

Resilience through social-ecological “fitness”? An evaluation of the reconfiguration of European marine and inland freshwater governance

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A number of frameworks aiming at the simultaneous considerations of social systems, ecosystems and their mutual interrelation implicitly accept the notion of “fit” catering for an improved, and possibly resilient overall system performance. Throughout the last decade, the idea of “fit” has been significantly detailed. A host of properties that may need consideration, where “fit” is at stake, has been added. The proposed paper aims to make an attempt to “operationalize” this research programme empirically. First, the paper will define a set of relevant properties of transactions: e.g. clarity of boundaries, complexity, variability, heterogeneity, decomposability, modularity and functional interdependence size of user group, etc.. Second, it will discuss the implications of different expressions of these properties for the scale at which marine and inland waters may be governed. Third, the paper will discuss the way these properties of transactions were considered in recent cases of “re-scaling” of governance: in Europe, the Water Framework Directive as well as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive call for an ecosystem approach to resource management implying re-scaling (change in territorial boundaries of resource management and the administrative level in charge). In order to provide an empirically grounded response to our “operationalisation” of the question for “fit” and the question concerning its relevance and role in the design of resource governance regimes, we assess the way characteristics of transactions, their perception and change shaped the reconfiguration of resource governance for the cases of Marine and inland freshwater systems in Spain, Germany and Portugal in the European Union. The corresponding empirical material relies on extensive qualitative data gathering. As a conclusion of the paper the question will be addressed to what extent European environmental governance follow a path towards resilience.