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Configuring the field of global marine biodiversity conservation

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Introduction: The article describes and analyzes the emergence of the field of global marine biodiversity conservation over the past fifteen years. We draw on collaborative research at international meetings, which we position as 'field' sites, places where diverse actors come together to negotiate the meaning and terms of global environmental governance and where that work is accessible and visible to researchers.

Methods: Based on Collaborative Event Ethnography (CEE), a method developed to facilitate study of large meetings, we mobilize research from seven meetings since 2008 to describe the field of global marine biodiversity conservation, but more importantly to specifying how that field has been configured.

Results: We identify practices of orchestration, narrative, performance, alliance, social objects, devices, and technologies, formal outcomes, and formal procedures, and their use at three phases of field configuration: building, framing, and bounding.

Discussion: The results: 1) enhance our understanding of the role of international conferences in global environmental governance generally, and for marine biodiversity conservation specifically; 2) demonstrate the relevance of field and field configuration theory; 3) contribute to theory on institutional fields by specifying practices of field configuration.

1 Introduction

> *"The marine environment is clearly disregarded and undervalued in the framework."*
> - Delegate from Finland, May 2021

"The marine environment is still undervalued, particularly the open ocean and the deep sea."

- Delegate from Portugal, May 2021

"Though science agrees that 30% protection of terrestrial and marine areas is needed, some studies converge on the idea that 50% protection by 2050 would protect marine and terrestrial biodiversity while preserving ecosystem services."

- Delegate from France, May 2021.

The above statements were delivered during opening plenary at the 24th meeting (Part 1) of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-24) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). They exemplify the sentiments expressed by many delegates that: i) failure to specify 'marine' biodiversity in early drafts of the CBD's Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was unacceptable; ii) the CBD should address marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ); iii) further expansion of marine protected areas (MPAs) is a priority. As researchers studying marine issues in the CBD and other international organizations since 2008, we found the procession of delegates calling for more attention to marine ecosystems both noteworthy and unsurprising. In this paper, we situate calls for 'more marine' within the broader field of global biodiversity conservation and we analyze how 'the field' of global marine biodiversity conservation has been configured over time.

The article emerges from our work as part of a larger research collaboration studying the role of international conferences – like SBSTTA-24 – in global environmental governance (GEG). GEG "includes the institutions, processes, initiatives, actors, and organizations that shape environmental actions and outcomes in the global realm" (O'Neill et al., 2013, 443). It is characterized by "uncertainty and complexity, multi-scalar linkages across ecologies and policies, horizontal linkages across issue areas, and rapidly evolving problems and institutional initiatives" (Campbell et al., 2014a, 3). These characteristics make GEG difficult to study, but international conferences are one place where research on GEG is possible (Brosius and Campbell, 2010; MacDonald, 2010; Campbell et al., 2014a) and we have adopted ethnographic research methods to support it (Corson et al., 2014; Gray et al., 2020). Using what we call Collaborative Event Ethnography (CEE), we have built an understanding of GEG across successive international conferences spanning fifteen years (see Corson et al., 2019).

In this paper, we assume the role of international conferences in GEG and turn our attention to specifying how work done at conferences by a variety of actors has helped to configure the field of global marine biodiversity conservation. We describe the field – defined as "a recognized area of institutional life" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 148) – and illustrate how it is shaped by, rather than simply revealed at, international conferences. In describing and analyzing 'the field' of global marine biodiversity conservation, we do not "claim to explain everything in the world at once" (Tsing, 2005, ix-x). Ethnographic study of global processes, with their "infinite interconnections and overlapping contexts" (Amit, 2000, 6), is always necessarily partial. Thus, the field we describe reflects our choices about which international meetings to attend and what questions to pursue, and our experiences (Corson et al., 2019). However, that the field we describe is partial and reflects

methodological choices does not mean it is not 'real.' The field has wide ranging consequences for how marine biodiversity is known, represented, and conserved, and who benefits from and bears the costs of marine conservation.

Drawing on our past work (Gray, 2010; Campbell et al., 2013; Gruby and Campbell, 2013; Campbell et al., 2014b; Gray et al., 2014; Silver et al., 2015; Campbell et al., 2016; Gruby et al., 2016; Gray, 2018; Campbell and Gray, 2019; Campbell et al., 2022), we begin with a summary description of the field of global marine biodiversity conservation. We elaborate and substantiate this description through the analysis that follows, but we foreground it here so that we can focus our attention in this paper on *how* the field has been configured through specific practices.

What then is the field of global marine biodiversity conservation? We identify six key and overlapping characteristics. First, the field of global marine biodiversity conservation frames conservation threats, trends, patterns, needs, priorities, ambition, and action at the global scale.[1] Although action by nation states is crucial for marine conservation, it is insufficient, as two thirds of oceans lie in ABNJ. Second, scientists, often working in collaborations, provide key, authoritative inputs to the field. Scientists describe marine biodiversity, its significance, and trends in and patterns of loss. Scientists have described and mapped oceans in terms of global hotspots, ecoregions, trans-oceanic migratory corridors, and ecologically and biologically significant areas. Many scientists advocate for the protection of such areas. Third, large environmental non-government organizations (ENGOs) (and the less visible donors that support them) are active in field configuration. Individually and in collaboration, they advocate for and support implementation of marine protected areas (MPAs) and promote global MPA targets to motivate MPA expansion. Fourth, MPAs and related targets center the field of global marine biodiversity conservation and dramatic expansion of MPAs (in number, average size, and area coverage) over the last two decades is both a product of the field and productive of it. Fifth, while ENGOs and scientists are highly visible in the global field, other non-state actors and their knowledge of marine biodiversity are often obscured, including people living with MPAs in particular 'local' places. Increasingly, however, the interests of local people can and do enter the global field; the field is influenced by broader societal attention to concerns for equity, well-being, and participation, particularly by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs). Individuals and representatives from IPLCs, ENGOs, Small Island Developing States (aka 'Large Ocean States'), and civil society organizations speak in support of IPLCs connected to or dependent on marine resources and impacted by MPAs. However, their concerns are often accounted for in ways that ultimately maintain the field, rather than reframe it. Finally, the field is animated by competing emotions, with evocations of crisis (e.g. threats to marine biodiversity, governance gaps, data gaps), scientific progress (e.g. supported by new data technologies), wonder (e.g. remarkable

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1 There is a large literature on the social construction of scale and scalar politics and we contribute to it elsewhere (e.g. Gruby and Campbell, 2013; Gray et al., 2014).

creatures newly discovered), cultural vibrancy (e.g. in Pacific islands), and success (e.g. MPA expansion and field visibility).

To support our analysis of how this field has been configured, we review theory from institutional sociology and management studies on fields and field configuration and we identify ways the analytical potential of this literature can be enhanced. We then provide a brief overview of our methods, before identifying what we label field configuration practices. For each practice, we provide evidence of how it was used and to what effect within individual and across multiple international conferences. Our goals are to: 1) further substantiate our description of the field of global marine biodiversity conservation; 2) enhance our understanding of the role of international conferences in GEG generally, and for marine biodiversity conservation specifically; 3) demonstrate the relevance of field and field configuration theory to doing so; 4) contribute to theory on institutional fields. In relation to this final goal, we argue that analyses of field configuration should be attentive to specific field configuring practices and phases, as well as interactions among them.

The field of global marine biodiversity conservation is not static, 'fixed', homogeneous, or uncontested; fields are defined equally by what they include and exclude. Work is required to build, frame, and bound fields and it is this work, and specifically as evident at international conferences over time, that we analyze here. Among the diverse interests of the larger research collaboration, marine conservation is particularly well suited to this analysis. From our first CEE at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) 2008 World Conservation Congress (WCC), marine issues were emerging as a 'new' or 'newly attended to' field within global biodiversity conservation (Universalia Management Group, 2009; Brosius and Campbell, 2010; Gray, 2010; IUCN, 2018).[2] Thus, our research began as the field was being built, which allows us to elaborate field evolution and the role of different field configuring events and practices over time.

