

TES Special Issue on

Governability of Aquatic Resources: Conceptual Exploration and Applications

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Introduction

This Special Issue contains four articles on the topic of governability. This concept, at least in the form presented here, is a rather new one. In his work on the interactive governance approach, Kooiman (2003) phrased governability as a synthetic concept in which the quality of the way a 'system-to-be-governed' and a 'governing system' can be considered jointly. This theoretical investigation is continued in a recent paper published in the *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*.

The interactive governance approach has since been applied to the field of fisheries and aquaculture, and it is in this context that the governability concept too has received elaboration. The concluding sections of the books *Fish for Life: Interactive Governance for Fisheries* (Kooiman *et al.* 2005) and *Interactive Fisheries Governance: a Guide for Better Practice* (Bavinck *et al.* 2005) make inroads into further defining the concept and also explore directions in which governability may actually be improved.

The four articles in this Issue are a next step in the work on governability. The authors' collective goal is to gradually develop the governability concept into an assessment framework, which will not only have scholarly clout but also be useful to policymakers and other stakeholders involved in the governance of natural resource systems as a measuring rod for the quality of their governance activities. However the conceptual work itself and the translation from theory to practice is a complex one and we do not pretend to have proceeded far. A large number of theoretical and methodological issues still remain. Still we are of the opinion that what we can offer now is promising and interesting enough for a wider audience in the field of governance and natural resources.

Among the three governance components developed in the interactive governance approach the governing system has received most attention so far. This is understandable because governing and governance are often perceived as a combination of steering activities, institutional frameworks and normative principles. While writing *Fish for Life*, however, the authors concluded that other aspects deserved attention as well.

The four articles collected here were first presented in the MARE People and the Sea Conference in Amsterdam in July 2005. They provide an entry point by applying the governability concept to aquatic and coastal resource systems. Such systems are currently under great pressure, and there is a widely perceived need for 'good governance'. The first article by *Kooiman et al.* presents the concepts of interactive govern-

ance and governability. The second, by Chuenpagdee et al., explores criteria and indicators for governability and starts to apply these to capture fisheries, aquaculture and coastal zones. The third and fourth articles present theoretical, methodological and empirical investigations of governability from the capture fishing sectors of the Caribbean (Mahon) and the Bay of Bengal (Bavinck and Salagrama). We hope that this collection will contribute to the debate on the nature of governance and governability, and the assessment of their qualities.

Acknowledgement

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