

## **Scaling-up Marine Conservation**

Morena Mills, Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions

### **Abstract**

Despite billions of dollars invested, "getting to scale" remains a fundamental challenge for conservation donors and practitioners. Understanding why an intervention goes viral is essential to evidence-based conservation policy and practice. Unfortunately, there is very little available research on this matter. Diffusion of innovation theory -- the study of how, why, and at what rate novel ideas and practices are adopted by individuals, groups, organizations, and countries -- provides a novel lens through which to examine rates and patterns associated with establishment of conservation policies, programs, and practices. Here, we study marine "viral" conservation initiatives to explain their rate and level of spread using diffusion of innovation theory. We draw knowledge of the key drivers of each initiative from experts and a content analysis of both peer reviewed and grey literature. Key variables considered to explain diffusion vary amongst the different types of conservation initiatives however they include, for example, high levels of relative advantage (for social and economic reasons), flexibility and compatibility with existing social structures and customs.