2 Fields and field configuration

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1990 [1980]) used the term 'field' to describe "relational arenas in which actors converge around particular interests and organizing principles while pursuing desired outcomes" (Wilshusen and MacDonald, 2017, 1830). In doing so, actors "take one another into account as they carry out interrelated activities" (McAdam and Scott, 2005, 10). Fields can evolve around issues – like global marine biodiversity conservation – and have both structure and frames. Structures position actors in relation to one another, while frames orient their work, and include meaning systems and shared understandings of issues that prioritize practices and give them legitimacy (Bartley,

2007). Fields have to be configured – momentum built, structures organized, frames maintained – a process of "enrolling actors in a collaborative project" (Bartley, 2007, 233). Field configuration can be conflictual, as actors with different interests, ideologies, and organizational forms "negotiate over issue interpretation" (Hoffman, 1999). In this view, fields are social rather than place based and configured in any number of locations.

Globalization poses challenges for understanding field configuration, as increasing global connections change both the nature of the social relations that constitute a given field and the links among field members. Further, fields exist that are necessarily 'global,' e.g. fields concerned with global climate change. If field building requires bringing actors "into routine contact with one another, under a common frame of reference, in pursuit of an at least partially shared project" (Bartley, 2007, 233), but the field of interest spans the "world's social and economic landscapes" (Lampel and Meyer, 2008, 1025), how then is a field built and maintained?

Field configuring events (FCEs) are one answer to these questions (Lampel and Meyer, 2008, 1025). FCEs are moments when and places where field members come together, e.g. at trade-shows or conferences, and serve as "a vehicle through which certain actors negotiate a new organizational order" (MacDonald, 2010, 256). At these events "field members meet, converse, negotiate, explore joint actions, and develop projects" (Lampel and Meyer, 2008, 1028). In doing so, they (re)configure their field, i.e. assert (or challenge) their positions in relation to one another, shore up (or challenge) their shared understandings, and reinforce (or challenge) rules of behavior. FCEs are both the products and drivers of field evolution.

All FCEs are not the same. Some FCEs have strong 'field mandates' and "formal authority in specific domains" (Lampel and Meyer, 2008, 1028). FCEs can also evolve over time. As a field emerges, FCEs may focus on establishing norms, e.g. agreeing on terminology and vocabulary, practices and standards, or roles in relation to other fields. As a field matures, FCEs may focus on replication, e.g. expanding, refining, reinforcing, or solidifying beliefs, norms, and logic, and measuring performance (Lampel and Meyer, 2008, 1029). Within the same field (e.g. global climate change) and at its marquee FCE (the Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)), Schüssler et al. (2014) distinguish among FCEs over time as 'regular' or 'high stakes' and their different potentials for field configuration. Additionally, there can be variation within a single FCE, with multiple fields present simultaneously in distinct spaces with different structures and related rules. Some field members may be empowered, e.g. through differentiated access to specific spaces (Hardy and Maguire, 2010).

For GEG, convenings of multilateral organizations such as the agencies or agreements of the United Nations (UN) can serve as FCEs. In their study of the United Nations conference that resulted in the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Hardy and Maguire (2010) pose FCEs as discursive spaces where competing understandings of the problem of pollutants can be tracked in texts (written, spoken, and other). They trace changing narratives of *Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane* (DDT) across FCEs

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2 Oceans have been on the international agenda for much longer, regarding fisheries, transportation, pollution, and the potential for sea bed mining, and are addressed in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. What is new (or newly 'high profile') in the past fifteen years is the attention to marine biodiversity conservation.

to understand how DDT became an exception within the convention. In a second example, Schüssler et al. (2014) argue that the UNFCCC COP has become less effective as an FCE over time, due to growth of field membership, diversification of interests, and separate 'social spaces' that limit debate; "instead of field-endogenous catalysts of change, they [COPs] become mechanisms of field maintenance" (Schüssler et al., 2014, 2014). In contrast, Hughes (2015) focuses on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its role as a central object of struggle within the field of global climate governance.

Our CEE collaborators Ken MacDonald and Peter Wilshusen have also approached international conferences as FCEs (MacDonald, 2010; Wilshusen and MacDonald, 2017; Wilshusen, 2019). MacDonald (2010) uses the FCE concept to analyze the influence of the private sector in conservation and how it is normalized through events like the IUCN's 2008 WCC. MacDonald includes texts in his analysis, but also attends to the dramaturgical and performative aspects of governance (Hajer, 2006), identifying how WCC structure, orchestration, and spectacle work to reinforce 'private sector engagement' as an IUCN norm. Wilshusen and MacDonald (2017) pursue this theme in examining the Corporate Sustainability Forum held as part of 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), where they document, the 'logics, social technologies, and organizational forms' used to further an economistic field of conservation governance (see also Wilshusen, 2019). Attention to performance and dramaturgy highlights how 'the act' of the meeting can privilege certain positions and actors working to (re) configure the field of biodiversity conservation.

The general literature on FCEs and the specific studies of FCEs related to global environmental issues have helped us think about the field of global marine biodiversity conservation and how it has been configured. However, we find the analytic potential of the literature on FCEs limited in four ways. We identify these limitations here, respond to them through our analysis, and return to them in our discussion and conclusions.

First, within the FCE literature key terms are often loosely and varyingly defined. For example, although there is agreement that there are different phases of field configuration, terms to describe these vary (e.g. emergence and maturity, building and framing). Whether or not phases are used descriptively (e.g. as a time line) or analytically (e.g. to better understand the field) differs from study to study. In this article, we identify and define three phases of field configuration – field building, field framing, and field bounding – and specify what is accomplished in each (see Section 4). We deliberately use terms that emphasize action; field configuration takes work.

Second, the identification of 'stages' or 'phases' can be read as linear, implying a field can ultimately be 'configured.' We label field building, framing, and bounding as phases, but treat them as interacting, overlapping, and ongoing, rather than sequential steps with an end point. Work at any one FCE is embedded in and related to work done at others. An established field, for example, may seek to engage new actors, and additional work to build the field may be required.

Third, the 'how' of field configuration is often vaguely specified. If field configuration requires developing rules, shared norms, and

understandings of issues, how is this accomplished? If rules, norms and understandings are contested, how are contests resolved? How are field frames "forged, maintained, and eroded"? (Lounsbury et al., 2003, 77). Hardy and Maguire (2010) with their focus on narratives and their production, distribution, and circulation in texts, and MacDonald (2010) with his analysis of structure, orchestration, and spectacle, provide examples of specificity we find useful. We specify seven practices of field configuration and organize our analysis around them: orchestration; narrative; performance; alliance; social, objects, devices and technologies; formal outcomes, and; formal procedures. We focus our analysis on elaborating these practices and we argue that analyses of fields and FCEs more broadly would benefit from attention to such practices.

Finally, the literature on FCEs is under-attentive to agency. Most studies center human agency and assume or imply that (at least some) humans (individually or representing their organizations) act deliberately and strategically to achieve particular goals. Although the literature positions FCEs as having field-configuring potential, the focus on human agency can reduce FCEs to vehicles designed intentionally to support goal achievement (with their field configuring outcomes determined by how well designed they are, e.g. MacDonald, 2010; Schüssler et al., 2014), or a back drop against which social relations occur and strategies are deployed (e.g. Hardy and Maguire, 2010). In contrast, we argue that: i) non-human actors do work within FCEs, sometimes mobilized with intention by human actors, but often exceeding that intention; ii) human actors with general or even vague goals rather than specific strategies can influence field configuration; iii) FCEs have effects that are unplanned and these can overflow the events themselves. Field outcomes are neither pre-determined nor deterministic and alternative field configurations are always possible. This understanding of the field of global marine biodiversity conservation as both contingent and emerging from work of human and non-human actors allows us to think about the on-going work to configure—to build, frame, and bound—the field across multiple FCEs over time. Our understanding of field configuration is informed by and resonates with assemblage thinking, which we have mobilized in other analyses (Corson et al., 2019).

