not benefit from so-called "regional" fundraising:

> "[T]hat was one of the major concerns. So you got to get money from all these sources and these entities. What about us?" (CNMI3).
>
> "[W]hen we first found out that we weren't going to get any money for this [. . .] that angered Guam and that angered most of us. So what are we doing here? [. . .] It basically, the bottom line was, well you're here to help the Micronesia Challenge. You're basically here to help FSM, Guam, or Palau, Marshalls, get money. That didn't sit very well" (CNMI7).

One high-level government official linked this concern about differential financial benefits to his broader concern about regional difference and how it would play out through the Micronesia Challenge:

> "[T]he concern there was the extent to which CNMI would be an equal partner and member. We are U.S. related and are we Micronesian? Can we actually get funding? We're U.S. And so our concern there was how we would be treated. Are we the foster, stepchild? Are we an equal partner in this? So not that there was objection to the goals, the objectives and the mission. But the role was a major concern. [. . .] Are we equal? Are we considered equal to Palau? Are we considered equal to FSM? Are considered equal to Micronesians? Or are we U.S. and Guam, then we are apart and set off. We're different in that sense, that we don't belong" (CNMI3).

Micronesia Challenge supporters in the CNMI articulated a broader conceptualization of benefits similar to those envisioned in Guam. Two interviewees in the CNMI suggested that horizontal ties could be leveraged to bring the voice of CNMI more directly into global environmental policy-making meetings:

> "[F]or the like, the United Nations, like if there's a CoP [Conference of the Parties] meeting somewhere, we could tag on to Palau or FSM as part of their delegation to get our foot in the door" (CNMI1).

While hopeful, another interviewee felt that increased access to international fora would ultimately be limited by the political status of the CNMI:

> "[T]he relation that we have right now with Micronesia challenge, may provide us the means to be more engaged and connected to this other [international policy-making fora] that we're not privy to at this point in time, such as biodiversities and all that stuff [. . .] My concern is as we move forward in time, like the next ten years, I'm not sure what level of, I guess, of involvement we'll have into the point where also it becomes a foreign issue, a foreign affairs kind of thing. And the [U.S.] Department of States steps in, says 'wait a minute, you gotta go through me before you do this or do that' you know" (CNMI8).

Other interviewees focused instead on how the Micronesia Challenge could be leveraged to improve relations with U.S. federal resource management agencies. Three interviewees suggested that one of the most important functions of the Micronesia Challenge for the CNMI is increasing international awareness, including within the U.S., of local realities in the CNMI:

> "[T]here is an arrogance that NOAA, the US Fish and Wildlife, EPA, they know everything. But they don't know here. [. . . .] So a major, a major importance of Micronesia Challenge is education, outreach and modeling. So that persons in the region and beyond the region are able to have information about who we really are" (CNMI3).

> "[I]t allows us to be part of this bigger framework, you know. And, I mean, if you talk to people on the Hill, and you have, I think…you know, a lot of times they're not aware of a lot of the activities that are happening in all the local agencies and all the stuff that we're doing. You know, cause we don't necessarily

> um, put enough stuff in the media and do enough outreach and make it clear enough, you know all the various activities that we're doing. [. . .] Whereas Micronesia Challenge does. So it's become, it's also become a vector for how to get the message out about some of the things that we're doing" (CNMI10).

Another interviewee envisioned mobilizing political ties to the freely associated states to put pressure on the U.S. government in support of local goals in the CNMI and Guam:

> "The United States can do whatever it wants with CNMI or Guam for that matter. They can implement whatever policy they have in place, and have us comply with it. But if you have partners such as Palau, FSM, the Marshalls, you have to do better than what you're doing right now for the CNMI, you gotta step up to the plate and do a lot more management measure for Guam. The U.S. may listen more that way" (CNMI8).

Finally, a small number of interviewees envisioned the Micronesia Challenge as a vehicle for reinvigorating lost cultural ties to natural resources in the CNMI through horizontal networking with "brothers and sisters" in more culturally 'traditional' Micronesian islands:

> "I think the biggest benefit would, um, and what I hope would come out of it is to get the local community to have a stronger tie with its resource, like what the rest of Micronesia has. [. . .] And I hope that the Micronesia Challenge would, there'd be a lot of dialogue between not just the monitoring teams, not just the focal points, not just the young champions, but the jurisdiction as a whole, like this big exchange of ideas and information so that the stuff that we've lost culturally that we can regain from maybe our brothers and sisters in Yap or in Chuuk" (CNMI12).

3.7.11 Discussion

The above analysis reveals the Micronesia Challenge to be a source of tensions and possibilities shaped by heterogeneous local political contexts, interpretations, and priorities. As local interpretive communities consider how to engage with the

Micronesia Challenge, they wrestle with questions of what their governments, NGOs, and/or communities stand to gain and lose from regional environmental governance – often in relation to what others throughout the region stand to gain, including international environmental NGOs. They also think creatively about how to mobilize the region in support of locally specified goals, and critically about how regional environmental governance may impose externally generated priorities, limit resource access, and/or restrict hard-won political autonomy. As the above analysis suggests, they reach varied, sometimes conflicting conclusions.

In summary, local implementation strategies are defined to varying degrees of coherence, and may coarsely be grouped into watershed-based approaches (Guam and CNMI), protected area-based approaches (Palau, RMI), and undecided (FSM). While these implementation mechanisms differ in name, all are based on pre-existing practice and an authoritative interpretation of the Micronesia Challenge as a thing that conveys rather than compels; this is, it conveys regional progress without, as yet, substantially reshaping local or regional resource management approaches. Its lack of influence on local management begs the question, if the Micronesia Challenge does not translate into changes in resource management, what functions does it serve?

The definition of a local implementing mechanism is only part of the story of localized engagement with the Micronesia Challenge. One of the most compelling insights from this analysis of localized perceptions of and engagement with the Micronesia Challenge is how its function transcends traditional understandings of environmental governance and stated thematic foci, however broad they may be. Interviewees rarely referenced specific goals of biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, or sustainable development when describing the overall function of the Micronesia Challenge. Instead, they focused on resource mobilization (for themselves or others), and broader horizontal and vertical linkages that they leverage to approach diverse and highly contextualized aspirations for political self-determination, international agenda-setting, bargaining power within international relations, or the construction of a particular Micronesian identity, for example.

Results also indicate that institutionalizing regional environmental governance embodies potential tradeoffs and dysfunctions, such as local conflicts, intraregional resentment tied to perceptions of uneven benefits, and the bottlenecking of (a larger pool of) international funding at the regional level. While the Micronesia Challenge may attract a larger overall pool of resources to the region, it also empowers two international environmental NGOs, as one person put it, "to direct how and why that funding should come to this region" (INGO7). The mobilization and distribution of international funding through the Micronesia Challenge is clearly reshaping relationships among Micronesian governments, local and international NGOs, and donors in complex ways, with as yet unclear consequences. Continued research is necessary to evaluate the impacts of regionalized fundraising on the thematic trajectory of local priorities and practice, accountability for local governance (upward vs. downward), and the redistribution of resources throughout the region. Surprisingly, few people in the freely associated states commented on what I suspected would be a major source of local concern: the short-term opportunity costs associated with diverting domestic funding to the regional endowment in order to match pledges from CI and TNC.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter presents an empirical analysis of the emergence, form, and function of a new and influential form of regional environmental governance. First, I describe the emergence of regional environmental governance in Micronesia, linking its development to U.S. and global conservation agendas, historically institutionalized regionalism, and a close partnership between state and NGO actors - so close that a high-level official in the Palauan national government characterized his NGO partners (primarily TNC) as "an extension of Palau government" (ROP10). Moreover, in linking the emergence of the Micronesia Challenge to interest in demonstrating large-scale progress toward the CBD Program of Work on Protected Areas, I challenge emerging explanations for "the rise of the region in global environmental politics" (Conca 2012, p. 127). Specifically, I argue that the emergence of the Micronesia Challenge represents the production of success for global environmental governance more so than its failure.

Next, I engage Balsiger and VanDeever's typology of regional environmental governance to characterize the form(s) of the Micronesia Challenge, in practice and in representation, with reference to its territoriality, thematic foci, and coordinating agency (Balsiger and VanDeveer 2010). I identify governance as an important focus for analysis and future comparative research, and propose its addition to the typology with a descriptive continuum ranging from *regionalized* to *decentralized*. The addition of governance to the typology is embedded in a constructivist recognition that "regional" environmental governance may be more or less regional in practice; adding *governance* to the typology guides the researcher's gaze to the essential question of which aspects of environmental governance are being regionalized and which are not, given that calling or representing an arrangement as regional does not make it so in practice.

Overall, my analysis of the form(s) of the Micronesia Challenge highlights its mutability. I explain how the territoriality of the Micronesia Challenge is political, though representations thereof imply an ontologically "natural" basis of cooperation. I suggest that its formal thematic focus is deliberately broad, and a subject of continual negotiation through more or less authoritative interpretations. I show that official coordinating agents comprise both state and non-state actors, though in practice, two international NGOs, the Micronesia Conservation Trust and TNC, are key drivers for sustained regional coordination. Finally, I convey how the Micronesia Challenge has attempted to regionalize environmental governance in three interrelated categories of finance, communications, and evaluation, and call attention to the ways in which inherent regional diversity renders regionalization of governance uneven, dynamic and contingent; it is constantly being molded to serve diverse interests. My analysis reveals that the Micronesia Challenge, as a mutable policy, falls along multiple points of individual axes on the revised typology of regional environmental governance, shifting with respect to sites of implementation, and analytical focus on representation vs. practice. Therefore, I suggest that a typology of regional environmental governance is perhaps most useful as a framework for generating research questions about regional environmental governance (comparable to the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework, see Ostrom (2005)).

