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Research Articles

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In writing about Barack Obama's efforts to entice Republicans into ending US Congressional gridlock, news columnist John Avalon wrote, "All politics is personal and at the end of the day, in a representative democracy, decisions are made by people in a room."[1] While he focused on the role of personal relationships in "a representative democracy," political decisions are made by "people in a room" across diverse forms of government. Accounting for what happens in that room, and theorizing how and why it happens, is a critical challenge for policy researchers. It requires focusing on the conduct of politics in everyday practice, and it necessitates studying the individual motivations, relationships, and agency that shape policies, institutions, and regimes. It also demands attention to the ways in which bureaucratic norms shape who can speak and how, as well as the ways in which multiple political, social, and cultural phenomena converge, conditioning which ideas, narratives, and practices subsequently become institutionalized. We argue that such details are best captured in real time,

1. The Telegraph, March 9, 2013.

by researchers who are also "in the room" to observe and record the everyday practices of policy-making.

We argue for the use of ethnography as a core method in research on global environmental politics. As O'Neill et al. highlighted, the study of environmental governance requires attention to dynamic relations of power and authority; the often unpredictable, nonlinear, and contingent trajectories of policies; and the complexity of environmental problems and multiple scales at which environmental governance occurs.[2] However, capturing these dynamic relations, contingent trajectories, and complex, trans-scalar processes is challenging, particularly given the dispersed nature of current environmental policy-making processes across sites and scales.

Contemporary global environmental governance (GEG) is increasingly cultivated through transnational and dynamic networks of public, private, and nonprofit organizations.[3] The state-to-state infrastructure for addressing global environmental issues has expanded dramatically in the last few decades, to hundreds of international environmental agreements. However, the rise of neoliberal ideology, with its associated privatization of state services and withdrawal from social protection, has also reduced state regulation of the private sector and created opportunities for nonstate actors to take over state functions.[4] Even as events such as the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, the 1992 Earth Summit, and the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) consolidated and directed state authority toward international conventions, they also institutionalized mechanisms for involving nonstate actors in their deliberations and embraced public-private-nonprofit partnerships and voluntary compliance guidelines.[5] Concurrently, as they have grown, transnational environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have cultivated relationships with multinational corporations, the financial sector, and the entertainment industry in an effort to attract broader attention to the environment.[6] Finally, globalization and technological advancement have enabled activists seeking to influence GEG to coordinate their resistance across transnational networks.[7] These transformations mean that understanding how public, private, and nonprofit organizations negotiate necessitates attending to both formal and informal domains in which policy is produced and enacted. It requires moving beyond single organizations to trace the institutionalization of policy in and across multiple institutional sites[8] to identify points and mechanisms of influence within these globalized networks. And, it demands rethinking what constitutes the field of governance that we seek to examine and how we bound our resulting ethnographic field of study. This is the project of collaborative event ethnography (CEE).

2. O'Neill et al. 2013.
3. Lemos and Agrawal 2006.
4. Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Keck and Sikkink 1998.
5. Chatterjee and Finger 1994; Kingsbury et al. 2005; Levy and Newell 2005.
6. Corson 2010; Holmes 2011; MacDonald 2010a, 2010b.
7. Keck and Sikkink 1998; Tarrow 2005.
8. Riles 2001.

CEE adapts traditional ethnographic methods to the "complex and fragmentary nature"[9] of large meetings makes "studying up"[10] difficult. International environmental meetings, such as those convened by the biodiversity and climate change conventions, offer critical sites for observing how actors who are normally dispersed in time and space—including representatives from NGOs, indigenous communities, the private sector, and research organizations—come together to negotiate policy, organize resistance, or promote organizational agendas. By aligning their work with convention priorities, many of these actors secure legitimacy to enter political negotiations, maintain access to associated funding, and translate that legitimacy and funding into organizational programs. Global meetings represent stages, where a politics are performed in front of audiences.[11] However, while official policies and programs shape global environmental politics, so do unofficial processes. Even in the absence of binding commitments, policy is developed through the informal discussions that transpire in conference side events (topical workshops, often organized by NGOs and intergovernmental organizations), hallway corridors, cocktail parties, and press conferences.[12] Most importantly, at these events, many of the official and informal struggles among these diverse actors become visible to researchers.