We draw on this understanding of the phases and practices of field configuration, and of agency and contingency, to describe how the field of marine biodiversity conservation has been configured through seven FCEs occurring from 2008-2022. We specify the phases and key practices of field configuration visible across events, in both informal and formal spaces within FCEs. We note here that theories of environmental governance and of field configuration draw attention to diverse state and non-state actors, with different opportunities and capacities to influence governance and field configuration. These opportunities and capacities vary across FCEs, phases of field configuration, and in relation to specific field configuration practices. In our larger collaboration, we have analyzed how Indigenous Peoples (Witter et al., 2015), scientists (Gray et al., 2014; Gray, 2018), Pacific islands states (Gruby and Campbell, 2013), civil society organizations (Corson et al., 2015) and the private sector (Wilshusen and MacDonald, 2017) participate in international meetings and with what effects. In this

paper, we describe how specific actors employ practices in moments of field configuration, but we do not theorize the role of any single actor or groups of actors (e.g. Global North versus Global South, or from ENGO versus civil society). While we recognize the uneven power relations among actors that characterize both involvement in and influence on field configuration, we focus in this paper on practices. Field configuration involves bringing diverse actors together and aligning them in a shared project, a process that 'blurs' distinctions among them; it is their collective work that combines to configure the field of global marine biodiversity conservation.

3 Methods

This article draws on results of research conducted using collaborative event ethnography. CEE modifies traditional ethnographic methods to suit the time condensed intensity of mega-events like international conferences and the challenges of studying them as a lone researcher. CEE supports team-based ethnographic study, as detailed elsewhere (Brosius and Campbell, 2010; Campbell et al., 2014a; Corson et al., 2014; Corson et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020). We provide a brief overview here.

At each CEE, we work together to collect and generate data in three ways. First, prior to a conference, we collect documents relevant to the agenda and related to our research interests, including official meeting documents, position papers, news and social media coverage, and press releases. Second, on site at the conference, we collaborate as a team to cover relevant events, including formal negotiations, scheduled 'side events', social events, press briefings, demonstrations, and informal gatherings in hallways and at lunch tables. Using theoretically informed participant observation guides, we take extensive ethnographic notes on what is said and who is saying it, but we also describe how events are structured and organized, what rules guide the conversation, the use of visual or other supports, the size and composition of audience, and the mood in the room or tenor of argument, among other things. We track how key phrases, visualizations, scientific studies, and other non-human actors move through events and with what effect. Third, we conduct interviews with relevant meeting participants. The resulting notes, photos, and transcripts are the data we analyze to identify field configuring practices described in this paper. Data analysis is iterative, beginning with daily debriefing sessions while at the conference; developing a shared understanding of our observations is key to the methodology.

Since 2008, we have studied seven FCEs that have helped to configure the field of global marine biodiversity conservation (Table 1).[3] Institutionally, we have focused on the International

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3   We have participated in other relevant FCEs without formally conducting CEE. These include the first International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC) in 2005, the International Marine Conservation Congress in both 2009 and 2016, and IMPAC 3 in 2017. Our analysis of the field is grounded in our CEE research, but it is consistent with and reinforced by our experiences at these other FCEs.

TABLE 1   International conferences studied via collaborative event ethnography.

2008	International Union for the Conservation of Nature, World Conservation Congress (WCC 2008)
2010	10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP10)
2012	3rd United National Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)
2014	International Union for the Conservation of Nature, World Parks Congress (WPC 2014)
2016	International Union for the Conservation of Nature, World Conservation Congress (WCC 2016)
2018	22nd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-22) and 2nd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-2) of the Convention on Biological Diversity
2020-22	15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), including preparatory meetings of the Subsisidary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-24), Subsidary Body on Implementation (SBI-3), and of the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG-3, 4, and 5)

Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations (UN), specifically its Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Commission on Sustainable Development. As the decision-making body for a binding international agreement, CBD Conference of the Parties (COP) has a strong field mandate and the two CBD COPs we studied were high stakes, as they included negotiations over long-term strategic plans (the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework).

Our methods differ from those used in most other studies of FCEs in three ways. First, ethnography is at the core, adapted with intention to the study of FCEs (Campbell et al., 2014a). In other studies, ethnographic style observations often provide context for analysis of other data (e.g., Hardy and Maguire, 2010; Schüssler et al., 2014). Second, our study extends to FCEs hosted by multiple organizations over 15 years. Although Hardy and Maguire (2010) and Schüssler et al. (2014) examined multiple FCEs, these were hosted by the same organization over a shorter time frame. Third, global biodiversity conservation is a broad topic, and global marine biodiversity conservation is one of the many fields that co-exists, overlaps, and competes for attention within the broader field. In contrast, regulating persistent organic pollutants (Hardy and Maguire, 2010) is a more narrowly scoped goal. Our methods inform our understanding of fields and FCEs, for example, regarding the role of FCEs hosted by different organizations in configuring the field of global marine biodiversity conservation; on different phases of field building across FCEs; and on how a (sub)field emerges from within a broader field. We develop these insights in the discussion.

4 Results

We organize our analysis around seven fields configuration practices (Table 2). Rather than enumerate every instance of each practice, we describe how each was deployed across events, for one of the three phases of field configuration (field building, framing,

TABLE 2   Field configuration practices.

Practice	Definition	Examples	Published CEE work
Orchestration	Event planning, programming, or infrastructure that guides the experience/activities of conference attendees	Marine Pavilion, "Marine Journey", marine guides, Oceans Day, keynote speakers, high level events	Separation of MPAs and fisheries in programing (Campbell et al., 2013; Corson et al., 2019).
Narrative	Stories and arguments made about the nature of and responsibility for problems and potential solutions	Formal statements, side event presentations, circulated texts, press releases, negotiations over resolutions and decisions	Blue economy and oceans generally (Campbell et al., 2013; Silver et al., 2015); MPAs as 'the solution' (Gray, 2010) at all scales (Gray et al., 2014); governance gaps in the UN system (Gray, 2018)
Performance	Narrative, images, sentiments, norms, and ideals publicly mobilized in a dramaturgical sense, and repeated, often visually	Special ocean events, celebrity appearances, cultural displays, demonstrations, technological display, formal announcements, promotional materials, infrastructure (posters, banners, pavilions)	Global Fishing Watch demonstration at WPC 2014 (Gray, 2018); performing a Pacific Region at CBD COP10 (Gruby and Campbell, 2013)
Alliance	Formal and informal partnerships or collaborations among diverse actors, to advance general or specific goals	Coordinated side events, joint press releases or position statements, 'friends of the chair' groups, informal 'huddles' during negotiations, lunch/coffee meetings	Global Ocean Partnership (Campbell et al., 2013); High Seas Alliance (Campbell et al., 2013); NGO coordination on MPAs (Gray, 2010); Pacific island nations (Gruby and Campbell, 2013)
Social objects, devices, technologies	'Things' mobilized in support of particular goals, often promoted as independent from them and neutral	MPAs, targets, toolkits, maps, scientific studies, best practices, certifications, computer programs	EBSAs, (Halpern et al., 2008) map of human impact on the ocean (Gray, 2018); MPAs and MPA targets (Gray, 2010; Campbell et al., 2014b; Gray et al., 2014; Campbell and Gray, 2019; Campbell et al., 2022)
Formal outcomes	Negotiated agreements specific to institution	Outcome documents, decisions, resolutions, recommendations	IUCN MPA resolutions (Gray, 2010; Campbell and Gray, 2019); CBD decisions (Campbell et al., 2014b), the *Promise of Sydney* (Corson et al., 2019)
Formal procedures	Rules and regulations specific to institution	Rules for membership, speaking, voting, sponsoring resolutions, editing text. Precedent in documents, decisions, resolutions, recommendations.	Role of previous decisions in CBD MPA target (Campbell et al. 2014b)

and bounding). This does not imply a particular practice is only relevant at the selected phase; we include some cross-phase referencing to illustrate this. Further, practices are often combined – e.g. 'narratives' are often 'performed' – but we have isolated practices to enhance conceptual clarity. Table 2 summarizes the practices, their definitions, general examples, and specific evidence of their use as detailed in our published work to date. We cite these existing publications as evidence where relevant and supplement them with new data throughout the analysis.