Finally, I examine the interactions of the Micronesia Challenge with local institutions, interpretations, and priorities within Palau, FSM, Marshall Islands, Guam, and the CNMI. This analysis reveals the Micronesia Challenge to function as a locally specific source of tension and opportunity shaped by heterogeneous political contexts and interpretations. Key insights suggest that local actors, including local environmental NGOs, are putting the Micronesia Challenge to work for highly contextualized functions beyond most conceptualizations of environmental governance. Results also reveal the potential for unintended and/or adverse functions, such as divisive local interpretive conflicts, intraregional resentment tied to perceptions of uneven benefits, and the alleged bottlenecking of international funding for freely associated states at the regional level.

In conclusion, I return to the title of this chapter: “the reconstruction of Micronesia through regional environmental governance.” In the context of the colonial construction and post-colonial destruction of Micronesia, the *reconstruction* of “One Micronesia” through the Micronesia Challenge may be understood in part as a strategic attempt to co-opt a historically imposed regionalism and put it to work for (some) Micronesians and environmental NGOs. It is likely the case that the region as institutionalized through the Micronesia Challenge has “given these little countries a voice at a level that they’ve never had before.” (INGO11). However, similar to the Pacific Region (Chapter 2), the version of Micronesia that is remade through the Micronesia Challenge is also shaped in part by external actors and agendas that both complement and contradict heterogeneous local priorities.

4. Multi-level governance for large marine commons: Politics and polycentricity in Palau's protected area network

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4.1 Introduction

Common pool resource (CPR) theory as defined by the Bloomington School (Aligica and Boettke 2011) emerged mainly from research in local, small-scale settings (Ostrom 1990). A critical research frontier is the governance of larger CPRs, which requires analysis of interdependencies among different levels and scales of more complex systems (Heikkila et al. 2011; Ostrom 2009). We take Elinor Ostrom's design principle of polycentric, nested enterprises in long enduring, larger CPR systems as a starting point for interdisciplinary research on the governance of large CPRs (Marshall 2008). Specifically, this paper brings together institutional theories of polycentricity and critical human geography theory on scalar politics to contribute to emerging research and policy agendas on the governance of larger CPRs by advancing our understanding of the form and function of nested, polycentric regimes. We highlight complementarities between scalar politics and polycentric theoretical approaches in agreement with Lejano (2006) that multiple analytical lenses can reveal different aspects of a policy situation.

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A well-suited policy arena in which to explore these issues is marine conservation governance, particularly marine protected areas networks (MPAs). Marine ecologists have concluded, "if marine reserves and other MPAs are to provide significant conservation benefits to species, they must be scaled up" (Gaines et al. 2010, p. 18286). As an alternative to scaling up the geographic extent of individual MPAs, conservationists are increasingly promoting large scale marine governance through networks of smaller MPAs that may spread the costs of conservation across resource owners and/or users, and "can have emergent [ecological] benefits that make the network more than the sum of its individual parts" (Gaines et al. 2010, p 18286). The most prominent global policy-making fora (i.e., World Summit on Sustainable Development, the World Parks Congress, the World Conservation Congress, and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity) have all called for ecologically representative MPA networks.

In theory, an MPA network stretching across a large marine CPR is networked in both biophysical and social dimensions. As Agardy (2005, p. 244) has pointed out, an MPA network has "a dual nature" of "connecting biophysical sites deemed ecologically critical (ecological networks), and linking people and institutions in order to make effective conservation possible (human networks)." While there has been a proliferation of research on the biophysical dimensions of MPA networks (e.g., Airamé et al. 2003; Botsford et al. 2003; Gaines et al. 2010; Moffitt et al. 2011; Roberts et al. 2003), there has been comparatively little research on the political and institutional dimensions thereof (but see Grilo 2011; Lowry et al. 2009; Sievanen et al. 2013). To be clear, institutions herein refer to the formal and informal rules, norms, and strategies that structure human interactions (Ostrom 2005).

To address this gap and explore our theoretical interests in multi-level governance for larger CPRs, we focus on institutional changes and politics associated with a national protected area network (PAN hereafter) in the western Pacific island nation of Palau, a context in which communities of resource users own and manage marine resources. Through the PAN, national government and NGO actors are providing financial incentives to resource users/owners to voluntarily enroll pre-existing and new protected areas[2] into an ecologically-relevant national network. Although resource users maintain ownership of PAN sites, there are significant changes to the process of governing those sites. As the PAN attempts to increase the spatial scale of marine governance to accommodate goals of biodiversity conservation, national government and conservation NGOs gain more influence in local decision-making processes. We conclude that the pursuit of large-scale marine conservation governance in Palau has led to a more nested but less polycentric governance system, and caution that decreased local autonomy may reduce the institutional diversity upon which the long-term sustainability of CPRs may depend. Results are broadly relevant to other geographic contexts as Palau's PAN is being promoted as a model for other nations seeking to meet their commitments to multilateral environmental agreements[3].

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[2] While the PAN includes terrestrial areas, our concentration on the marine component reflects the focus of the PAN and historic local conservation on marine environments.

4.2 Complementary perspectives on multi-level CPR governance

According to Giordano (2003, p. 365), “the field of geography has been relatively silent in the commons literature, especially on the theoretic front.” This is beginning to change. There is an emerging foundation of interdisciplinary theoretical dialogue regarding the relationships between physical geography, resource users, and institutional arrangements for CPR governance (e.g., Araral 2013; Brewer 2010; Giordano 2003). However, there remains little constructive engagement between Bloomington School institutional theorists and critical human geographers interested in the scalar dimensions of CPR governance (hereafter, institutional theorists and critical human geographers) (Armitage 2008; Clement 2010; Poteete 2012), arguably due to divisive tensions about core questions, values, epistemologies, assumptions and methodologies (Johnson 2004; Mosse 1997).

While Johnson (2004) concludes that co-existence is more likely than convergence[4], there is emerging interest in a third option: complementarity (e.g., Armitage 2008; Clement 2010; Campbell 2007; Poteete 2012). Poteete (2012) for example, brings together concepts across multiple disciplines, including critical human geography and Bloomington institutional analysis, to argue for broader perspectives on the multi-level institutions and multiple scale linkages characterizing CPRs. Research taking an interdisciplinary perspective, she argues, “is less likely to overlook important elements, relationships, or processes” (Poteete 2012, p. 147). Armitage (2008) similarly advocates for “critical reflection” on multi-level governance for CPRs, calling for the exchange of ideas from common property theory, resilience thinking, and political ecology central to those disciplines (Armitage 2008, p. 7).

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[3] Palau received the high profile 2012 Future Policy Award for having the world’s policies to protect oceans and coasts.

[4] Johnson (2004) describes tensions between “collective action” and “entitlement” schools of thought that generally correspond to what we refer to here as institutionalist and critical human geography perspectives.

In agreement that “continued cross-fertilization of ideas is crucial for the evolution of commons governance” (Armitage 2008, p. 26), we explore complementarity between “Bloomington institutionalism” (Aligica and Boettke 2011, p. 29), grounded in the seminal work of Vincent and Elinor Ostrom and colleagues, and critical human geography theory on scalar politics. This section describes arguments and analytical foci within each literature, demonstrating that they share key concerns with power, scale, and multi-level governance. We argue that key components of the theoretical perspectives fit together to structure a more comprehensive analysis of multi-level governance regimes for larger CPRs, such as networks of marine protected areas.

4.2.1 Polycentricity

In 1961, influenced by the study of federalist systems, V. Ostrom et al. observed that some federalist systems were organized as polycentric political systems, arguing that they could constitute a potential alternative to the theoretical ideal of monocentric systems with a dominant center of decision-making power. The term polycentric “connotes many centers of decision-making which are formally independent of each other" (Ostrom et al. 1961, p. 831). In polycentric political systems, multiple centers of decision-making "may function in a coherent manner with consistent and predictable patterns of interacting behavior" (Ostrom et al. 1961, p. 831). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the empirical research agenda on polycentricism focused on the role of local institutions for the governance of CPRs, although few studies have used polycentrism as a framework for analysis (Araral 2013).

In its theoretical ideal, a polycentric system is thought to be more likely to enhance the ability of resource users to craft and adjust their own institutions over time, which can increase the likelihood of those institutions leading to effective, equitable, or sustainable outcomes because they are more likely to be well matched to particular social-ecological contexts (Andersson and Ostrom 2008; Ostrom 2012). Ostrom's eighth design principle holds that for CPRs that are part of larger systems, enduring polycentric governance is "organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises," where "smaller-scale organizations tend to be nested in ever larger organizations" (Ostrom 2005, p. 269). Note, however, that a nested governance system in which decision-making power is not distributed among different actors does not constitute a polycentric system. A nested system where decision-making is centralized is less likely to succeed in supporting sustainability and resilience of the resources it governs. In theory, a nested polycentric system is advantageous because, through the involvement of resource users, local knowledge can inform the design of diverse, context-specific rules, while larger organizations (including but not limited to governments) can enhance local capacity to deal with non-contributors or local tyrants, share and invest in information, and coordinate cross-boundary problems (Ostrom 2010; see also Mansbridge In Press).

