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8 - 11 August 2022 • Melbourne Zoo
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UNUSUAL SUSPECTS: THINKING OUTSIDE OF THE BOX TO INSPIRE SUSTAINABILITY ACTION

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ABSTRACT

What do fishing nets, carpet tiles, seaweed and ice cream have to do with zoos and aquaria inspiring sustainability action? And no, this isn't the opener to a bad joke! Of course the animals in zoos and aquaria are the rightful stars of the show and provide the most obvious inspiration for sustainability action. But there are opportunities to inspire sustainability action in even the most unlikely of places! This talk will share the experiences of Nick and Amado in creating unusual partnerships that have resulted in new and complementary sustainability 'stars' such as carpet tiles and ice cream. These stars can broaden the experience of visitors and help to provide more direct or tangible opportunities that reinforce sustainable behaviour change. We will share how a multi-award winning partnership between carpet tile company Interface and the Zoological Society of London came to be that delivered impact across 9 of the SDGs, linking seahorse conservation to financial inclusion of women via fishing nets, and ultimately resulted in empowering marginalised coastal communities to turn the 'palm-oil-of-the-sea' into a force for ocean restoration that is enjoyed in the copious quantities of ice-cream consumed by visitors to zoos and aquaria worldwide. We will share how these links can help to further 'enrich' visitor experiences and support behaviour change campaigns. Along the way we will explore the need and opportunity to shift from the traditional model of grant-dependent sustainability action to bankable nature-based solutions, and the role that zoos and aquaria can help to play in this shift. And in case you are wondering, no, carpet tiles made out of old fishing nets don't smell fishy.

BIOGRAPHY

Nick Hill and Amado Blanco are co-founders and CEO and COO of Coast 4C. Nick and Amado started working together with Amado was National Director of Project Seahorse Foundation for Marine Conservation and invited Nick to the Philippines to do his PhD research on seaweed farming as an alternative livelihood to reduce fishing. Both have extensive experience in working with marginalised communities, including in community-based conservation and agridevelopment. Nick and Madz have worked with and/or for the Zoological Society of London in various guises since 2002, where they founded the Net-Works™ project which focused on the Philippines but has been replicated into Cameroon and Indonesia. In 2020 they launched Coast 4C as a standalone social enterprise that could take on investment to scale.