4.1 Building the field of global marine biodiversity conservation

Field building is the work required to generate interest in and enthusiasm for a collective project and to enroll actors (often with different interests, ideologies, and organizational forms) in it. Developing trust among actors and building a shared understanding of issues is necessary to "tie a variety of organizations (and individuals) to one another" (Bartley, 2007, 233) and motivate them to work together. We illustrate how the field of global marine biodiversity conservation has been built through practices of orchestration, narratives, performance, and alliance.

4.1.1 Orchestration

International conferences require organization, but they are also orchestrated, i.e. organized to achieve an overall goal. Both

organization and orchestration affect the experience of attendees, including their understanding of issues. Conference organizers highlight desired content and shape key messages, using featured keynote speakers or designated high level events scheduled to ensure minimal programmatic overlap and facilitate a wide audience (MacDonald, 2010). The IUCN relies on topical and thematic 'journeys' (e.g. for marine conservation, business and biodiversity, etc.) to further organize the WCC and WPC programs. Journeys most often coincide with existing IUCN programs and program staff coordinate them. They help attendees navigate the number of possible activities. But journeys are more than organization; they make corresponding topics visible and reinforce their importance (MacDonald, 2010).

Orchestration supported field building for global marine biodiversity conservation at WCC 2008. Attendees could follow a marine journey and gather informally in an associated Oceans Pavilion located in the exhibition hall. This was a milestone in the work to revitalize the marine program, a priority of the IUCN's 2000-2004 intersessional work.[4] Staff at the Pavilion and marine conservationists generally expressed their excitement about the marine journey and the attention it garnered at WCC 2008 (Gray, 2010). This early field building stands in contrast to WCC 2016, held in Hawaii, where oceans (along with Pacific islands culture) were center stage, the focus of the opening ceremony and

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4   As directed by WCC-2000-Res-2.1.

one of six topics with a dedicated 'high level dialogue.' The latter featured ocean celebrity speakers including former President Anote Tong of Kiribati and prominent National Geographic Explorer Sylvia Earl. During the IUCN Members Assembly, oceans were one of three topics set aside for reflective discussion. All of this was in addition to the day-to-day programming in the marine journey. Members of the local organizing committee (state of Hawaii employees, Hawaii based NGO staff, etc.) expressed pride in their success in featuring oceans at the meeting.

The importance of orchestration to field building, and the *awareness of its importance*, was most visible at WPC 2014, where the program was organized around eight 'streams' and four cross cutting 'themes'. Oceans were a theme, a position that ostensibly reflected importance, as it meant all eight streams (e.g. on climate change, health and well-being, etc.) had to include oceans in their programming. However, IUCN marine program staff complained to us that formal programming—scheduling, room allocation, IT support—was organized around streams and, without one, they did not have a program to run. They were concerned that with ocean talks scattered across the program and the large event venue, the theme designation obscured rather than highlighted oceans. In response, staff organized an 'informal' marine stream operating out of the Oceans Pavilion. Despite limited seating and audio-visual capability, the Oceans Pavilion became a full time showcase for marine research, technology, and conservation; at one point presenters launched an aerial drone that flew a circuit overhead in the large exhibition hall, a spectacular site in 2014. With a central location in a high foot-traffic area, and because people with marine interests had no formal stream to follow, the pavilion was frequently packed to overflowing and passage around it impeded. The successful orchestration of an informal marine stream was reflected in comments by the head of the WPC 2014 organizing committee at the closing ceremony: "Marine. Goodness! Marine! One of the most active! [One] of the most techy! They really lead us, inspire us all, with their fantastic technology! Clearly, this has got to be a priority."

4.1.2 Narrative

Narrative is central in shaping how environmental issues are understood (Roe, 1991) – describing problems and required solutions – and we have drawn on related theory and analytics in several publications (Table 2). FCEs are a place where narratives circulate, compete, and are sometimes reconciled. Here we describe two narratives to illustrate their role in field building. They are not the only narratives about marine conservation circulating at FCEs, but they have been prominent in field building for global marine biodiversity conservation at these FCEs.

The first narrative describes oceans as home to vast biodiversity in need of further scientific exploration and protection. The narrative draws attention to oceans as a legitimate part of the global biodiversity conservation agenda, (at least) on par with terrestrial biodiversity. Through major scientific collaborations like the Global Ocean Biodiversity Index and the Census of Marine Life, scientific knowledge of marine biodiversity has increased dramatically, and conferences are one place to share that knowledge. Beginning with CBD COP10, many marine

related side events featured presentations on scientific advances combined with calls for further research and science was invoked frequently in negotiations over the Marine Decision (Gray et al., 2014). The narrative identifies so called 'governance gaps', reflected in MPA coverage (less than 1% of oceans were in MPAs in 2008) and in institutions to protect marine biodiversity. This latter concern is prominent among NGOs, scientists, and supportive states interested in extending conservation to areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), which represent ~64% of the oceans. FCEs are a place to promote new institutional arrangements to fill these gaps; Gray (2018) documents the importance of science, scientists, and scientific narratives in making marine biodiversity in ABNJ visible and amenable to conservation via MPAs.

A second narrative relates to the role of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – reframed as large ocean states (LOS) – in ocean conservation (Chan, 2018). The narrative highlights the amount of ocean territory within LOS EEZs, particularly in the Pacific, the centrality of oceans to Pacific island cultures, and traditional ocean governance models that support stewardship (Gruby and Campbell, 2013; Gruby, 2017). It positions LOS as key actors in global marine biodiversity conservation and can be mobilized to support different goals (expanded MPA coverage or enhanced fishing rights). Within the CBD and IUCN, the increased prominence of this narrative *reflects* field building, as LOS and supporters position LOS to take advantage of growing interest in oceans within the field of biodiversity conservation. However, in the UN more broadly, the LOS narrative *contributes to* field building by making oceans more visible within the broader UN system. For example, at Rio+20, Green Economy was promoted as the new organizing framework for sustainable development. In response, Pacific LOS introduced Blue Economy during preparations and, although some Caribbean states and UN organizations initially resisted this move, Blue Economy was widely circulating by Rio+20 (Silver et al., 2015). On site, we heard for the first time the discursive reframing of SIDS as LOS, a label that has solidified post-Rio+20 (Jumeau, 2013; Chan, 2018). Narratives of Blue Economy and LOS are broad and make oceans visible beyond the field of global marine biodiversity conservation, including in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, where LOS were the primary advocates of including an SDG for oceans, SDG 14 (Quirk and Hanich, 2016). This broad framing dilutes the centrality of biodiversity conservation, but also inspires further field building. For example, as Blue Economy increasingly emphasizes oceans as a frontier for industrialization and capital expansion, it fuels renewed concerns about and commitment to global marine biodiversity conservation (e.g., Bond, 2019).

The narratives above have resonated across FCEs, one of the reasons they drew our attention. In contrast, narratives about fisheries are multiple and their role in field building for marine biodiversity conservation is less straightforward. Fisheries are often identified as a driver of biodiversity loss, but this is complicated by their specifics (legal vs. illegal; ABNJ vs. domestic; large scale vs. small scale; economy vs. food security, etc.). We return to the problem of fisheries in relation to formal outcomes and formal procedures (Section 4.3). Narratives about climate change have also

been less dominant in the field; although climate was a cross cutting theme at both WCC 2008 and 2016, it accounted for 16% and 9% of marine journey events respectively (IUCN, 2008; IUCN, 2016). Climate narratives are likely to become more prominent in the field of global marine biodiversity conservation, however, as interest in the biodiversity-climate change 'nexus' generally and ocean ecosystems specifically (e.g. for blue carbon sequestration and as the basis of Blue Economy) continues to grow.