However, there is still limited understanding of the operational characteristics of such systems. Ostrom (2012, p. 140) concluded, "[o]ur own research supports more complex, adaptive designs that do enable the users to have a substantial voice in the design and monitoring of the rules in use but also involve larger units in a polycentric system." While a defining concept in polycentricity is the level of autonomy local participants have from larger units, there is little guidance on what constitutes a "substantial voice," how nesting affects the polycentricity of a given system, and how varying levels and forms of autonomy affect the function and overall trajectory of the system. Depending on the autonomy local units have, a given governance system may be "more or less polycentric" (Andersson and Ostrom 2008, p. 77). More polycentric systems will show significant autonomy for decision-making among local units and units operating over larger jurisdictions. In less polycentric systems, for example, nested enterprises may engender partial or complete dominance of local groups by government regulators or other powerful actors (Adger et al. 2005; Marshall 2008; Young 2006).

4.2.2 Scalar Politics

Critical human geographers, including political ecologists, are similarly interested in the relationships among actors, institutions, and spatial scale in multi-level CPR governance (often referred to as "multi-scaled" environmental governance in this literature) (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003). As part of this research agenda, critical human geographers are engaging a body of literature articulating as “politics of scale” or “scalar politics” (scalar politics herein) (MacKinnon 2010, p. 22) to analyze the social construction and manipulation of social and biophysical scales as part of “social strategies to combat and defend control over limited resources” (Swyngedouw 2000, p. 70). In this sense, social and biophysical scales are understood as dynamic, historically contingent tools of politics that actors wield as part of strategies to pursue particular agendas, such as gaining control over space, limited natural resources, and/or a governance process (Brown and Purcell 2005; Gruby and Campbell, In Press; McCarthy 2005). While this literature includes critical realist recognition of the biophysical and social processes that co-produce scales of social and ecological organization (Sneddon 2003), there is increasing awareness that biophysical scales (i.e., watershed, ecosystem, eco-region) may also be identified and invoked in support of particular political projects, such as biodiversity conservation (Campbell 2007; Campbell and Godfrey 2010; Cohen 2012; Sievanen et al. 2013).

Critical human geographers engage theory on scalar politics to critically assess social and biophysical scales and consider the role of scalar constructions and narratives in efforts to reconfigure and legitimize new forms of multi-level CPR governance (Sievanen et al. 2013). For example, Campbell (2007, p 327) shows how sea turtle experts invoke spatial scales of sea turtle distribution and migration of sea turtles to “override local rights of withdrawal, management, and exclusion, and to assign these rights at other sociopolitical scales.” Analytical attention thus focuses on “who produces scale, how, and for what purposes" (McCarthy 2005, p. 733). This literature recognizes that rescaling environmental governance may result in significant social and ecological outcomes, but tends to focus on those associated with actor dis/empowerment (Campbell and Godfrey 2010; Norman and Bakker 2009; Sievanen et al. 2013; Swyngedouw 2000). While the literature contributes policy-relevant analysis, it generally does not engage with the institutional theory described in section 4.2.1

4.2.3 Toward Constructive Dialogue

We take shared concerns with scale, power, and multi-level governance as a point of entry toward constructive dialogue between institutional theorists and critical human geographers. We argue that complementary loci of attention advances a more complete, critical analysis of the form and function of large-scale CPR governance by directing analytical attention to the specific actors, agendas, and institutional changes associated with political projects to scale up and coordinate polycentric systems. The dual objectives of this study are thus to advance constructive theoretical dialogue by exploring how new configurations of participants and institutions in nested regimes for larger CPRs affects the degree to which the system is polycentric. In the following sections we illustrate how this theoretical dialogue can inform the analysis of polycentric governance for marine conservation in Palau as a contingent and dynamic construction.

We evaluate the polycentricity of the PAN by asking who is initiating institutional change and why; how the change is legitimized with reference to ecological scale; and how the change redistributes rule-making authority and affects resource user autonomy.

We define autonomy as the ability of marine resource users to devise their own institutions for the governance of marine resources without being challenged by non-local units (modified from Ostrom, 1990). Autonomy can foster (or not) the development of diverse, context-appropriate institutions, and as such is seen as a pivotal concept linked to the emergence and endurance of a local CPR regime (Basurto 2013; Ostrom 2005; Schlager 2002). In recognition that there are few, if any, examples of completely isolated social-ecological systems, we approach autonomy relationally. Accordingly, our analysis examines the ways in which marine resource users' autonomy changes over time through dynamic institutions-in-use.

4.3 Methods

The first author collected field data during three trips to Palau totaling four and a half months over the period 2010-2012. Data sources include 101 semi-structured interviews with 72 people (19 key informants were interviewed 2-4 times), observation of seven policy planning meetings, and documents related to protected area science and policy in Palau throughout the 1980s-2000s. Interviewees included two heterogeneous groups we refer to as resource users and PAN architects. These analytical groupings are not always mutually exclusive; three individuals spoke at length from both perspectives and are thus included in both groups.

Interviews with 39 marine resource users from each of Palau's 16 states, included 13 out of the 16 state governors, other elected or appointed state officials, traditional leaders (chiefs), and volunteers on conservation committees. According to the Palau

National Constitution (Article 1, Section 2, 1979), Palau's states hold "exclusive ownership" of the ocean and its resources from the land to 12 nautical miles seaward (Section 4.4 discusses the meaning of ownership). Most Palauan states are small communities comprised of a few hundred people from historically unified social and political units (Graham and Idechong 1998). Nearly all households in Palau are involved in coastal fishing activities, so Palauan states may be understood as communities of resource owner/users (who we refer to as resource users herein) (FAO 2009; Freidman and Golbuu 2011). Interviews with resource users focused on the history of protected area designation and management in his/her state, interpretations of and experiences with the PAN, and decisions to enroll protected areas into the PAN.

Interviewees also included 36 PAN architects who conceptualized, developed, and communicated the PAN, including 10 current and former members of Palau's national government and 26 former and current NGO affiliates from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Palau Conservation Society. Interviews with PAN architects focused on drivers and rationales for the PAN, design of PAN institutions, and interpretations of PAN objectives, institutional processes, and participant roles. PAN architects are coded and cited as A1-A36, and resource users as R1-R39.

Drawing from interviews, observations, and historical documents enabled us to triangulate data and undertake a "thick" approach (Geertz 1973 p. 3) to institutional analysis that recognizes embeddedness of actors and institutions within particular social, political, and environmental situations (Mccay and Jentoft 1998). Data collection and analysis were guided by constructivist grounded theory, whereby data collection and analysis take place simultaneously, with emergent theory guiding the collection effort (Charmaz 2000). Analysis of institutional change is guided by four interlinked levels of institutions and action arenas: operational, collective choice, constitutional, and meta-constitutional (Ostrom 2005). Operational institutions directly affect the biophysical world and are crafted in collective choice arenas. Collective choice institutions determine eligible participants in operational arenas and specify how operational institutions may be changed. Collective choice institutions are crafted in constitutional arenas, and so on (Figure 10). We complement observations and institutional analysis with interpretive analysis that focuses on the situated meaning of institutions to different actors (Yanow 1996).

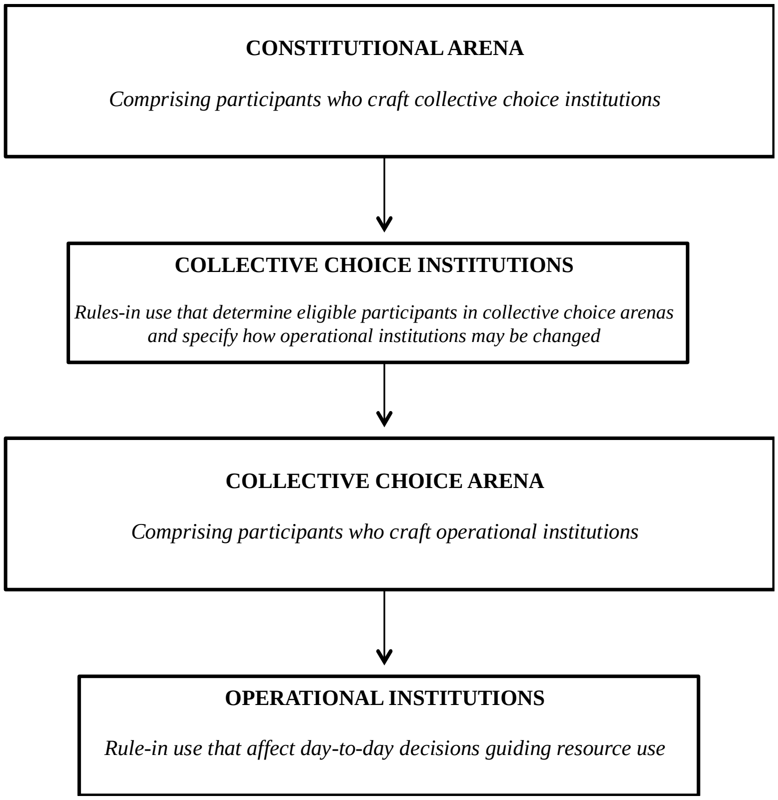
CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA
Comprising participants who craft collective choice institutions
COLLECTIVE CHOICE INSTITUTIONS
Rules-in use that determine eligible participants in collective choice arenas and specify how operational institutions may be changed
COLLECTIVE CHOICE ARENA
Comprising participants who craft operational institutions
OPERATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
Rule-in use that affect day-to-day decisions guiding resource use

Figure 10: Levels of institutional analysis (adapted from Ostrom 2005)

4.4 Pre-PAN polycentric marine governance (before 2003)

Situated roughly 800 km east of the Philippines and 800 km north of Papua New Guinea, Palau is an archipelago comprising 586 small islands and an ocean territory of 616,029 km^2. The total land area of the largest island is about 400 km^2. Palau's population is around 20,000 and tourism their main source of revenue. Foreign vessels dominate industrial offshore export fisheries while coastal marine fisheries mainly support local subsistence and commercial uses critical to domestic food supply (FAO 2009; Freidman and Golbuu 2011). Palau's marine environment has the most diverse coral reef fauna in Micronesia (Golbuu et al. 2007), and is part of Conservation International's Polynesia-

Micronesia Biodiversity Hotspot, described as the "epicenter of the current global extinction crisis" (CI 2012).