This article describes how we use CEE to trace the configuration of conservation governance in and across multiple institutional sites. We illustrate how, through ongoing collaboration in processes from data collection to analysis and writing, a team of researchers is better able than an individual to address cross-cutting themes and to generate a comprehensive understanding of meeting dynamics.[13] As collaborators discuss and debate each other's observations and interpretations, they produce a nuanced and powerful analysis.[14] Below, we elaborate on our method and discuss how it builds on traditional forms of ethnography, as well as on approaches that use ethnography to study policy-making. Then, we propose a new understanding of the ethnographic field of environmental governance as constituted by relationships across time and space that come together at sites such as meetings. Finally, we discuss how we have used and refined the method through application at sequential CEEs in order to further knowledge about GEG.

Studying Up, Through, and Across

Traditional ethnography entails cultural immersion, in which a researcher lives or is embedded in a "field site," learning a local language, participating in events, shadowing actors, gathering informal information, and recording

9. Little 1995.
10. Nader 1972.
11. Death 2011; Tarrow 2005.
12. Corson et al. forthcoming, 2014; Suarez and Corson 2013.
13. Brosius and Campbell 2010.
14. Corson et al. forthcoming, 2014.

field notes to produce "thick description."[15] As a "participant observer," the researcher is both a participant and a spectator who views each moment as an opportunity for both data gathering and reflection, not knowing what will ultimately be important.[16] Yet, ethnography is both a method and a methodology.[17] In addition to a method of data collection, it comprises a "sensibility" to the meanings attributed by those observed to their social and political reality, a way of problematizing the world, and a reflexivity about one's relationship with those studied.[18] Ethnography cannot exist in isolation from theory precisely because ethnographers rely on theoretical framings in research design, data collection, and interpretation "in order to structure findings."[19] Yet, ethnographers do not aim to generate predictive theory or generalize from specific case studies. Rather, the goal is to be sufficiently grounded in context so as to be able to draw informed distinctions. Ethnographic case studies offer windows into constitutive processes: "Instead of testing elegant causal chains, [the ethnographer] views complex configurations of factors that combine and recombine in a striking variety of ways."[20] The goal is to produce knowledge that reveals where existing theory falls short of explaining social phenomenon, and then to modify it accordingly. Here, "objectivity is not measured by procedures that assure an accurate mapping of the world but by the growth of knowledge; that is, the imaginative and parsimonious reconstruction of theory to accommodate anomalies."[21]

Pioneering scholars across anthropology, sociology, geography, and political science extended the application of ethnography beyond its original focus on "traditional societies" in geographically bounded sites in order to respond to calls to "study up" in order to understand the internal dynamics of national and international organizations and institutions.[22] In these loosely termed "institutional ethnographies," as the ethnographer becomes familiar with bureaucratic culture and political processes, s/he develops situated perspectives and personal relationships with actors, which generate the necessary sensibilities to move beyond abstract models of how policy is supposed to happen, to document how policy actually happens in a particular context.[23] While distinctive schools, even within disciplines, approach the undertaking of institutional ethnography differently,[24] most share a commitment to what Eastwood calls, "the ways in which nebulous dynamics such as power, globalization, and development are empirically *accomplished* through the institutionally organized and organizationally

15. Geertz 1973.
16. Wedeen 2010.
17. Jackson 2008.
18. Brigg and Bleiker 2008; Roy 2012; Schatz 2009; Vasti 2008.
19. Wedeen 2010, 264.
20. Schatz 2009, 11.
21. Burawoy 1998, 5.
22. Nader 1972. See also, Watts 2001.
23. de Volo and Schatz 2004; Fenno 1986; van Hulst 2008.
24. E.g., Burawoy et al. 2000 compared with Smith 2006.

concerted activities of individuals."[25] In this manner, "[E]thnography does more than simply propose theoretical connections between our variables: it actually views how these variables play themselves out in the real world."[26] Institutional ethnographers have creatively combined key informant interviews, focus groups, document analysis, oral histories, and financial flow analysis with participant observation to build a situated understanding of the internal dynamics of studied organizational culture in circumstances in which opportunities to do "classic participant observation" are restricted.[27]