4.1.3 Performance

We specify performance in the dramaturgical sense, where meetings are stages on which to 'act' in ways that convey particular understandings of conservation. Orchestration may provide the stage, but performance is what happens on the stage. Sometimes orchestration and performance are well aligned. For example, the opening ceremonies at WCC 2016 in Hawaii included a dramatization of how Pacific Islanders would have welcomed visitors historically. Then President of Palau and keen spokesperson for marine conservation, Tommy Remengesau, gave a featured address, the only head of state to do so. As WCC host, the United States (US) used the opening ceremony to officially 'announce' that President Obama was expanding the size of the Papahānaumokuākea US Marine National Monument, which at the time made it the largest MPA in the world. The announcement was accompanied by rumors that President Obama would attend in person and created a 'buzz' for several days; many speakers began their presentations by first congratulating the US. Splashy announcements of newly (or soon-to-be) established large scale marine protected areas were a recurring performance across FCEs; for example, Henry Puna, then Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, announced the intention to establish Marae Moana (a 1.9 million km^2 multiple-use marine park) at the WPC 2014 (see also Campbell et al., 2022). These performances contribute to enthusiasm within the field, but also make the marine field visible on the larger conference stage, distinguishing it from other fields.

Performance also occurs independent (or in spite) of orchestration. For example, when The World Bank launched its (short lived) Global Partnership for Oceans at Rio+20, it did so in room with seating for ~150 people. Entrance was restricted so that delegates could be accommodated in the tightly packed room and the overflow crowd stood outside the door. In her opening comments at the launch, World Bank Vice-President Rachel Kite jokingly chastised UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, saying "'this is a lesson for you Secretary General, you cannot put oceans events in small rooms anymore!" (Silver et al., 2015, 143). Congratulatory statements that oceans were "on the Rio agenda" were made at the meeting and Jumeau (2013) later described the position of oceans at Rio+20 as 'center stage.'

The narrative about the role of SIDS/LOS in ocean conservation is enhanced through performance (Gruby and Campbell, 2013). One of the most moving performances we attended across FCEs was the arrival of the *Vaka*—a fleet of Pacific islands traditional sailing vessels—in Sydney Harbor during WPC 2014. Hosted by the (streamless) IUCN marine program, the half day event featured speakers interspersed with cultural ceremony and display by

participating island nations. These ranged from a *haka* performed by Maori warriors in traditional dress to the joyful song and dance of hundreds of Cook Islanders in bright green t-shirts. Although the event was scheduled on the same day of the WPC opening ceremonies, key IUCN officials including the Director General travelled the 40 minutes to join several Pacific island heads of state at the event.

4.1.4 Alliance

Given that field building requires "enrolling actors in a collective project" (Bartley, 2007, 233), all of the practices we describe are often most successful when supported by alliances. The Pacific islands region is performed by a group of countries focusing on their shared traditions and values, rather than differences; their efforts are supported by regional multilateral organizations and international NGOs (Gruby and Campbell, 2013). Scientific initiatives like the Global Ocean Biodiversity Index and the Census of Marine Life involve thousands of scientists, supported by governments, international organizations, and philanthropies (Campbell et al., 2016). Alliances move 'across' FCEs and deploy specific practices strategically at each. For example, the High Seas Alliance brings together almost 50 NGOs to lobby for increased marine biodiversity conservation via MPAs in ABNJ (Campbell et al., 2013; Gray, 2018). At CBD COP10, they lobbied for this position in the Marine Decision. They met regularly in the central courtyard, along with representatives from supportive states and research groups, to strategize their interventions. Not fully successful at CBD COP10 (where Parties agreed to support a scientific process to identify ecologically and biologically significant areas (EBSAs) in oceans, including in ABNJ, but declined to promote the establishment of high seas MPAs), the alliance changed tactics; at Rio+20, the High Seas Alliance organized side-event sessions to encourage the UN to develop a new implementing agreement under UNCLOS to address biodiversity conservation in ABNJ. At WCC 2016, they sponsored a resolution to encourage the process (WCC-2016-Res-047-EN). The UN General Assembly agreed to do so in 2017, negotiations on a draft agreement concluded in March 2023, and the agreement was adopted in June 2023 (UN General Assembly, 2023). NGOs together and in collaboration have been particularly involved in promoting marine resolutions at the WCC and in framing the field of marine biodiversity conservation around MPAs (Gray, 2010).

4.2 Framing the field of global marine biodiversity conservation

We conceptualize field framing as the work required to bring order and meaning to a field, by "creating a status ordering for practices that deem some practices as more appropriate than others" (Lounsbury et al., 2003, 76). Field frames are political constructions that can help actors to "reduce socio-cultural complexity in order to perceive, interpret and act in ways that are socially efficacious" (Lounsbury et al., 2003, 76). As cultural meaning systems, field frames are subject to challenge and

modification; thus, field framing remains an ongoing process. If field building creates momentum and enthusiasm for global marine biodiversity conservation, field framing involves agreeing on and prioritizing ways this might be accomplished. We describe how social objects, devices and technologies (ODTs) are mobilized to frame the field of global marine biodiversity conservation.

4.2.1 Social objects, devices, and technologies

We use the term ODTs in a science and technology studies sense, as 'things' coproduced through intersecting and overlapping social and scientific processes. They come in many forms (documents, maps, protocols, standards, models, tools, etc.) and, although they are imbued with social meaning, they can circulate independently of the processes that coproduced them, appearing as 'natural,' 'taken for granted,' and 'common sense'. At the same time, they constitute a practice as they must be circulated and referenced by actors. ODTs sometimes 'stand in' for ideas or arguments. For example, at WCC 2008, a map by Halpern et al. (2008) illustrating wide-spread human impacts on oceans was featured on a wall sized display near the Oceans Pavilion, enrolled in the early effort to build momentum for the field. Two and four years later, at CBD COP10 and Rio+20, the map featured in the opening slides of many side event presentations, 'standing in' for an argument that global marine biodiversity conservation is necessary. Greeted with nods of recognition, the map establishes that threats to global marine biodiversity are a visible fact (Gray, 2018).

The marine protected area (MPA) is the primary ODT mobilized to frame the field of global marine biodiversity conservation. Protected areas are defined by the IUCN as any "clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values" (Dudley, 2008). The definition is broad and the IUCN recognizes different categories of protected areas. Categories have expanded over time to accommodate different interests and subsume critiques, such that protected areas can serve as 'everyone's solution' (Corson et al., 2012). In the marine realm, MPAs are conceptualized as both 'bottom up' tools for community-based conservation and 'top down' products of science (Gray and Campbell, 2009; Gray et al., 2014). We have theorized MPAs as boundary objects, "both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (Star and Griesemer, 1989, 383). This theorization helps to understand how MPAs facilitate alliances among diverse actors to pursue the goal of MPA expansion (Gray et al., 2014).

And that goal has been pursued with vigor. When we began this research in 2008, MPAs covered less than 1% of the global ocean; there has since been a ten-fold increase in the number of MPAs and almost as much in area coverage (Campbell and Gray, 2019). Increased MPA area coverage is the 'marquee' metric used to measure progress in marine conservation, and this is reinforced through a second ODT critical to field configuration: conservation targets. Targets are coproduced via science and politics, but once agreed circulate as 'natural' objects (Campbell et al., 2014b). In

December 2022, at COP15, the CBD adopted its third set of biodiversity targets as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF; CBD, 2022). Target 3 as outlined in the GBF directs Parties (states) to:

Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.