In pre-colonial Palau, customary marine tenure was vested in traditional leaders and kin groups (Ueki and Clayton 1999). Customary marine tenure has been defined as "a situation in which particular groups of people [. . .] have informal or formal rights to coastal areas and in which their historical rights to use and access marine resources are, in principle, exclusionary, transferable, and enforceable" (Aswani 2005 p. 287). In Palau this included *bul* or harvesting moratoriums, as well as religiously motivated taboos, practices that had the effect if not the sole intent of sustainable use. Violators could be fined, banished, shamed, or killed (Johannes 1978).

Formal colonial administrations from Spain, Germany, Japan and the U.S governed Palau beginning in 1885. Imported legal and economic systems under U.S. and Japan administrations deteriorated customary marine tenure, leading to *de facto* open access fisheries conditions and perceptible fisheries decline (Ueki and Clayton 1999). Palau gained independence in 1994, but maintains a formal political association with the U.S. Today, Palau's federated government mirrors that of the U.S., comprising a national government with an executive branch, a bi-cameral congress, and judiciary as well as 16 state governments each ruled by a constitution, elected governor, and legislature. The national constitution delegates power to the states, including power to enact and enforce laws.

The national constitution is based on U.S. democratic ideals, but also seeks to invigorate custom by granting equal authority to statutory and traditional law, which is unwritten and based on titled elitism and highly decentralized decision-making (Graham and Idechong 1998). All states incorporate traditional authorities in their governments to varying degrees, and the strongest customary political power in Palau is arguably at the state level (Graham and Idechong 1998). Inconsistencies between dual democratic-egalitarian and customary systems are many, and underwrite ongoing power struggles among Palau's traditional and elected leaders and also between state and national governments, given the role of traditional leaders in state governments (Graham and Idechong 1998).

These struggles extend to marine resources. The Palau National Constitution delegates to states "exclusive ownership of all living and non-living resources, except highly migratory fish, from the land to twelve (12) nautical miles seaward from the traditional baselines" (Article I, Section 2). Traditional baselines represent ownership as recorded through oral histories and use patterns, though boundary conflicts have arisen as most states have not mapped or strictly defined these baselines (Matthews 2007; Pulea 1994). The national constitution also contradictorily grants congress the power to "regulate the ownership, exploration and exploitation of natural resources" (Article IX, Section 5.12). Throughout the 1990s, traditional leaders, state governments, and national government fought for control over marine resources (Graham and Idechong 1998). The courts supported states' authority to enact and enforce regulations for marine resource use (Graham and Idechong 1998), effectively translating the clause for states' "exclusive ownership" into full property rights of access and withdrawal, management, exclusion, and alienation (Schlager and Ostrom 1992).

In institutional terms, resource users had a high level of autonomy and ultimate authority to make collective choice and operational rules regarding marine resources, with enabling collective choice rules-in-use that recognized and supported full property rights and governing authority. The only constraints on local autonomy in practice were national fisheries laws regulating exploitation of particular species and fishing methods (Palau National Code, Title 24, Chapter 13).

4.4.1 Re-emergence of customary marine tenure as polycentric practice (1980s to early 2000s)

Resource users started actively exercising their right to self-govern their resources in the 1980s. By the mid 1990s and early 2000s almost every state was establishing controls on fishing through *buls* and legislated MPAs, often with involvement from TNC and the Palau Conservation Society, a local NGO that TNC helped form in 1994. We refer broadly to *buls* and MPAs as conservation areas. Nearly all resource users interviewed cited perceived fisheries declines as the primary motivation for initiating harvest controls, though the resurgence of *buls* was also an expression of the chiefs' desire to re-exert control over marine resources following independence (Graham and Idechong 1998). By 2003, 13 states had established at least 26 conservation areas (Palau Conservation Society, unpublished data), and by 2007 all states had established at least one (Figure 11). Ongoing disputes between some states over resource ownership and access has arguably limited cooperative marine governance across state boundaries (Matthews 2007).

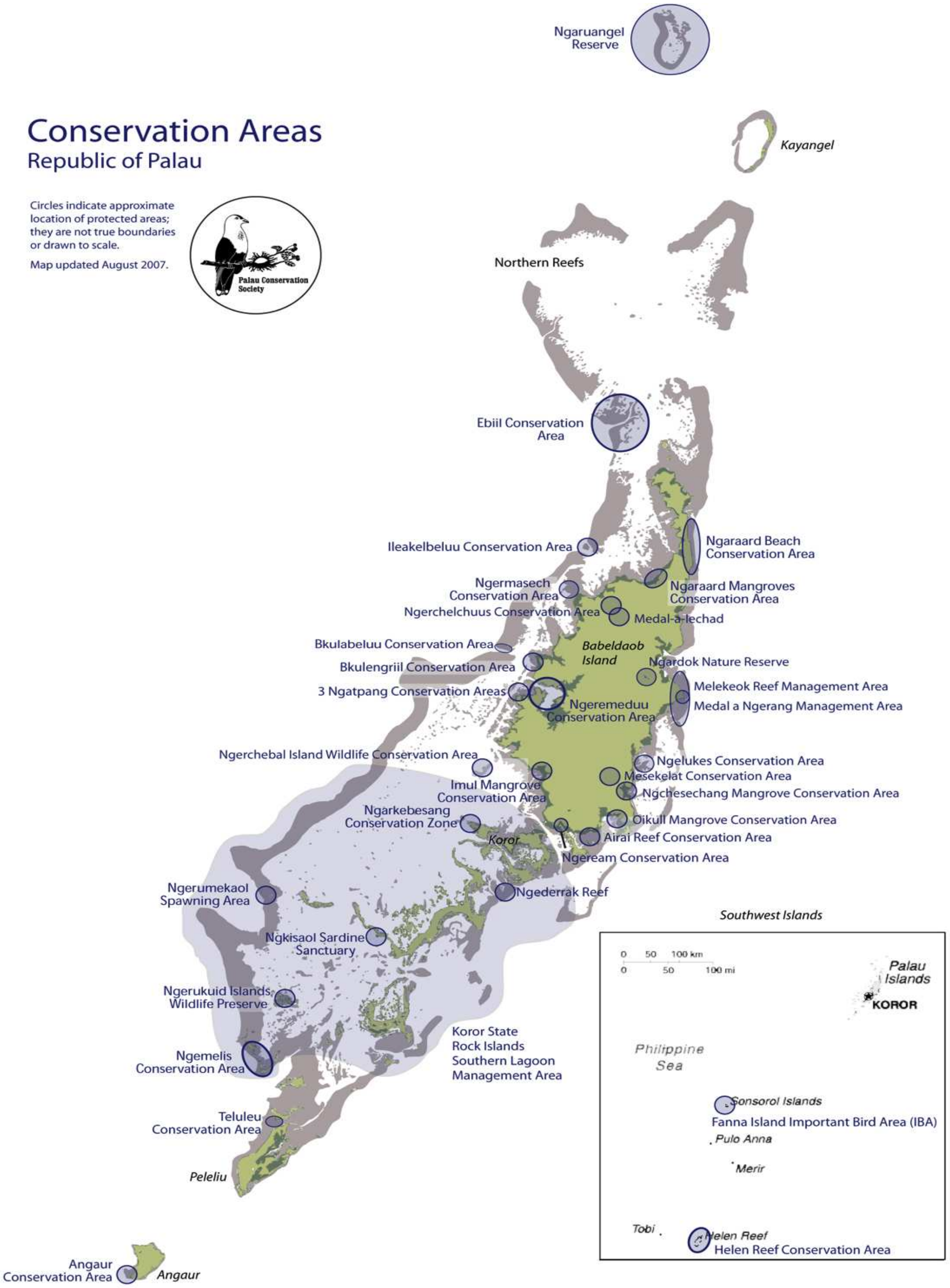
Conservation Areas
Republic of Palau
Circles indicate approximate location of protected areas; they are not true boundaries or drawn to scale.
Map updated August 2007.
Palau Conservation Society
Ngaruangel Reserve
Kayangel
Northern Reefs
Ebiil Conservation Area
Ileakelbeluu Conservation Area
Ngaraard Beach Conservation Area
Ngermasech Conservation Area
Ngaraard Mangroves Conservation Area
Ngerchelchuus Conservation Area
Medal-a-lechad
Bkulabeluu Conservation Area
Babeldaob Island
Bkulengriil Conservation Area
Ngardok Nature Reserve
3 Ngatpang Conservation Areas
Melekeok Reef Management Area
Ngeremeduu Conservation Area
Medal a Ngerang Management Area
Ngerchebal Island Wildlife Conservation Area
Ngelukes Conservation Area
Imul Mangrove Conservation Area
Mesekelat Conservation Area
Ngchesechang Mangrove Conservation Area
Ngarkebesang Conservation Zone
Oikull Mangrove Conservation Area
Koror
Airai Reef Conservation Area
Ngeream Conservation Area
Ngerumekaol Spawning Area
Ngederrak Reef
Southwest Islands
Ngkisaol Sardine Sanctuary
0 50 100 km
0 50 100 mi
Palau Islands
KOROR
Ngerukuid Islands Wildlife Preserve
Koror State Rock Islands Southern Lagoon Management Area
Philippine Sea
Ngemelis Conservation Area
Sonsorol Islands
Fanna Island Important Bird Area (IBA)
Pulo Anna
Teluleu Conservation Area
Merir
Peleliu
Tobi
Helen Reef
Helen Reef Conservation Area
Angaur Conservation Area
Angaur

Figure 11: Conservation areas in Palau as of 2007, indicated by circles. Copyright by Palau Conservation Society and Palau Automated Land Information Resource Services. Reprinted with permission.