These scholars have illuminated aspects of GEG ranging from the ways structures enable or limit individual actions[28] to the agency of bureaucratic practices[29] to the coproduction of science and politics in boundary organizations.[30] Ethnographers tend to see policy-making process "less as interplay among competing interests and more as interactions among different meaning systems."[31] They reveal "aspects of reality obscured by more orthodox approaches to knowledge-building,"[32] such as the culturally inscribed positions that permit particular conducts of politics.[33] In this sense, they respond to Rancatore's call for scholars of international relations (IR) "to specify new puzzles whose investigation usefully generates knowledge about how politics works."[34] In the absence of attention to these factors, political processes can be misread and less obvious influences undervalued.[35] Often this happens simply because factors are difficult to quantify or model, but as political ethnographer Ed Schatz argues, "insider meanings and complex contextuality cannot be plugged into a regression equation, so one must either marginalize them or create a space for research that attends to them."[36]

We are not political scientists. However, as studies of GEG are frequently grounded in political science, we review some ways political scientists have used ethnography. James Scott, with his studies of everyday forms of peasant resistance and state planning, has arguably done the most to illustrate the value of ethnography in political science,[37] and Richard Fenno's groundbreaking ethnographic research on US members of congress paved the way for its acceptance as a method in American politics.[38] Other researchers draw on personal experiences working in bureaucracies to demystify "taken-for-granted entities, such as

25. Eastwood 2005.
26. de Volo and Schatz 2004, 268.
27. Bebbington and Kothari 2006; Bebbington et al. 2007; Lewis et al. 2003.
28. Kubik 2009.
29. Green 2007; Neumann 2007.
30. Fogel 2005; Guston 2001; Jasanoff and Martello 2004; Koetz et al. 2008.
31. Poncelet 2001, 15.
32. Tickner 2005b, 8.
33. Rancatore 2010.
34. Rancatore 2010.
35. de Volo and Schatz 2004; Fenno 1986; Schatz 2009.
36. Schatz 2009, 315.
37. Scott 1976, 1985, 1998.
38. Fenno 1986.

the individual or the state,"[39] revealing how particular policy practices serve to consolidate institutional identities, authority, and social networks.[40] Even scholars working in the positivist tradition have used ethnography to find overlooked dimensions of power and process or as "value added" to historicize, contextualize or triangulate results found using other methods.[41] Of particular note, a group of interpretive political ethnographers have focused on relations among power, situated knowledge, narratives, meaning, and identity in politics.[42] Finally, IR has seen an "ethnographic turn,"[43] led by feminist scholars, who have called for grounded research that embraces ideas of situated knowledge and experience and that explores "the linkages between everyday lived experience of women and the constitution and exercise of political and economic power at the state and global levels."[44]

Despite these advances in political science, a reluctance to embrace ethnography as a core method in IR remains. Traditionally, regime analysts tended to approach GEG as a set of collective action problems requiring international authorities to create incentives for cooperation.[45] However,

> [R]ather than attending to questions of how the **process** of negotiation or interaction expresses a specific cultural-political history and shapes the outcome of conventions, agreements, or organizational mandates . . . regime work is primarily concerned with the **outcome** and is empirically grounded in textual analysis and representations of interaction rather than direct observation of those interactions.[46]

Even as many IR scholars abandoned regime analysis and/or adapted it to acknowledge: the role of less formal norms and their social construction; the rising influence of non-state actors and the ways in which coalitions form across a diversity of actors;[47] how forces of global capital shape international environmental politics and economic inequality;[48] and the gendered nature of IR,[49] ethnography remains underutilized. Our goal is to draw on the scholarship of institutional ethnographers from a range of disciplines to offer a novel approach to conducting ethnographies of GEG.

39. Brigg and Bleiker 2008, 89.
40. Barnett 1997; Green 2007; Neumann 2007.
41. Baiocchi and Connor 2008; de Volo and Schatz 2004; Kubik 2009.
42. Allina-Pisano 2009; de Volo and Schatz 2004; Kubik 2009; Pader 2006; Schatz 2009; Wedeen 2008, 2010; Yanow 2007.
43. Vasti 2008.
44. Tickner 2005a, 2185.
45. Chasek et al. 2013; Downie 2011; O'Neill 2009.
46. MacDonald 2010a, 258.
47. Bäckstrand 2008; Corell and Betsill 2001; DeSombre 2000; Haas 1992; Hajer 1995; O'Neill 2009; Vogler 2003; Wapner 1996.
48. Conca 2006; Levy and Newell 2005; Newell 2008.
49. Cohn 2006; Tickner 2005a, 2005b.