There is much to say about this target and we unpack various components in the analyses that follow. Here we note that among the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Aichi Target 11 on protected areas generated most attention and action (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020; Hagerman et al., 2021). The MPA area coverage component was almost met, laying the groundwork for an ambitious 30% by 2030 target (and replacing the SDG target of 10% by 2030). Expectations for GBF Target 3 are high and its anticipated importance helps to explain its complexity; diverse actors worked hard and formed alliances (e.g., the High Ambition Coalition for nature and people) to have their preferred language included. When GBF Target 3 was on the agenda at CBD COP15, the negotiating room (which seated ~1000 people) was usually full; at one session, when GBF Target 3 discussions finished and the co-chairs turned to the next agenda item, the majority of observers got up to leave. It was so noticeable that the co-chair admonished those leaving, reminding the audience that 'every target is important.'

To be clear, MPAs and MPA targets are not the only issues discussed among marine conservationists at these FCEs. What is striking, however, is how MPAs emerge as the solution to almost any marine conservation challenge. Concerned about impacts of ocean acidification (OA) on ocean health? MPAs will make ocean ecosystems more resilient in the face of OA. Need to provide an economic rationale for ocean conservation within the Blue Economy? MPAs support ecotourism. Want to recognize and protect ecosystem services? Coastal MPAs protecting natural shoreline buffers, like mangroves and wetlands, are the answer. Concerned about the plight of small-scale fishers and food security? MPAs recover fish stocks and make fishing more productive. Migratory species? Ecosystem-based conservation? Climate change? A large scale MPA is for you! (see also Campbell et al., 2013).

Field frames are rarely universally supported or accepted. In the field of global marine biodiversity conservation, Jentoft et al. (2007) described the rapid rise of MPAs as a 'pandemic' and many marine ecologists and conservationists expressed concerns about the focus on MPA targets and advocacy before and during this research (Agardy et al., 2003; Dulvy, 2013). Conceptualizing MPAs as an ODT that frames the field helps explain the status of MPAs as a

'privileged solution' in marine conservation. We turn now to how this framing has been accomplished and maintained.

4.3 Bounding the field of global marine biodiversity conservation

Fields are characterized by struggle – struggle to control process, to define authoritative knowledge, and to articulate priorities and interests (Hughes, 2015). This struggle is key to field bounding – the work required to maintain a field frame and its 'purity' by defending, adjusting, or redefining its boundaries. Boundaries both arbitrate and reinforce the 'status order of practices' that deem which actions are legitimate – this, but not that – and who should undertake them. Boundaries may shift in response to challenge, but often in ways that preserve the field frame. If field framing centers MPAs and establishes them as the standard by which progress in global marine biodiversity conservation is measured, field bounding is the work required to keep the frame in place.

Our analysis has shown that momentum for the field of global marine biodiversity conservation has been built through a number of practices that invoke broad ocean interests and concerns (MPAs, Blue Economy, fisheries, large ocean states, marine science, etc.); field framing narrows those interests and concerns to center MPAs. Those 'other interests' do not disappear, however, and once centered on MPAs, the field frame must be 'defended' against alternatives or challenges absorbed within it, making field bounding inevitable. Formal outcomes and formal procedures are particularly important to this work.

Formal outcomes and formal procedures vary across FCEs. There are regularly scheduled and formalized decision-making processes at meetings of CBD COP and of the IUCN Members Assembly, which convenes as part of the WCC. Table 3 describes the main outcomes of interest at CBD COP (decisions) and the IUCN Members Assembly (resolutions and recommendations[5]), how texts are developed, and the rules of voting for adoption. In contrast, meetings like Rio+20 and the WPC are decadal and lack formal decision-making mandates. However, both Rio+20 and WPC 2014 produced outcome documents, *The Future We Want* (UN General Assembly, 2012) and *The Promise of Sydney* respectively. These are non-binding 'aspirational' documents meant to capture meeting sentiment and potentially influence future negotiation of binding outcomes. As a UN document, *The Future We Want* required consensus approval by member states; it

TABLE 3 Formal outcomes and formal procedures in CBD and IUCN.

FCE	Outcome	Procedures	
		Negotiations	Voting rules
CBD Conference of the Parties (COP), every 2 years	Decisions (related to policies, work programs, strategies, funding, administration, etc.)	Decision text developed through preparatory meetings of subsidiary bodies, further negotiated at COP in contact groups. Text suggestions from non-state actors require a state co-sponsor for consideration	Adopted in plenary, via consensus among parties to the convention (nation states)
IUCN Members Assembly, every 4 years, in conjunction with WCC	Resolutions (directed at IUCN) and recommendations (directed at 3rd parties)	Sponsors provide text, further discussed in contact groups. Sponsors can reject or accept contact group suggestions, as all dues paying members have the right to bring resolutions and recommendations to vote	Simple majority of *dues paying members* in three groups, states (A), non-government organizations (B), and Indigenous Peoples organizations (C). Group A members have 3 votes each, groups B and C members have 1 vote each and B and C votes are tallied together

was negotiated at Rio+20 in June 2012 and formally adopted by the UN General Assembly in July 2012 (UN General Assembly, 2012). *The Promise of Sydney*, on the other hand, had no formal vetting procedure and was presented at the closing ceremony of WPC 2014 as a meeting summary. We describe how formal outcomes and formal procedures have been used to bound the field of marine biodiversity conservation around MPAs, illustrated in distinct but intersecting efforts to define: (1) MPAs and their purpose; (2) the MPA target and how it is measured.

4.3.1 Defining MPAs and their purpose

The field of global marine biodiversity conservation has struggled with how to account for fisheries. Fisheries are often positioned as a key threat to marine biodiversity, but competing narratives offer different accounts. At WCC 2008, negotiations on MPA-related resolutions and recommendations featured ENGOs advocating for reference to the negative impacts of fisheries on marine environments and/or the role MPAs can play in rebuilding fish stocks. This was ultimately blocked by representatives of fisheries management agencies, who argued that MPAs had not been proven effective for fisheries management (Gray, 2010), thus bounding both the field frame (fisheries are out) and the purpose of MPAs (to conserve biodiversity). At CBD COP10, the separation was maintained in the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, with separate MPA (Target 11) and fisheries (Target 6) targets. The inclusion of a fisheries target was new to the CBD in 2010 and work to develop a related conceptual framework and indicators was ongoing at

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5 Although IUCN resolutions and recommendations are not legally binding, they are a popular means for members to signal interest in particular issues, gain media attention, and pressure both states and the IUCN. Because of their popularity and proliferation over the last decade, in 2016 the IUCN moved to on-line negotiation and voting prior to the Members Assembly, to limit the number of resolutions needing in-person discussion. Only the more controversial resolutions and recommendations are negotiated in person. Often, the IUCN will suggest that sponsors of multiple similar resolutions and recommendations work together to combine their priorities.

SBSTTA in 2018[6], eight years after the target was adopted and two years prior to its expiry. A fisheries-focused target is not included in the CBD's newly adopted GBF, although fisheries are listed among the productive sectors that need to be managed sustainably in GBF Target 10 (CBD, 2022).

Fisheries were on the agenda at Rio+20, reflecting the broader mandate of the meeting. Rio+20 delegates discussed the role of fisheries in Blue Economy and the importance of fisheries to food security, although rarely together with marine conservation and MPAs (Campbell et al., 2013). At WPC 2014, small scale fisheries (SSF) featured, triggered by the just-released FAO guidelines for SSF (FAO, 2014). Three sessions combined marine conservation and SSF, but there were many more sessions that addressed them separately. This separation became problematic when the WPC outcome document *The Promise of Sydney* included a recommendation from the 'marine theme' that 30% of oceans be strictly protected from all extractive use. Several attendees active in the SSF sessions expressed their surprise and frustration at this, and later published their concerns (Charles et al., 2016). Overall, WPC reinforced the boundary between fisheries and MPAs and between people working on these topics.