Collective choice rules provided rule-making authority for conservation areas to traditional chiefs and state governments, and in some cases, management boards comprising a mix of traditional leaders, state government leaders, and other community members. In most states, collective choice rules-in-use also permitted NGO involvement in the initiation, design, and implementation of operational rules to varying degrees. Nine state governors said that the Palau Conservation Society and/or TNC were involved in the initial designation of conservation areas in their state (the other four governors interviewed did not know). However, the extent of NGO involvement varied from state to state and was limited by small NGO staffs during this period. Operational rules governing conservation areas vary, but most include rules for boundaries, monitoring, conflict resolution, and graduated sanctions ranging from shaming to fines and imprisonment. Operational appropriation rules include no-entry and no-take regimes, season and species specific rules, and/or sustainable use for subsistence and education.

In summary, high local autonomy led to highly polycentric regimes for conservation areas characterized by limited non-local involvement, context-specific rule-making, and institutional diversity. As one interviewee summarized: “when you went to one state conservation site it had a different policy from another” (A11). Interviews with resource users revealed high awareness and support for marine conservation areas, but most also reported some poaching, poorly marked boundaries, and insufficient funding for fully implementing rules. The primary source of state revenue for government operations is an annual grant from the national government; excluding the state of Koror, the average FY2011 allocation was US$237,000, which left insufficient funds to manage conservation areas according to some interviewees.

4.5 Nesting polycentric systems through PAN (beginning in 2003)

4.5.1 Initiation and legitimization of PAN: Prioritizing ecological scale

The initial PAN Act (2003) was primarily conceptualized and designed by about ten PAN architects, including Palauans and non-Palauans working for NGOs and Palau's national government. Resource users reported limited involvement in the initial stages of institutional development. The main motivation for developing a national, science-based protected area network was the conservation of marine biodiversity, which arguably required management of ecological and social-institutional processes across larger, transboundary spatial scales. Coordination needs served as justification for shifting some local control over conservation areas to centralized agencies through institutional reforms that nested local institutions for conservation areas within new national institutions. The maintenance of natural processes at ecologically relevant scales served to legitimize this shift.

PAN architects cited two main drivers for institutional change. The first was their heightened concern about marine biodiversity in Palau after a massive coral bleaching and mortality event in a particular ecosystem type in 1998 (Golbuu et al. 2007). In anticipation of future threats from climate change and ocean acidification, PAN architects drew on resilience theory to conclude there was a mismatch between governance and the spatial scale of ecological processes considered relevant to conserving marine biodiversity. They reasoned that maintaining ecological connectivity, representation, and resilience required governing at larger spatial scales than individual state territories as was the current practice. This understanding justified expanding authority for national government to centrally coordinate the designation of conservation areas across Palau:

> “if you leave it up to the communities they're always going to think about fisheries resources mainly and they're going to think only within their state. And that's why you needed the national government to be a partner because the national government can look at the whole of Palau, and address issues such as biodiversity and other issues that the state can't think about, and connectivity. You know states cannot think about the ecosystem” (A3).

PAN architects recognized that resource users did not necessarily share their goal of biodiversity conservation and would be wary of national involvement given historic politics of control over marine resources. They legitimized increased involvement of larger organizational units with scalar narratives articulating incontrovertible relationships among social-ecological processes, scale, and outcomes (Sievanen et al. 2013), such as in the following:

> “Koror state or another State cannot protect its natural resources alone because our resources are connected and interdependent …. the National and State government should work together to identify the important or critical habitats or species to ensure their survival” (Senator Adalbert Eledui, Television advertisement).

The prioritization of ecological connectivity in justifications for institutional re-arrangement may be understood as a form of anti-politics (Ferguson 1990) that naturalizes inherently political projects. In other words, the focus on natural scalar processes discursively skirts the reconfiguration of decision-making power necessary for PAN architects to accommodate a new set of national goals (biodiversity conservation) (Sievanen et al. 2013).

A secondary motivation for the PAN was to report progress toward Palau's commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which has produced global biodiversity targets since 2002 and makes funding available through the Global Environment Facility for national implementation. One PAN architect reported that the PAN was designed to facilitate documentation of national-level progress toward international obligations so as to attract international recognition and associated financial support.

4.5.2 Changing positions of non-local actors

PAN architects restructured the existing polycentric regime to facilitate a more active role for national government and NGOs, thereby centralizing some aspects of decision-making. Specifically, the dynamic sequence of formal PAN laws, amendments, and regulations adopted between 2003 and 2008 created new action arenas and institutions in collective choice and constitutional levels that cumulatively restructured the process for designing operational institutions for state-owned conservation areas.

The approach allowed non-local actors to influence operational rules without overt persuasion or total control (see Li 2007). The logic was thus:

> “[T]he structure had to be seen on the one hand by the states to be advantageous to them, in the sense that they could control everything … [but] we had to make sure that at the national level it did deal with some of the national obligations and priorities, they would still have some degree of control over the broad things” (A34).

Under the PAN Act (2003), states may voluntarily nominate new and/or pre-existing marine and terrestrial conservation areas to the national network. Participating states would be eligible for technical assistance and financial support, and they must manage sites in consultation with the Ministry of Resources and Development (hereafter, the Ministry). The PAN Act (2003) directed the Ministry to promulgate PAN rules and regulations for the operationalization of the PAN. In 2004, the Ministry signed a memorandum of understanding with TNC to work together to do so. Through the memorandum of understanding, TNC also agreed to fund a range of supporting technical work within the network.

Together, the Ministry and TNC designed a complex system of institutions through the PAN regulation (2007) that spelled out roles and rule-making procedures for PAN site selection, criteria and guidelines for PAN site management plans (which states must develop in conjunction with the Ministry within 12 months), and a technical committee that would review and comment on management plans and develop standardized environmental monitoring protocols for PAN sites. The process was designed to influence resource user decisions about conservation area designation as well as management: “the role of the technical committee and this whole application process was to help ensure that the states sort of choose the right areas, or when they put their boundaries they put them in a way that makes sense ecologically” (A24).

By early 2008, no state had joined the PAN because a) resource users feared losing ownership and governance authority in PAN sites, and b) there was no discernable source of financial support (access to financial resources later proved to be a powerful incentive). The PAN law was amended in 2008 to more explicitly recognize state government ownership and governance of PAN sites, and scale back control of national government and NGOs through the creation of a “management committee” that would grant resource users formal authority in future constitutional arenas where overall PAN rules, regulations, and system-wide management plan would be developed. The amendment also created a financial incentive for states to join the PAN, outlining plans to collect a $15 “Green Fee” from each departing visitor to be distributed by a “PAN Fund Board” to resource users to develop and implement management plans funds in accordance with system-wide goals. Collection of the Green Fee began in 2009.

4.5.3 Current nested polycentric structure for marine conservation area governance

As of September 2011, much of the institutional infrastructure described in section 4.5.2 was not yet functional, including the technical committee, the management committee, the PAN Fund board, and the system-wide management plan (see Figure 12).