Relations Across Time and Space: Reconfiguring the Field of Environmental Governance

As outlined in the introduction (Campbell, Corson et al., this issue), at events, we do not simply attend sessions and analyze their discursive content or document how negotiations transpire. Rather, by drawing on a set of shared analytics on the politics of knowledge (or "translation"), scale, and performance, we bring a critical reflexivity, taking as our ethnographic object not the negotiations themselves, but the transformation in meaning and governance processes that they represent. In paying attention to the role of historical contingency, context, and conjuncture as conditioned by structural forces, we focus on how particular actors use political space in pursuit of outcomes at certain moments in time. We do not endeavor to predict policy trajectories or model political dynamics. As Campbell, Hagerman, and Gray (this issue) reflect, we are interested in policies "not only in terms of successes or failures to meet them, but in how they define what global conservation is, how it will be accomplished, and who is responsible for it." Our research at past CEEs entailed observation of formal and informal events, and the collection of data ranging from language, representations, and sets of knowledges used by various actors to how procedural rules, room structures, and event schedules shape the ways in which these actors interact. We also used semi-structured interviews with state delegates, UN officials, and think-tank representatives, NGOs, and private companies to gather information about the intentions behind certain agendas, the informal negotiations hidden from view, and the history of particular policies. Finally, we relied on innumerable documents (e.g., formal statements, press releases, reports) to obtain background information and analyze narratives and representations.

We have also studied multiple events individually, and in relation to each other, including the Fourth World Conservation Congress (WCC), the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP10), and Rio+20. In documenting the production of hegemonic discourse across multiple sites by the diverse actors who move through them, we capture the ways that actors align around sanctioned concepts at particular moments, but also how they change how they frame, translate, and make sense of particular conservation ideas over time.

This approach addresses a key challenge in using ethnography to study GEG—capturing the formation of power relations in transnational networks of public, private, and nonprofit organizations—a task that necessitates research across institutions, sites, and scales. While many institutional ethnographies examine single organizations,[50] others use multi-sited ethnography to study the movement of concepts and actors across sites and organizations.[51] Multi-sited institutional ethnography necessitates not only overcoming common

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50. Crewe and Harrison 1998; Harper 1997; Mosse 2005; Wade 1997.
51. Bebbington and Kothari 2006; Goldman 2005; Perreault 2003; Thayer 2001.

accessibility challenges in bureaucratic sites, but also making difficult choices about which sites, connections, and sources are most important to study and how much investment at each site is sufficient. We argue that, while approaches that follow people, things, or metaphors, or that focus on relationships among sites or constellations of actors illuminate how policies are produced across multiple arenas,[52] they often under theorize configurations of power in and across these sites. This weakness is addressed by anthropological scholarship that augments actor network theory with Foucauldian theories of power;[53] sociological approaches that focus on how the forces of global economy are manifested in localized sites;[54] analysis of historical conjuncture in critical human geography;[55] and an emergent body of work on "ethnographic circulations," which traces policy across what Peck and Theodore term "distended networks" to theorize the practices through which policy is made mobile.[56]

Importantly, these and other studies identify both ethnographic objects and the ethnographic field in creative ways. Tsing uses "ethnographic fragments to interrupt stories of a unified and successful regime of global self-management."[57] Roy approaches processes of policy-making, translation, and implementation as a Foucauldian-informed apparatus or dispositif.[58] These studies break apart traditional concepts of the field—understood as the site(s) one attends to in doing fieldwork and as the social arena in which struggles over the material and ideological orientation of political projects such as biodiversity conservation occur[59]—as single and geographically bounded.[60] They force us to reflect on our entry into the ethnographic field,[61] and our own role in constructing the field we study.[62]

Our approach pushes conceptions of the ethnographic object and field further. As we refined our method and methodology, we supplemented our original interests in how actors and ideas move across networks[63] and our specific concern with the relationship between GEG and local struggles over resources.[64] We began conducting ethnographies not just of multiple institutions and geographical sites, but of how these events configure a field of GEG. We assert that, even as our study "sites" are physically temporary and the processes of governance produced through them are dynamic, the narratives and ideas that come together at them become institutionalized in policies, relationships, and

52. Cohn 2006; Gusterson 1997; Hannerz 2003; Marcus 1995, 1998; Wedel et al. 2005.
53. Fairhead and Leach 2003; Mosse 2005.
54. Burawoy et al. 2000.
55. Büscher 2013; Hart 2002; Li 2007.
56. Peck and Theodore 2012.
57. Tsing 2005, 271.
58. Roy 2012.
59. Bourdieu 1996.
60. Gupta and Ferguson 1997.
61. Amit 2000.
62. Comaroff and Comaroff 2003; Hannerz 2003; van Hulst 2008.
63. Brosius and Campbell 2010.
64. MacDonald 2013.

