Coalition Science: Bolstering the Sustainability of Collocated Communities on the Water

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In these times of austerity and social media, the pressure for civility and collaboration has increased for scientific teams working in the water, yet collocated groups (who both rely on each other and impact each other's livelihoods) have few pathways toward communication and often decades of incommensurate history obscuring the distance between them. Scientists often describe their interactions with external members to their teams as tense if not antagonistic (to other scientists, fishers, farmers, coastal communities, indigenous communities, industry leaders, even tourism). Through participatory and ethnographic observations, interviews and long term immersion in fields, this talk presents “Coalition Science” in ocean and water engineering as a pathway toward developing communication channels throughout the full pipeline of the scientific process. Coalition Science draws from Gloria Anzaldua’s definition of coalition as a familial relationship, with black sheep and favorites, often in competition, collusion, and collision. Rather than focus on innovation and collaboration, coalition emphasizes the relationships necessary to perform science in and around shared waters. This framework encourages attention to the ongoing maintenance work of relationships. The protocols offer instruction and suggestion for scientists to identify and develop liaisons between themselves and collocated groups, without forcing collaboration, that provoke ongoing feedback, active listening and taking seriously both harm and support to communities throughout the full scientific research process. Informed by justice-oriented approaches to Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), decolonial ethnography and feminist technoscience, Coalition Science involves building alliances, even when they are uncomfortable, in an attempt to improve the conditions in which we all live and the oceans we all share.