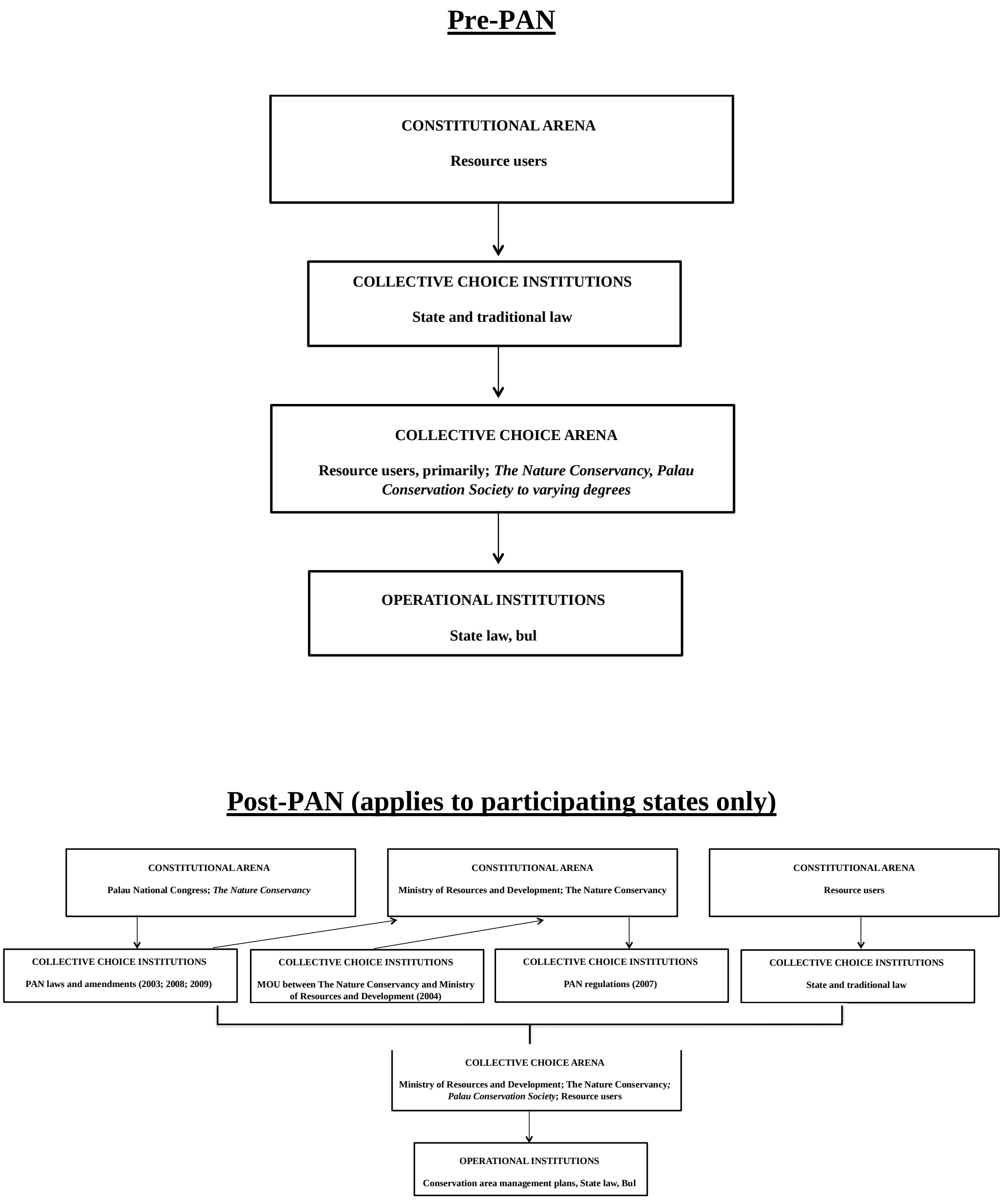
Pre-PAN
CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA
Resource users
COLLECTIVE CHOICE INSTITUTIONS
State and traditional law
COLLECTIVE CHOICE ARENA
Resource users, primarily; *The Nature Conservancy, Palau Conservation Society to varying degrees*
OPERATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
State law, bul
Post-PAN (applies to participating states only)
CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA
Palau National Congress; *The Nature Conservancy*
CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA
Ministry of Resources and Development; The Nature Conservancy
CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA
Resource users
COLLECTIVE CHOICE INSTITUTIONS
PAN laws and amendments (2003; 2008; 2009)
COLLECTIVE CHOICE INSTITUTIONS
MOU between The Nature Conservancy and Ministry of Resources and Development (2004)
COLLECTIVE CHOICE INSTITUTIONS
PAN regulations (2007)
COLLECTIVE CHOICE INSTITUTIONS
State and traditional law
COLLECTIVE CHOICE ARENA
Ministry of Resources and Development; The Nature Conservancy; *Palau Conservation Society*; Resource users
OPERATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
Conservation area management plans, State law, Bul

Figure 12: Institutional structure in-use for conservation area governance before and after PAN. Italics denote informal positions and arrows denote directional connectivity between rule-makers in action arenas and institutions. Diagrams constitute simplifications of complex, highly dynamic governance systems also characterized by (unrepresented) informal institutional arrangements at all levels.

While TNC conducted an ecoregional assessment in 2007 to inform the network design, it has not been used in formal application and review processes, given the absence of a technical committee. Lacking a functional scientific review process, NGOs stepped in to provide technical and scientific input by working with resource users to develop the management plans necessary to be part of the PAN. This is a task that resource users felt they had limited capacity to do on their own:

> "[I]n order to become a member of the PAN, you have to have a state conservation management plan, in order to get the fund. That is what we need, we need the fund … we have a natural idea of what we think is the nature of our place but those people from there [NGOs], like they have a science background, they have an environmental background to put it [the management plan] together" (R24).

Thus, by requiring a management plan, the PAN created a de facto leadership position in a collective choice arena for NGOs, which have the staff, funding, and technical means to provide it. As organizers of the management planning process, NGOs introduce scientific knowledge and biodiversity conservation goals as integral elements of operational rules for conservation areas:

> "We try to start with the biodiversity as the targets and then … you plan backwards … the structure is already decided. … you have to have a management group picked in a certain way, and they have to go through this certain routine" (A1).

Given that the PAN Fund board was not functional, $1.4 million collected from departure fees remained in national government coffers and control. Eight states had confirmed PAN sites (all pre-existing conservation areas) and four had received $50,000 each (a significant sum roughly equivalent to 20% of the average state's annual operating budget). Representatives from the remaining eight states said their state was moving forward to nominate at least one of their pre-existing conservation areas to the PAN. All resource users cited access to PAN funds as their main motivation for joining the PAN, a powerful incentive given that a majority of resource users interviewed expressed concerns about participating. As one person summarized:

> “[T]hese guys from national government level and PCS [Palau Conservation Society] are going after [states]- hey guys, would you like to be registered or not? We’ve been waiting for you! Come on, there’s money now! See, the [resource users’] perception is different because at the beginning [there was] no money… now when you say PAN, people think about Green Fee… And that’s maybe contribute to 95% of the reason why they *now* want to [be a] member of this” (R39).

4.5.4 Resource user autonomy as a measure of polycentricity

Institutional analysis reveals the form of a given polycentric system: the participants, their relative positions, and associated rule-making authority. Our interest in autonomy, however, concerns the relationship between the form of a nested system and its functional polycentricism. Here we interrogate this relationship by exploring the ability of resource users to devise rules affecting the governance of PAN sites without being challenged by non-local actors. This section complements institutional analysis with a discussion of how resource users perceive institutional change and their current and potential ability (not only authority) to act within the new regime.

All resource users interviewed said that states would maintain ownership of PAN sites. However, when asked about how the PAN has or would affect their control over decision-making, 18 felt that it would be unchanged, 5 said that control would be shared, 13 felt that it would greatly curtailed, and 3 were unsure. The 18 resource users who experienced and/or predicted retention of autonomy acknowledged the institutional changes cited above, but interpreted them as empowering. The logic of this group was generally: "I think [states] will just be able to implement what they wanted to do all along but didn't have the resources to do" (R33).

Those who anticipated or experienced loss of autonomy felt that the PAN increased rule-making authority of non-local actors; prioritized science and written law over traditional knowledge and traditional law; and financial dependence. For example, one interviewee explained that the involvement of NGOs and national government in marine conservation area governance:

> "[H]as significantly increased by the way they advise, and the way activities have been carried out on the ground…when you come to community and talk about hard science, stats and data, you're stuffing them back in a hole. They don't see what you're talking about, they don't see their way out….So for example, our communities basically understand that the resources, they are the owner. But how do they manage it? They felt that they've lost sight, lost their resources. They don't have a much say over it any longer" (R35).

Others focused on the complexity and permanence of legally designating PAN sites, which could limit their ability to design and change conservation area rules in a practical, "Palauan" way:

> "But whereas PAN, it's going to depend on some writing that takes a whole big process to reverse it. It's not as reversible as *bul*…. if PAN takes over, then maybe we can't do anything like we could if a *bul* or just a state law that conserves a place…it doesn't make sense that PAN has to come in and put it in writing" (R38).

Finally, others in this group feared the financial dependence enacted through the PAN, as expressed thus:

> “[O]nce you’re hooked to the strong hand of the money that they’re gonna to give you, it’s gonna be very hard to bite that hand. Who will bite the hand that’s feeding them? And to me, that’s our worry. That we will become reliant on the PAN fund and at some point they might say ‘oh, well but we want you guys to do this.’ And we will say ‘no, that’s not what our community wants.’ [Then they will say] ok, ‘then the funding stops.’ We don’t want to get to that stage but we’re fully aware of that” (R37).

Many in this group used the dissociative language *give* or *donate* to describe the *sale* of their conservation area to *outsiders* through the PAN, i.e. “Now all the governors of all the states fighting to get the $50,000 and give their land for the PAN…. They say give us some money and we give you PAN site” (R23).

Divergent interpretations of how the PAN has and will affect resource users’ autonomy in governing their conservation areas have led to conflict in one state. In 2010, 50 people from Hatohobei state (roughly 25%) signed a petition to remove their conservation area from the PAN. While petitioners were concerned about resource user autonomy, others felt those concerns were not justified:

> “One of the arguments that came up was that the PAN is run by outsiders, not from Tobi, and if they want to make changes or make rules that will affect Helen Reef they can do so, which is not true” (R28).

The conflict in Hatohobei reflects the politics inherent in nested polycentric regimes as diverse actors negotiate changing roles both within and across action arenas controlling various aspects of decision-making.