programs that collectively comprise a field of governance. Thus, they constitute critical historical events, which, as bundles of social relationships and power dynamics,[65] bring together and align actors and ideas at particular moments in time and space. As they construct political arenas for the presentation, negotiation, and institutionalization of particular agendas, providing the institutional context to legitimate and shape disparate pursuits into common policy trajectories, they become field-configuring events.[66]

While the field we are studying is being constituted before our eyes by these actors, our ethnographic field is also one that we simultaneously configure as we draw on observations from other research sites. Within our team, each researcher comes to an event with individual interests and previous experiences in specific locales and organizations, creating our own fields of study. At the same time, we are developing an ethnographic familiarity with global environmental meetings and meeting cultures, both generally and in relation to specific topics and interests. Our broader field of study is thus made coherent by the relationality that each of us constructs as we choose sites, events, and people to follow. In this sense, it is continually configured through interactions among the researchers and subjects, and shaped by our own situated knowledge and experiences.[67] Herein lies one of the inherent tensions within the collaborative endeavor. Each participant comes with different theoretical training, background knowledge, and field experience that shapes how we approach fieldwork and how we analyze, theorize, and write-up our results. The creative tension that necessarily emerges forms an exciting intellectual arena, in which we constantly challenge others' assumptions and analyses, as well as bring in information from other study sites. Ultimately, this dynamic leads to a more nuanced and comprehensive methodology, analysis, and theoretical engagement in the collective intellectual endeavor to build knowledge about GEG.

CEE Findings to Date

Our research has examined a number of topics of central importance in contemporary biodiversity conservation, including efforts to: link conservation to the climate change agenda;[68] respond to the threat and opportunity of biofuels;[69] promote market-based conservation;[70] and reform oceans governance.[71] We show how various actors use events such as the WCC, CBD COPs, and Rio+20 meeting as opportunities to perform their policy preferences;[72] how issues of access, staging, and institutional rules and norms discipline such

65. Massey 1999.
66. Hardy and Maguire 2010; Lampel and Meyer 2008.
67. Haraway 1988.
68. Doolittle 2010; Hagerman et al. 2010, 2012.
69. Maclin and Dammert Bello 2010.
70. Corson and MacDonald 2012; MacDonald and Corson 2012; Suarez and Corson 2013.
71. Campbell et al. 2013; Gray 2010.
72. Gruby and Campbell 2013; Suarez and Corson 2013.

efforts;[73] and how actors negotiate within "discourse coalitions."[74] Here, we briefly summarize four examples from our work. In the first two, we discuss the value of the team approach for capturing power relations and contestation within a single event. In the second two, we track the translation of ideas, coalitions, and policies across multiple events to analyze how global environmental meetings become platforms for the orchestration of paradigm shifts in conservation.

Biodiversity Targets

The 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets were prominent in COP10 negotiations; Campbell, Hagerman, and Gray (this issue) show how the targets, though promoted as science-based, are embedded in webs of power-laden relationships within and beyond the CBD. By drawing on observations made by team members distributed throughout the conference, they were able to interpret delegate negotiating positions on particular targets not only in terms of specific language, but also in relation to these webs of relationships. For example, they used the observations of team members who tracked market-based conservation[75] to analyze how multiple positions taken by recipient countries during target negotiations were linked to concerns about funding and its delivery (i.e., via the market or the state). In addition, ethnographic attention to the individuals negotiating revealed the influence of nonstate actors on outcomes. For example, a Costa Rican delegate, who was also a Conservation International (CI) employee, negotiated the protected areas target, and, not surprisingly, his position mirrored CI's push for higher targets in other parts of the conference. Overall, Campbell, Hagerman, and Gray argue that, even as, over time, targets become "increasingly 'naturalized' objects detached from the negotiations that produced them," they reflect, reinforce, and challenge power relations among different actors both within the CBD and between the CBD and other nodes in a GEG network.