Representatives of some IPLCs, along with supportive states and organizations, also challenge the MPA field frame, arguing that other marine management practices contribute to biodiversity conservation and these contributions should be recognized. At CBD COP10, they successfully lobbied for including the phrase 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs) in Aichi Target 11 (Campbell et al., 2014b). In 2015, a joint IUCN-CBD Task Force was established to define OECMS and, in 2018, the CBD adopted a definition of OECMs as "a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio–economic, and other locally relevant values" (CBD, 2018). Thus, OECMs differ from MPAs in that they need to have conservation impact, but not purpose. The inclusion of OECMs in both Aichi Target 11 and GBF Target 3 extends the boundaries of the field frame beyond traditional MPAs to include conservation undertaken by IPLCs, but it also pulls fisheries (back) into the frame. The ongoing contestation regarding whether and how fisheries management areas should be designated as OECMs (Garcia et al., 2022; Lemieux et al., 2022) reinforces the importance of this issue for field bounding.

The OECM case also reflects that field bounding is never 'finished.' As reflected in GBF Target 3, IPLCs and their allies advocated successfully at CBD COP15 for reference to traditional and Indigenous territories, in addition to OECMs. OECMs and now traditional and Indigenous territories push the boundaries of the field frame, but actors concerned about the frame's 'purity' can and do resist and reassert the centrality of traditional MPAs. One place where this is evident is debates over the MPA target and how it is measured.

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6   SBSTTA-22, Session 2403, Fisheries and Biodiversity, July 5, 2018.

4.3.2 Defining and measuring the MPA target

MPAs frame the field of marine biodiversity conservation and ambitious MPA targets support MPA expansion. However, MPA targets are contested, and one place the work to defend the field frame is visible is during target negotiations. We illustrate this work in relation to two points of debate: how much area coverage the MPA target should specify and, relatedly, how to measure progress toward it.

In terms of area coverage, the IUCN has consistently sought more, more strictly protected, MPAs, arguing for a target of 20-30% of the ocean in strictly protected MPAs since at least the early 2000s. In contrast, until it adopted a 30% area coverage component in GBF Target 3, the CBD aimed for 10% area coverage without stipulating type of protection (Campbell and Gray, 2019); here, we consider how formal outcomes and formal procedures have been mobilized in support of the IUCN's preferences.

Recommendations, decisions, and outcome documents from prior FCEs are often invoked as precedent during formal procedures at subsequent FCEs. For example, MPA advocates invoked WPC 2014 and *The Promise of Sydney* text calling for 30% of oceans covered in strictly protected MPAs as the basis of the marine resolution being negotiated at WCC 2016. During the contact group, proponents of the text argued that WPC 2014 was part of the IUCN and had already 'agreed' on 30% area coverage and strict protection; as such, there was no need for debate at WCC 2016. Opponents of the text argued the opposite, reiterating concerns published in Charles et al. (2016) about the narrow focus of *The Promise of Sydney* text and how it was produced.

The issue was contentious. During the second contact group meeting at WCC 2016, with no compromise in sight, a delegate invoked IUCN rules of voting to argue that only dues-paying members should participate in the debate. This view marginalized IUCN volunteer members ineligible to vote (e.g., the more than 9000 experts who are members of the 160 specialist groups within the IUCN Species Survival Commission) and offended many in the room; volunteer members, but also national delegates who collaborate with them and rely on their scientific credentials in support of national positions. There was a general sense that an unwritten rule of collegiality had been broken and the contact group chair was visibly taken aback. In closing the meeting, he emphasized the value of all input and his desire to maintain an open discussion, but said he would seek advice. He opened the third contact group meeting acknowledging that only dues-paying members were eligible to vote on the text of resolutions, including during the contact group negotiations, but reaffirmed an interest in hearing from all participants, who were asked to state their membership status prior to speaking. Here, bounding the field extends to defining who is and is not able to participate in it.

In spite of contestation, the final version of the marine resolution (WCC 2016 Res.50) called for 30% of oceans in strictly protected MPAs with no extractive activities. It was later taken up by a group of >100 countries calling themselves the High Ambition Coalition and mobilized by the campaign for "30 by 30", both of which lobbied on GBF Target 3 at CBD COP15. They were at least

partially successful; Target 3 adopts the 30% area coverage, but without reference to strict protection.

Debate about the numeric target for percent area coverage is intertwined with debates about how to measure progress toward it, and more specifically, what should count. OECMs and Indigenous and traditional territories are included in GBF Target 3, but proponents of strict MPAs work to reinforce a field frame around traditional MPAs in other ways. For example, delegates at CBD COP10 concerned about diluting the MPA ideal argued that, if OECMs are counted toward the MPA target, the target should specify a higher percentage of area coverage (Campbell et al., 2014b). Similarly, opponents of including Indigenous and traditional territories in GBF Target 3 expressed the concern that Target 3 would be met "overnight," without any new conservation action. These arguments simultaneously recognize and discount the role of OECMs and Indigenous and traditional territories in conservation; the field frame is expanded to include them, but their ability to deliver conservation value is questioned.

In addition to OECMs and Indigenous and traditional territories, the MPA field frame and MPA target have coproduced the large scale MPA (LSMPA, defined as over 100,000km2). Although LSMPAs pre-date MPA targets, they emerged as a phenomenon beginning in 2006 when a percentage for area coverage was first attached to the CBD's first MPA target; since then, LSMPAs have increased in number from 3 to 42 (MPA Atlas, 2023a). LSMPAs interact with field framing and bounding in multiple ways. For example, the MPA coverage component for CBD Aichi Target 11 was nearly achieved through the proliferation of LSMPAs (Campbell et al., 2022). Forty-two LSMPAs account for more than 75 percent of global MPA coverage (MPA Atlas, 2023a). However, many LSMPAs are not strictly protected and allow different levels and types of resource extraction, and some marine conservationists question the value of LSMPAs in contributing to conservation versus progress toward a 'political' target (Devillers et al., 2014; Sala et al., 2018). Thus, LSMPAs can be used to support arguments for an MPA target with higher area coverage – LSMPAs show that ambitious and rapid MPA expansion is possible – but also for more strict protection, because their conservation value is contested.

Both OECMs and LSMPAs illustrate the iterative work required to frame and bound the field. MPA targets reinforce MPAs as the dominant field frame, but also drive demand for new types of MPAs to be recognized and counted. While some field members see the expansion of what counts as an MPA as legitimate and appropriate, others see it as dilution of the MPA ideal. So, work is done to bound and reframe the field, for example by stipulating the amount of MPA coverage that must be strictly protected (and thus discounting many existing LSMPAs), or by splitting the target for OECM coverage from MPA coverage. While the split is not expressed numerically in Target 3, the World Database on Protected Areas now reports total MPA coverage (8.16%) and MPA *plus* OECM coverage (8.26%) separately (Protected Planet, 2023), and the MPA Atlas distinguishes among MPAs according to level of protection, noting that only 2.9% of the ocean is fully protected (MPA Atlas, 2023b).

5 Discussion and conclusions

We began this paper with a description of the field of global marine biodiversity conservation and have illustrated the work to configure it over time, across seven FCEs hosted by three different organizations. At FCEs, diverse actors mobilized formal and informal field configuration practices to build momentum for the field, to frame it, and to bound it and that work is ongoing. In this discussion, we reflect on what our work contributes to an understanding of field configuration and FCEs, and the role of FCEs in global environmental governance.