At this stage, our interpretive institutional analysis suggests that the PAN represents movement on a continuum of polycentricity toward centralization and institutional homogenization. PAN architects control the financial resources that have motivated resource users to nominate areas to the PAN. As part of the PAN, resource users are beholden to new, deeper level rules set by PAN architects that reshape the process and objectives of institutional design. In particular, the requirement to have a conservation area management plan has made resource users dependent on NGOs who have the procedural and technical knowledge to produce one. As leaders in collective choice arenas, NGOs facilitate the design of management plans that are legible (Scott 1998) to those tasked with documenting progress toward national and international biodiversity agendas (i.e., through written documents, management budgets, paid enforcement staff, etc.). However, resource users still have ultimate ownership and rule-making authority in PAN sites as they may withdraw from the PAN should they choose to do so.

Finally, while our focus is on the social dimensions of the PAN, it is important to highlight that the institutional changes described above have not yet led to significant reform in conservation area boundaries or placement. As Agardy (2005, p. 245) has argued,

> "Identification of existing protected areas and tying them together into a regional initiative does not magically create large-scale conservation. [. . .] Since individual MPAs were historically established opportunistically rather than strategically, functional networks will require the creation of new MPAs to fill remaining gaps, even in areas where MPAs are common."

At the time of research, the PAN only included pre-existing conservation areas. Thus, the network has yet to advance large-scale conservation through enhanced ecological connectivity. To this point, tensions are also emerging among PAN architects about the foregrounding of ecological scale in the PAN, and associated roles for science, and national and NGO actors. Some envision a greater role for non-local actors and science through more strategic use of their control over PAN funds to influence the placement of PAN sites:

> “They can still do their fisheries thing but if PAN said we want PAN site to be resilient network then you know that can happen. If PAN said we want site now that’s going to be in the atmosphere then states would designate their atmosphere right now, they want the money now. I think it just…PAN needs to be active” (A30).

Other key PAN architects envision a less influential role for non-local actors, understanding PAN foremost as a mechanism for supporting and empowering resource users:

> “What I disagree with is that we should impose the eco-regional assessment on our communities and say only these sites…. if it’s science driven it won’t last, it won’t be sustainable. The scientists aren’t going to manage these areas” (A25).

4.6 Discussion and conclusions

If the success of a polycentric system is dependent in part on the ability of resource users to craft and adjust their own rules over time (Andersson and Ostrom 2008), there is need for critical reflection on how new configurations of actors, interests, and institutions in nested regimes for larger CPRs affect the autonomy of resource users – or, the degree to which the system is polycentric. Toward this end, we demonstrate the potential for constructive dialogue between institutional theorists and critical human geographers. We do not argue for complete theoretical integration, but rather, for the analytical utility of engaging key elements from each perspective.

We engage scalar politics to contribute a critical perspective on the drivers and legitimization of nested, polycentric regimes for large-scale marine governance in Palau (see also Lee (2013) on the importance of legitimacy in the functionality of polycentric regimes). An institutional analysis informed by scalar politics draws attention to the actors and agendas that drive institutional rearrangement in accordance with particular governance goals that are not necessarily shared. Through the PAN in Palau, actors who held no property rights over marine resources rescaled a highly decentralized, polycentric marine governance regime because they felt that the existing regime did not and could not adequately conserve marine biodiversity. They legitimized governance at a larger spatial scale and higher jurisdictional level than individual state territories through an ecological connectivity argument, an expression of scalar politics that is reflective and productive of struggles for control over the goals and processes of governance (Swyngedouw 2000; Sievanen et al. 2013). These scalar politics are not circumscribed to the realm of national/local; in this case, global environmental governance agendas expressed through the UN CBD protected area targets, reporting requirements, and financial incentives also motivated and legitimated the rescaling project.

Critical human geographers may also find useful analytical tools in Bloomington institutionalism. We engage institutional analysis underpinning ideas about polycentricity to systematically identify the changes in operational, collective choice, and constitutional rules and arenas that both reflect and serve those scalar projects and associated priorities. Organizing analysis around levels of institutions enabled a more systematic, nuanced assessment of the control actors gain or lose over specific parts of decision-making processes, as well as their agency in shaping institutions in divergent ways. Finally, we also draw from polycentricity to identify autonomy and institutional diversity as policy-relevant metrics by which to assess how scalar politics affects the outcomes of a governance regime.

Our interdisciplinary analysis suggests that the prioritization of ecological scale in institutional reform resulted in nested but less polycentric institutional arrangements governing the network in Palau. In a highly polycentric system where resource users can modify rules, CPR institutions are more likely to be tailored to local circumstances (Ostrom 1990). Engendering feelings of lost local autonomy and devalued knowledge systems risks crowding out conditions that may contribute to enduring, diverse institutions that could yield intended outcomes – whether fisheries or biodiversity or both, in the case of Palau. While we do not critique the general scientific argument for organizing marine biodiversity conservation at larger scales (e.g. Gaines et al. 2010), our case study results are cautionary, highlighting potential tradeoffs that may accompany the prioritization of ecological scale as a guide for institutional reform. These include tradeoffs between governance goals, tradeoffs between institutional nestedness and autonomy, and tradeoffs between biological and institutional diversity.

It is not yet clear how the degree of decreased autonomy in Palau will affect institutional innovation and diversity. In the small island of Palau, national government and NGOs also include resource users, therefore, so-called “non-local” influence is exercised by people who hold a relatively high degree of contextual social and environmental knowledge. Moreover, “processes of rescaling do not entail the simple replacement of one scalar configuration with another fully formed one” (Sievanen et al. 2013, p. 213); they are dynamic, continual processes of social negotiation. Continued research is necessary to track how the PAN will affect institutional innovation and diversity considered necessary to arrive at rules that are well matched to social and ecological contexts.

We identify a series of inter-related questions for future research relevant to marine governance in Palau, the design of MPA networks, and interdisciplinary scholarship on the governance of larger scale CPRs. How does increased nestedness and decreased resource user autonomy in Palau affect institutional innovation and diversity? Are institutional monocultures the likely result of scaling-up MPA governance? Does increased jurisdictional nestedness necessarily decrease resource users’ autonomy in polycentric systems? If so, is there a tension between the argument for jurisdictional nesting as a design principle for larger CPRs and the argument for resource user autonomy in polycentric systems? In Palau and more generally, there is a need for long-term institutional research on how the dynamic distribution of control in nested, polycentric regimes links to particular social and ecological outcomes.

In conclusion, interdisciplinary perspectives from institutional analysis and critical human geography can reveal how multi-level regimes change over time as people experiment, learn, and also struggle for control of the process. In research and policy agendas it will be important to consider how larger organizations may support as well as limit institutional innovation and autonomy while endeavoring to govern at ecologically-relevant spatial scales, given that "protecting institutional diversity related to how diverse peoples cope with CPRs may be as important for our long run survival as the protection of biological diversity" (Ostrom 1999, p. 282).

5. Conclusion

This dissertation examines the scalar politics and associated institutional dynamics characterizing expanded ocean conservation in the Pacific Islands. Case studies across global, regional, national, and local governance levels collectively demonstrate how networks of state and non-state actors pursue their contextually specific goals by working together to scale *up* the objects - the biophysical spaces - of ocean conservation. The means through which they achieve rescaling include discursive framings, performative acts, and/or institutional change. These 'scalar practices' are all shaped in part by broader political processes and structures, especially those relating to global environmental governance processes tied to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the relatively subaltern geopolitical status of micro states and territories. Results demonstrate how interlinked processes of rescaling ocean conservation in the Pacific Islands region, the Micronesia sub-region, and the nation of Palau have resulted in considerable – sometimes surprising, and/or unintended –social, political, and institutional outcomes. Corresponding biophysical outcomes, if any, are yet to be determined, and are acknowledged as an important area for future work. The next three sections briefly review the key findings of Chapters 2, 3, and 4; the main theoretical contributions of this dissertation; and topics for consideration in future research.

5.1 Summary of key findings

Question 1: Why are state and non-state actors rescaling ocean conservation?

This dissertation engages the scalar politics literature to analyze the rescaling of ocean conservation as a "strategy used by political groups to pursue a particular agenda" (Brown and Purcell 2005, 608). Drawing on the concept of embeddedness, my analysis of the agendas driving particular rescaling projects also draws attention to the influence of historic and contemporary structures on the formation of those particular agendas (McCay 2002).

Chapter 2 found that an alliance of state and non-state actors (including environmental NGOs and a regional organization, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) strategically enacted one large Pacific ocean region at the CBD CoP 10 in an effort to increase their collective capacity to participate in the meeting and influence negotiations, and also to increase their visibility to international donors. This collective effort was shaped in part by the CBD CoP10 meeting structure and rules of engagement for state and non-state actors, as well as increasing interest in oceans on the global conservation agenda. Chapter 3 traced motivations for institutionalizing ocean conservation at the regional scale through the Micronesia Challenge to state and non-state actors' complementary interests in re-energizing the global protected area agenda with a large-scale conservation success story, and attracting international donor attention and resources to Micronesia. These interests were similarly embedded within global and international environmental governance processes, particularly those of the UN CBD and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. Finally, Chapter 4 traces agendas for scaling up conservation governance to the national level in Palau to interlinked national and global agendas to protect coral reef resilience and biodiversity. In this case, as well, a relatively small network of state and non-state actors conceptualized and pursued the rescaling project in partnership.

