

An Application of Regime Theory to Examine Regional Ocean Governance

Kateryna M. Wowk, University of Delaware, College of Marine and Earth Studies

Problem Statement

Ocean issues, including land- and sea-based pollution, overfishing, marine degradation, and invasive species, do not occur in isolation but have transboundary effects on ocean ecosystems crossing multiple jurisdictions. Accordingly, management of ocean areas must take into consideration actions occurring not only within national jurisdictions, but also activities occurring under the jurisdictions of neighboring states and on the high seas. Regional ocean governance regimes attempt to make this link to provide for holistic, cross-sectoral and jurisdictional management. Despite their importance, however, the knowledge base concerning the functioning and effectiveness of these regimes is relatively limited.

Policy Research Objectives

The research aims to expand the knowledge base regarding the formation, effectiveness, and dynamics of regional ocean governance regimes in an effort to understand when, how, and why these regimes work.

Proposed Research

This research will focus on the UNEP Regional Seas Programmes and Large Marine Ecosystem Projects, as these are the two regimes currently attempting to apply holistic management to regional ocean areas. To date, 64 Large Marine Ecosystems have been identified in the global oceans, which are mainly located within the boundaries of 18 designated Regional Seas ([Figure 1](#)). This research seeks to address the following:

- ⊕ What are the “on the ground” effects of these regimes?
- ⊕ To what extent do various features of regimes play a role in increasing or decreasing effectiveness?
- ⊕ What factors determine whether an existing regime will remain effective over time?

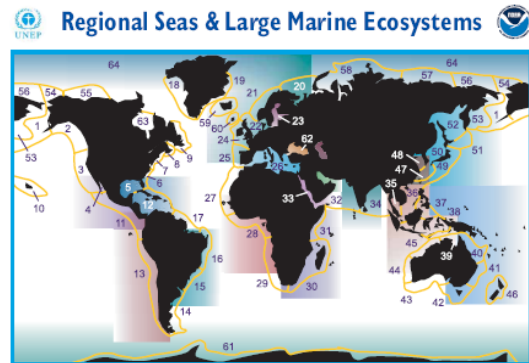


Figure 1: Shaded areas represent the 18 designated Regional Seas; Yellow contours represent the 64 identified Large Marine Ecosystems (Source: UNEP/NOAA 2005, http://www.unep.org/regionalseas/Publications/RSP_Large_Marine.pdf)

Tools and Techniques

This research will utilize regime theory based on work completed by Breitmeier, Young, and Zurn in their 2006 book Analyzing International Environmental Regimes, as well as regime theory developed by Miles et al. in their book Environmental Regime Effectiveness: Confronting Theory with Evidence, to qualitatively and quantitatively expand knowledge regarding the formation, effectiveness, and dynamics of regional ocean governance regimes. It will use case study analysis to identify key factors in regime formation, regime attributes, regime effectiveness, and regime dynamics, and archive the values of these features into a proposed Regional Ocean Regime Database (RORD) which would contain both quantitative and qualitative data.

For More Information Contact:

Kateryna M. Wowk
Graduate College of Marine and Earth Studies
University of Delaware
Newark, DE 19716
kmw@udel.edu