First, in examining multiple FCEs over time, our work aligns with and extends existing studies of environmental field configuration. We traced field configuration across events hosted by different organizations concerned with biodiversity conservation generally (IUCN and CBD) and sustainable development broadly (UN Commission on Sustainable Development). At FCEs hosted by these organizations, marine biodiversity conservation is one among many topics addressed. Our analysis provides new insights into field building, as enthusiasm for the field of global marine biodiversity conservation had to be built at FCEs where multiple issues compete for attention. Some of the informal field configuration practices, like efforts by the IUCN marine team to spotlight oceans at WPC 2014 or of Pacific islands states to perform a region at CBD COP10 (Gruby and Campbell, 2013), illustrate efforts to gain and sustain attention within this broader context. Both the success in field building and the on-going work to maintain it is illustrated by the quotes at the beginning of this paper, from CBD delegates complaining about lack of specification of marine issues in the zero draft of the GBF. In explaining the omission, the CBD Secretariat argued that it was no longer necessary to specify marine ecosystems, as it is now taken for granted that they are included in *all* CBD work. This argument was rejected by marine proponents; field building over time may have succeeded in ensuring that marine is a high priority within the broader field of global biodiversity conservation, but proponents were not willing to take this for granted and pressed successfully for continued marine visibility within the broader field of biodiversity conservation.

Second, looking at multiple organizations and FCEs challenges any straightforward assessment of 'strong' field mandates and their association with formal decision-making authority (Lampel and Meyer, 2008). As an international treaty with binding outcomes for member states, the CBD COP has a 'stronger' field mandate than do the IUCN's WPC or WCC. However, our work shows that these FCEs are linked and that actors can circumvent and even take advantage of a 'weak' field mandate. For example, the WPC has the 'weakest' field mandate among the FCEs studied, but the outcome document from WPC 2014 was effectively mobilized beyond it. The weak field mandate of the WPC may, in fact, explain *how and why* MPA advocates were able to insert their preferred language in *The Promise of Sydney*; few attendees were participating in or paying attention to outcome document negotiations, *because* the WPC lacks decision-making authority. This preferred language –30% of oceans in strictly protected areas – was later invoked as precedent at the WCC during the IUCN Member's Assembly, when resolutions

and recommendations were debated and where debate was disciplined via rules of voting. The resolution then informed lobbying efforts directed at the CBD by both the High Ambition Coalition and the "30 by 30" campaign, which were partially successful. More generally, the lack of formal authority in the IUCN combined with its majority rather than consensus voting rules allow members to pass resolutions and recommendations that are ecologically, politically, economically, and socially diverse, and in doing so, to 'push' the CBD COP toward, in this case, an ambitious MPA target. Overall, our work illustrates the value of studying different organizations and FCEs over time and assessing their meaning for global environmental governance together. Power is not inherent to organizations with strong field mandates, but exercised via relations among organizations and field members.

Third, we expand and name field configuration practices, including: orchestration, narrative, performance, alliances, social objects, devices and technologies, formal outcomes, and formal procedures. Both our theoretical interests and ethnographic approach directed us to go beyond written and spoken texts to include performances like the arrival of the Vaka at WPC 2014, and social objects, devices and technologies, like maps of human impacts on oceans circulating at WCC 2008 and CBD COP10 (Gray, 2018). By specifying multiple practices of field configuration, we explicitly link theory of field configuration to the 'work' required to configure fields. We do not suggest the practices we identify are the only ones, but we argue that specifying practices (and attending to the same practices across FCEs over time) enhances our understanding of FCEs and their role in global environmental governance. These theoretical insights may have applied uses as well: actors involved in global field-building can engage these 'practices' as a conceptual framework and language to guide more explicit discussion, deliberation, and debate about their roles, strategies, and influence.

Fourth, we organized our analyses around individual field configuration practices, each in relation to a specific phase of field building, to provide some conceptual clarity. In reality, practices and phases are entangled and overlapping, and specific practices can contribute simultaneously to different phases; MPA targets play a role in building, framing, and bounding the field. However, our work does suggest that some practices might be more impactful, or even necessary, at particular phases of field configuration. Many informal practices helped to build momentum around broad interests in and concerns for marine biodiversity. Field framing, however, required narrowing those interests and concerns to focus, in this case, on MPAs. Due to the inevitable conflicts that arise when moving from broad interests to prioritizing among them in field framing, formal outcomes and formal procedures became important. For example, we found broad support for marine conservationists as reflected in and mobilized via narratives, performance, and alliances (Gruby and Campbell, 2013; Gray et al., 2014). However, and when translating broad support for marine issues into a field frame around MPAs, formal mechanisms like precedents or rules of voting became important for framing and bounding. Critically, some of the work to frame and bound the field – keeping alternatives (like fisheries) out of frame and defending the

frame's purity – is not visible in formal outcomes of FCEs. Our ethnographic approach allows us to see what and who is excluded and how; had we not been 'in the room' when fisheries were removed from the marine resolution at WCC 2008 or when rules of membership were invoked to restrict debate on the marine resolution at WCC 2016, we may not have known either had happened.

Fifth, our work suggests that field configuration is never complete, that work is always required to build, frame, and bound a field. The field of global marine biodiversity conservation is framed around MPAs now, but the field frame cannot be taken for granted. We see several potential pressure points. For example, fisheries, and specifically small-scale fisheries, will continue to press for attention within the field of global marine biodiversity conservation. The FAO guidelines for small scale fisheries (FAO, 2014), recent update of the *Hidden Harvest Report* on SSF (FAO et al., 2023), and the general emerging interests in Blue Economy and concerns about the place of SSF within it, have together generated renewed attention to the topic, particularly and critically among philanthropies that have historically supported marine conservation and MPA expansion. Whether or not the inclusion of OECMs in the MPA target can accommodate this interest remains to be seen. Plastic pollution is currently the subject of an UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee working to develop an international legally binding instrument, and marine plastics present a different type of challenge to an MPA frame, one not easily 'contained' by MPAs. On the other hand, the UNCLOS implementing agreement for conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (UN General Assembly, 2023), once entered into force, will provide new momentum and opportunity for MPA expansion in ABNJ. Indeed, without such an agreement, GBF Target 3 for 30% global MPA coverage is impossible to meet. That an UNCLOS implementing agreement was imminent when the GBF was finalized at CBD COP15 helps to explain why 30% MPA coverage was accepted with limited contestation, in contrast to prolonged debate about 10% at CBD COP10 (Campbell et al., 2014b). We have not included UNCLOS negotiations in this analysis, but the field of global marine biodiversity conservation is not 'contained' with the organizations and FCEs that we describe here.

We have found the literature on fields, field configuration and FCEs helpful for thinking through our research and analysis undertaken over the course of 15 years, at multiple international conferences. The literature provides theory and analytics that allowed us to identify and specify, from within hundreds of hours of observation, some of the moments and practices that illustrate how the field of global marine biodiversity has been configured. It helped us elaborate and further substantiate our understanding of that field. Conversely, applying field configuration theory and analytics in the context of our ethnographic research on a broad field and FCEs of multiple international organizations has generated new theoretical insights, into field configuration phases, the roles of formal and informal practices and of diverse actors including non-human ones, and relations among FCEs. Our elaboration of specific field configuration practices expands the

analytics that can be deployed in FCE research and may even inform practice. Recognizing that fields are configured and that there are practices that can be deployed to reconfigure them invites field practitioners to reflect on 'the field' that exists, what it achieves and who benefits from it, and what other configurations might be possible. Given contemporary interest in and momentum for oceans governance – whether in specific initiatives like the development of a code for seabed mining by the International Seabed Authority, or general interests in an ocean-climate nexus or the potential of the blue economy – such reflection is both timely and critical to the future of our oceans.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because, although the data we produce and analyze in our research results from public events, Institutional Review Board protocols for research with human subjects, the contextualized nature of ethnographic field notes, and restrictions on recordings at some of the events we attend limit the extent to which our data can be meaningfully shared beyond our research team. A limited selection of data are available through Mount Holyoke University. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to https://ida.mtholyoke.edu/handle/10166/3758 or LC, lcampbe@duke.edu.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Duke University Campus Institutional Review Board, Colorado State University Institutional Review Board, and University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent for participation was not required from the participants or the participants' legal guardians/next of kin because the research is based on observation of meetings that are public events where participants have no expectations of privacy.

Author contributions

LC: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – original draft. RG: Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. NG: Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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