

## **Inertia and Adaptation: The Role of Social-Ecological Memory**

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In this paper we argue that there is a need to analyse Social Ecological Memory (SEM) as both nurturing “good” natural resource management and as explaining inertia that potentially explain the prevalence of adverse practices. The aim is to explore mechanisms of SEM beyond those contributing to desired social-ecological resilience. We situate this argument in a framework of adaptive governance that we derive from the literature on social ecological systems and resilience thinking, in which adaptive capacity is considered to be a key aspect of social-ecological resilience. The paper addresses the historical case of the Norse settlements on Greenland and research in the Tandroy society in the south of Madagascar, as well as other studies identifying collective memories as important in explaining inertia in institutions. Results show that SEM is integral to explaining the structures that in each case are associated with a lack of adaptive capacity. Our results hence indicate that SEM can build both undesired inertia and social-ecological resilience. We discuss how SEM contributes to both rigidity and adaptability, as SEM is integral to identity that is linked to inertia in institutions, and contrast our results against the applied framework. We conclude that it is therefore useful to adopt and further discuss different forms of adaptive capacity, and it is important to separate between social-ecological resilience and institutional resilience. Finally, we conclude that identifying different framings of SEM inevitably affect the framing of social ecological systems. The relationships between SEM, adaptive capacity and resilience are often characterised as self organizing, but accepting parallel framings and accepting that SEM are not intrinsically benevolent, point at the fact that process of self-organizations in complex systems works both for “good” and “bad” natural resource management.