Defining and Redefining Protected Areas

Webs of relationships were also evident in discussions about protected areas, where the team approach again proved invaluable. At COP10, a subteam tracked conversations about protected areas, working collaboratively from research design to data analysis and writing. Across events on topics ranging from ecosystem services to human rights to carbon sequestration, they observed actors debate the framing of and rationales for protected areas. Individual observations often revealed contradictory understandings of what counts as conservation, how it should be pursued, and to what ends, as they traced the discursive

73. Doolittle 2010; Gruby and Campbell 2013; MacDonald 2010a.
74. Corson et al. forthcoming, 2014.
75. MacDonald and Corson 2012; Suarez and Corson 2013.

construction of PAs as targets; networks of science based protected areas; sites that provided ecosystem services; and means for solidifying the rights of indigenous and local communities.[76] They documented how certain actors were better able than others to shape dominant narratives and to institutionalize associated policies. While Corson et al. worked as a team, they collected data individually at different events, and, after the meeting, worked to transform "this 'dispersed consciousness' into a more 'collective,' albeit dynamic, consciousness," by challenging each other's interpretations and continually renegotiating their analysis.[77] As they did so, they "produced a more encompassing, nuanced, and powerful analysis of the CBD/COP10 than could have one individual."[78]

Market-Based Conservation: The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity

While the ethnography of a particular event, such as the CBD COP10, can reveal critical relationships and individual agency within a meeting, ethnography across events can illuminate changes in conservation governance over time and space. Across our three CEEs, a subteam used ethnography to document the rise of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative. First presented at the 2008 WCC where it was challenged by conservation biologists,[79] TEEB became a mechanism around which actors aligned at the CBD[80] and ultimately an advocacy slogan emblazoned across the city of Rio de Janeiro at Rio+20.[81] The WCC, CBD, and Rio+20 were all critical sites for TEEB's institutionalization; they offered platforms for keynote speeches and press briefings, incorporated its tenets into policy documents and project financing, and brought together and aligned influential actors from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. At COP10, TEEB was rolled out and showcased as a "paradigm shift," and the orchestrated fanfare around it created a "policy peer pressure"[82] such that "side event titles changed, corridor conversations shifted, and high-level politicians struggled to reformulate their speeches in the language of ecosystem services and more specifically TEEB."[83] By the 2012 Rio+20 meeting, TEEB had become the central mechanism employed by the CBD and its supporters to situate biodiversity with the green economy, the primary conceptual platform of Rio+20. Again, the subteam was able to witness its transformation across multiple events at Rio+20 by paying attention to mundane details such as the conference schedule, the make-up of panels about TEEB, and the setup of rooms in which it was debated. Team members observed how it spread to other nodes in the "distended network" of GEG, reshaping conservation discourse in

76. Corson et al. forthcoming, 2014.
77. Corson et al. forthcoming, 2014.
78. Corson et al. forthcoming, 2014.
79. Monfreda 2010.
80. MacDonald and Corson 2012.
81. Suarez and Corson 2013.
82. Suarez and Corson 2013, 75.
83. MacDonald and Corson 2012, 171.

sites distant from the CBD. For example, at the January 2011 symposium on Caribbean Marine Protected Areas, an actor the CEE team had seen at the COP10 invoked TEEB as "the international bible of socioeconomic assessment."[84] TEEB attracted new actors to conservation, via, for example, high profile events for corporate leaders on measuring and accounting for natural capital, as well as how the meetings offered focal points for activists to organize resistance to the commodification of nature.[85] Through multiple studies across events, team members traced how global meetings help to create the conditions for the emergence of markets for ecosystem services, and in doing so, reconfigure the field of global conservation governance.

Ocean Biodiversity Governance

Similarly, by moving across the three events, another CEE subteam tracked the rise of oceans as a global conservation concern. Ocean biodiversity is relatively new on the oceans agenda, and events like the WCC, COP10, and Rio+20 provided critical sites for configuring new relations of ocean conservation governance. While, as spatially delineated interventions, marine protected areas (MPAs) can be studied in particular places, Gray, Gruby, and Campbell followed a cadre of conservation professionals (academics, as well as NGO and government staff) who travel from meeting to meeting, engaging in an ongoing conversation about how MPAs should be conceptualized, implemented, and managed. Driven by international targets for, and existing low levels of, MPA coverage, advocates sought to expand MPAs. This "scaling up" changed how MPAs are conceptualized and implemented, in that advocates paid less attention to rights and needs of resource users than to "ecological and biologically significant areas" (EBSAs) in the high seas.[86] At COP10, ocean advocates failed to translate this focus on EBSAs into support for MPA establishment (Gray, Gruby, and Campbell, this issue), so they took their case to Rio+20, where they lobbied for a high seas MPA implementing agreement under the auspices of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.[87] Here, ethnography across multiple events allowed the subteam to document the role of NGO networks in shaping the evolution of the oceans governance agenda and the construction of scalar relations through international negotiations that spanned these events.