Question 2: How are state and non-state actors rescaling ocean conservation?

The scalar politics literature has outlined an agenda for research on the "scalar practices of social actors" (Moore 2008 p. 212, as quoted in Neumann 2009). This dissertation focuses on the performative, discursive, and institutional dimensions of the scalar practices through which state and non-state actors, together, rescale ocean conservation.

Chapter 2 focuses on the performative acts and discourses though which state and non-state actors enacted the Pacific Region at the CBD CoP 10. This chapter describes how the Pacific Region was scaled through the formation of a regional delegation with "one Pacific voice" that conveyed a Pacific Region ordered around a shared regional identity, a common commitment to global biodiversity conservation, and a large and boundary-less ocean territory. The relevance of the Pacific Region to ocean conservation in particular localities will become evident beyond the CBD; the Pacific Region, once enacted, will continue to do work beyond the CBD, by scaling and rescaling the objects and agents of ocean conservation in the Pacific Islands, and by reshaping the nature of the funding, actors, institutions, and ideology already in place (or absent). Chapters 3 and 4 focused on formal and informal institutional changes as the means through which state and non-state actors are scaling up ocean conservation to the regional level in Micronesia, and the national level in Palau.

Question 3: What are the social, political and/or institutional outcomes of rescaling ocean conservation?

Ultimately, theories of scale and scalar politics are conceptual tools for understanding the continual (re)ordering of ideas, participants, and decision-making processes that constitute environmental governance. While the conceptual tools are abstract, the outcomes they bring into focus are palpable, affecting a wide range of actors.

Chapter 2 concludes that, for Pacific SIDS, the scaling of the Pacific Region served as a scalar fix (in the sense of problem-solving; see McCann 2003) for two forms of smallness in the context of the CBD CoP 10: the limited capacity of relatively small delegations to participate in meeting activities, and the global spatial imaginary of Pacific Island territories and populations as small, isolated, and somewhat irrelevant to achieving global conservation goals. This chapter argues that the Pacific Region enhances the capacity of Pacific SIDS to participate in the CoP10, as well as their ability to attract recognition, attention, and support from NGOs, foundations, and donors on the global environmental governance stage. NGOs representatives who participated in enacting the Pacific Region, particularly those included in formal delegations, also gained a more influential position in the CBD CoP10 than they may have as non-delegate observers.

Chapter 3 argues that that the rescaling of conservation governance to the regional level through the Micronesia Challenge has resulted in both tensions and opportunities for state and non-state actors working within participating jurisdictions. Specifically, these 'local actors' are mobilizing the Micronesia Challenge to serve diverse goals, including political self-determination, international agenda-setting, bargaining power within international relations, fundraising, and the construction of a particular Micronesian identity, for example. However, local actors also identified the Micronesia Challenge as a source of local interpretive conflicts, and intraregional resentment tied to perceptions of uneven benefits. They also expressed concerns about the potential bottlenecking of international funding at the regional level. Results also indicate that the rescaling of conservation governance through the Micronesia Challenge has led to influential fundraising, organizational, and policy-making positions for international environmental NGOs.

Chapter 4 concludes that the prioritization of ecological scale in the rescaling of ocean conservation in Palau has reshaped the process and objectives of institutional design, and increased the influence of national government and environmental NGOs in local governance processes. This chapter finds that the rescaling project resulted in nested but less polycentric institutional arrangements. The analysis highlights potential tradeoffs that may accompany the prioritization of ecological scale as a guide for institutional reform, including tradeoffs between governance goals, tradeoffs between institutional nestedness and autonomy, and tradeoffs between biological and institutional diversity.

While all chapters recognize scale and scalar arrangements as contingent and subject to continual negotiation (McCann 2003; Brown and Purcell 2005), it is also important to emphasize that scalar arrangements – particularly those which are institutionalized – may also be "routinized into relatively enduring and hegemonic structures for certain periods of time" (Brown and Purcell 2005 p. 610). The latter point is particularly relevant to Chapters 3 and 4, where outcomes tied to the institutionalization of rescaled ocean conservation may signal longer-term political trajectories.

Finally, this dissertation has taken a particular interest in the role of environmental NGOs in the reconfiguration of scale within environmental governance (as called for in McCarthy 2005). All case studies suggest that the rescaling of ocean conservation has resulted in a marked increase in the roles, responsibilities, and/or authority of environmental NGOs within conservation governance processes across multiple levels. Chapter 3 quotes a high-level official in the Palauan national government who characterized an environmental NGO as "an extension of Palau government." I argue that this assertion is becoming true more broadly throughout the Pacific Islands, whereby the rescaling of ocean conservation is reflective and productive of large ocean "governance states" (Duffy 2006, p. 740).

5.2 Theoretical contributions

This dissertation demonstrates the analytical value in undertaking a critical approach to scale in environmental governance research. First, Chapters 2 and 3 advance theory on the scalar dimensions of environmental governance, including regional environmental governance, by conceptualizing regions as strategically constructed tools of environmental politics. Together, these chapters help explain "the rise of the region in global environmental politics" (Conca 2012, p. 127) by conceptualizing the construction of large oceanic regions as means to diverse ends for partnerships of state and non-state actors embedded within global environmental governance processes. In addition, it has become clear that the construction of large oceanic regions reflects an expression of political agency that is both enabled and constrained by broader governance processes, agendas, and structures; the Pacific Region, for example, is simultaneously empowered and constrained (in form) by the increased global attention to the oceans within the global conservation agenda. There is a need for more attention to the agency that is simultaneously gained and lost in the process of constructing regions, in part, in the image of global environmental governance structures and agendas.

The second key theoretical contribution of this dissertation lies in its advancement of constructive theoretical dialogue between critical human geographers and institutional theorists (Chapter 4), who have much to learn form one another regarding the scalar, political, and institutional dynamics characterizing multi-level environmental governance. This chapter brings together key concepts from these literatures to expand understanding of the form and function of nested, polycentric regimes for the governance of large-scale common pool resources. This cross-disciplinary engagement yields a systematic, politicized analysis of institutional emergence and formation in which the struggle to define the spatial scale of ocean conservation is shown to be part of a dynamic struggle for control over governance goals and processes. In so doing, Chapter 4 demonstrates that it is possible to move beyond historically divisive disciplinary tensions to identify complementary analytical tools and theoretical perspectives that together may structure more complete analysis of the scalar dimensions of environmental governance.

5.3 Questions for Future Research

Chapter 2 calls for continued research on the scalar politics associated with the enactment of the Pacific Region to understand the broader consequences of that particular version of Pacific regionalism. This chapter also raises questions about the sustainability of the state/non-state alliance observed at the CBD CoP 10, questioning the extent to which it is predicated on the support of partners and the willingness of the Pacific Region to promote itself and be promoted as in line with global concerns for marine biodiversity conservation.

Chapter 3 calls for further research on the ways in which regionalized fundraising impacts the thematic trajectory of local priorities and practice, accountability for local governance (upward vs. downward), and the redistribution of international resources throughout Micronesia. I also wish to highlight the potential for comparative studies of similar models of regional environmental governance emerging in the Caribbean and Western Indian Ocean regions. How has the 'Challenge' policy model being adapted to articulate with these disparate contexts? What functions is it serving therein, and for whom?

Finally, Chapter 4 calls for long term institutional research in Palau and in general on how the dynamic distribution of control in nested, polycentric regimes links to particular social and ecological outcomes. This chapter identifies a series of specific questions for future research relevant to marine governance in Palau, the design of MPA networks, and interdisciplinary scholarship on the governance of larger scale CPRs: How does increased jurisdictional nestedness and decreased resource user autonomy in Palau affect institutional innovation and diversity? Are institutional monocultures the likely result of scaling up MPA governance? Does increased jurisdictional nestedness necessarily decrease resource users' autonomy in polycentric systems? If so, is there a tension between the argument for jurisdictional nesting as a design principle for larger CPRs and the argument for resource user autonomy in polycentric systems?

With this project, I have examined the myriad ways in which scale matters for conservation governance. Most significantly, I have shown how, in an era of 'global' crisis in the oceans, the enactment and institutionalization of large ocean states and regions reshapes the positions of and interactions among governments, resource users, and environmental NGOs within environmental governance processes across multiple levels. I hope that this work and the questions arising from it serve as a foundation upon which to further advance cross-disciplinary theory on the scalar dimensions of environmental governance, while informing the processes under study.

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Biography

Rebecca Gruby was born in 1984, and grew up on the east coast of Florida. She earned a Bachelor of Science *summa cum laude* from the University of Florida in 2006, with a major in Natural Resource Conservation and minors in English, and Agriculture and Natural Resource Ethics and Policy. Prior to entering graduate school at Duke University, Rebecca worked as a Research Associate at the Environmental Law Institute from 2006-2008, where she conducted research on marine ecosystem-based management, U.S. fisheries policy, tax incentives for agriculture, and post-conflict natural resource management. She received a Graduate Research Fellowship and a Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant from the National Science Foundation in 2008 and 2011, respectively. She also received dissertation research travel awards from the Duke University graduate school in 2011 and 2012. Her research has been published in Global Environmental Change, Environment and Planning A, Conservation Letters, Marine Policy, Environmental Science and Policy, Conservation and Society, Yearbook of International Environmental Law, and The Environmental Forum. Starting in August 2013, she will be an Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources in the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University.