

## **Staking claims to ocean space through a failed large-scale marine protected area Proposal**

## **Hacer reclamos en espacio oceánico por la propuesta fallida de una área marina Protegida**

## **Jalonnement de revendications à l'espace océanique par une proposition ratée d'une aire marine protégé**

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### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

For nearly two decades, marine conservation advocates have promoted the designation of large-scale marine protected areas (LSMPAs) in the EEZs of small island states and territories as a way to address area coverage targets for global oceans conservation. These offshore spaces, early proponents argued, are too remote for people to use and are thus “politically less risky” than nearshore areas to use for conservation. This paper counters this assertion through an empirical examination of how the mistaken assumption that offshore spaces are unpeopled contributed to a failed LSMPA designation attempt in Bermuda.

Drawing on policy documents, speech transcripts, popular media, and 104 semi-structured interviews with key actors, it presents an analysis of the territorial narratives used to discursively (re)produce Bermuda’s EEZ during negotiations over the proposed Blue Halo from 2010-2015. Three major findings emerge. First, rather than a blank slate on which conservation values could be easily inscribed through an LSMPA designation, these narratives showed Bermuda’s EEZ to be a space deeply entangled with values, identities, and goals of diverse actors, both Bermudian and non- Bermudian. Second, the narratives that actors used revealed broadly overlapping values related to Bermuda’s EEZ, even among people promoting opposing governance outcomes. This demonstrates that, while no major regulatory changes occurred in Bermuda’s EEZ following the 2010-2015 negotiations, this outcome was far from inevitable. Third, despite a perception that “nothing happened” as a result of these negotiations, they still discursively (re)produced and altered Bermuda’s EEZ with implications for human-ocean interactions and governance options in the future.

Additional information and resources about this presentation can be found at the Human Dimensions of Large Marine Protected Areas project website: <https://humansandlargempas.com/>.

**KEYWORDS:** marine protected area, narratives, human dimensions, Bermuda.