Simultaneously, Gruby and Campbell documented the efforts of Pacific small island developing states (SIDS) to enact a Pacific region at COP10 by speaking, acting, and negotiating collectively. By attending to the historical evolution of this strategy, sitting in on daily strategy meetings of Pacific SIDS delegates, observing delegate communication at COP10, and interviewing delegates during and after the meeting, they were able to detail the ways in which the

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84. MacDonald and Corson 2012, 178.
85. Corson et al. in review; Doolittle 2010.
86. Gray 2010.
87. Campbell et al. 2013.

Pacific region was performed at COP10 and to document the internal struggle by SIDS to align their collective interests and their necessary reliance on NGOs to coordinate their efforts.[88] Finally, they tracked institutions for marine conservation governance that emerged and transformed in association with these regional strategies. For example, Gruby's (2013) multi-site ethnography of the Micronesia Challenge—an initiative that commits five participating island nations and territories to conserve 20 percent of their nearshore waters—links its articulation on the global stage to its interpretation in implementing states.[89] She illustrates how changing relations among actors and institutions in their home countries and across the region created multiple new fields of governance that defied "local," "regional," or "global" categorizations. By bringing together analyses from these contrasting windows, team members documented the continually contested relations that configure a transcalar field of ocean governance, as well as its consequences.

Revealing Relations of Power and Authority Across Multiple Sites

These case studies track how actors frame, translate, and institutionalize certain conservation ideas within and across multiple events, documenting the mutually constitutive transformations in discourse and relations of governance that comprise conservation paradigm shifts. We illustrate how these shifts are produced not only through official discourse and policy, but also through informal information sharing and aligning of diverse actors. Here, attention to how conference norms and structures shape the ways these actors interact, as well as to the forms of knowledge, representations, and narratives they use, illuminates how and why certain actors are better able than others to shape policy. The case studies also show the value of the collaborative approach for capturing contestation across events, sites, and actors to produce a comprehensive and nuanced analysis. Finally, the ethnographic lens offers a method for studying how and why particular ideas rise to prominence at particular moments in time and space, even as conditioned by broader structural forces.

Global environmental meetings offer both windows into the making of environmental governance and constitutive forces themselves. As political spaces that bring together actors who are normally dispersed in time and space, global meetings offer stages for the framing and institutionalization of particular agendas. Their rules and norms of engagement sanction particular actions and discipline others. They enable, structure, and disseminate paradigm shifts in conservation—shifts that both reflect and constitute changing relations of power and authority in environmental governance. And importantly, they provide opportunities for researchers to observe and document policy-making processes as they unfold in time-condensed settings.

88. Gruby and Campbell 2013.
89. Gruby 2013.

Any attempt to comprehensively understand the mobilization and ramifications of political projects like biodiversity conservation necessitates designing methodological practice that can attend to the increasing importance of the formal and informal domains responsible for producing and enacting conservation policy. Locating the transitory, dispersed, and often hidden sources of power in contemporary networks of environmental governance poses significant challenges to the lone researcher. While our team began with an interest in studying the relationship between global environmental discourse and local struggles over resources, we came to appreciate that, only by conducting research across multiple events can we capture the changing discourses and relations that comprise transformations in global conservation governance. Thus, we propose a new understanding of the ethnographic field as constituted by relations across time and space, which converge at spaces like global environmental meetings to configure a transcalar field of governance. Further research will inform our ongoing effort to refine CEE, particularly with respect to how to locate and bound this ethnographic field of study.

Documenting relations of power in and across the networks of public, private, and nonprofit actors is especially paramount in the current political climate, in which state-to-state negotiations appear stalled, nonstate actors are increasingly influential, and the targets of environmental activism are dispersed and often hidden. At stake is how the environment will be governed in the twenty-first century, and in whose interests resource allocation will be structured. By illustrating the intricate and subtle ways that informal interactions can shift policy trajectories, even in the absence of binding documents, we hope to reveal the existence of multiple avenues for transformative action.

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