



Marine governance as processes of regionalization: Conclusions from this special issue



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 August 2015

Received in revised form

17 September 2015

Accepted 22 September 2015

Available online 3 October 2015

Keywords:

Marine governance

Ecosystem-based management

Regionalization

Cooperation

Integration

ABSTRACT

Marine governance is challenged by complex situations at regional seas and coastal areas of European countries where multiple stakeholder interests and numerous management options have to be balanced. In these situations an improved understanding of marine governance is crucial for ensuring sustainable development at sea. The main aim of this synthesis article is to increase present understanding of processes of regionalization in EU marine governance based on the contributions in this special issue. Regionalization is defined as the integration and cooperation of maritime activities, policies and actors at the level of the regional seas. The contributions in this special issue analyse processes of regionalization within different maritime sectors from a diversity of social scientific disciplines to unravel different forms and types of regionalization in marine governance. The main finding is that there is still a relatively large mismatch between the vision on ecosystem-based management expressed in EU marine policies and the implementation of EBM within sectoral maritime activities. A reduction of such a gap between EU marine policies and sectoral management fully depends on efforts at regional level to coordinate and to integrate the different sector policy processes.

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1. Introduction

This special issue discusses processes and structures of marine governance by focussing on processes of regionalization. Regionalization is about the integration and cooperation of maritime activities, policies and actors at the level of the regional seas. Instead of operating at existing administrative and political levels, processes of regionalization have emerged that facilitate problem-solving for environmental and spatial problems and development of governance strategies, such as ecosystem-based marine management (EBM), at the appropriate ecosystem/regional level. Ecosystem based management (EBM) is presented as an integrated approach to manage marine ecosystems, including human activities, in a sustainable and legitimate way. An integrated management approach refers to the integration of ecological indicators (De Jonge et al., 2012) as well as of policy instruments and planning systems of different sectoral marine policies at different levels (Janssens and Van Tatenhove, 2000). In addition, stakeholder involvement is considered a key principle of EBM (Arkema et al.,

2006; Leslie and McLeod, 2007; Curtin and Pallezo, 2010). Within EU marine policies EBM has become a dominant discourse. In the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the directive on Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), the Common Fisheries Policies reform (CFP reform), EBM has, although in different ways, been targeted as the way forward to come to productive, healthy and sustainable seas and oceans. Defining EBM as a core objective of marine policies has consequences for its development and implementation. Not only is there a need for improving the knowledge base to understand ecosystem components and dynamics, there is also a need for decision making institutions that are able to deal with the (scientific) uncertainties and complexities of ecosystem based management (Van Leeuwen et al., 2015 this issue). For example, from a governance perspective, the implementation of EBM requires coordination of policy domains through increased cooperation and integration of sectoral maritime activities and policies at the level of regional seas (Salomon and Dross, 2013).

The articles in this special issue analyse different maritime activities (such as fisheries, offshore wind energy, and shipping) and institutions (such as the International Maritime Organization, the Helsinki Commission Group for implementation of the ecosystem approach and the Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum) from a diversity of

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social scientific disciplines, such as sociology, political science, geography, and governance studies, to unravel different forms and types of regionalization in marine governance. Based on the results of the different contributions in this special issue, this synthesis article draws some conclusions about current regionalization processes in marine governance for European seas.

With the main aim to increase present understanding of processes of regionalization in marine governance, we analyse the dominant mode(s) of regionalization in EU marine governance at this moment and relevant trends that are emerging from the different maritime sectors. We use the integrated marine governance framework as presented in the first article by [Soma et al. \(2015, this issue\)](#). The analysis is based on the articles in the special issues, which is why an overview of the articles is given first (in Section 2). The analysis of the dominant mode(s) of regionalization in EU marine governance at this moment and relevant trends of regionalization in fisheries, offshore wind energy and shipping are discussed in Section 3. In Section 4, we draw conclusions about marine governance as a process of regionalization.

2. The regionalization of marine governance; results based on this special issue

To inform the analysis in this article, this section gives a brief overview of the contributions to marine governance and regionalization in this special issue.

[Soma et al. \(2015, this issue\)](#) developed a marine governance framework to understand regionalization as the interplay of cooperation and integration guided by governance principles. Modes of regionalization provide insights about the possibilities to implement EBM in legitimate and responsible ways. Four modes of regionalization are distinguished based on the two variables: cooperation (ranging from deliberative problem solving to confrontational bargaining) and integration (from fragmented/differentiated to coordinated/uniform). The four modes of regionalization as we see it are: 'sectoral- and territorial synchrony', and 'sectoral- and territorial anarchy'. The presented forms of regionalization combined with the governance principles make it possible to evaluate the enabling and constraining conditions to implement EBM ([Arkema et al., 2006](#); [UNEP, 2011](#); [Röckmann et al., 2015](#)) within the governance setting of the EU seas, and to understand the context-dependent and context specific character of regionalization on marine policies.

[Hegland et al. \(2015, this issue\)](#) deal with the implementation of EBM in the Baltic Sea. Given the existing institutional arrangements of regional cooperation and coordination in fisheries and environmental management, the Baltic Sea could be a pioneer and front-runner region to implement EBM at the regional sea level. They analyse two different forms of regionalization in the Baltic Sea; HELCOM GEAR (Group for Implementation of the ecosystem approach) ([Jouanneau and Raakjær, 2014](#)) as an example of regionalization in marine environmental management and Baltfish (Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum) as an example of regionalization in fisheries management. Baltfish is a cooperative structure of European Union member states' fisheries administration in the Baltic Sea. HELCOM GEAR is the joint management of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the MSFD. The analysis makes clear that there is no 'one way' governance structure to improve cooperation and coordination in implementing EBM in the Baltic Sea. Different separately evolving pathways of regionalization are taking place. The implementation of EBM in the Baltic Sea could therefore benefit from further nesting of existing institutions.

[Van Leeuwen \(2015, this issue\)](#) discusses the regionalization of shipping. She analyses the way in which regional institutions complemented the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

when governing shipping operations within the European Union. Dissatisfaction with the ambition level of IMO and a lack of effective implementation and enforcement of IMO standards have resulted in the emergence of regionally based initiatives. A system of Port State Control for ships calling into ports in the North–East Atlantic region as well as EU legislation on shipping are examples of institutionalized regional initiatives. Their institutionalization has been made possible through the extension of port state jurisdiction through the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in combination with the strong economic power of the EU. A strong level of integration of environmental standards exists between the IMO, the system of Port State Control and EU legislation. The latter two have increased the enforcement levels of IMO standards. Regionalization of maritime governance in Europe has thus made maritime governance more effective. In addition, an important conclusion is that regionalization is also taking place within sector specific governance systems, such as shipping, and not as a result of an EBM discourse.

[Jay and Toonen \(2015, this issue\)](#) present offshore (super-) grid development of wind energy as an example of the move towards marine regionalization. This research is motivated by the fact that offshore (super-) grids are beginning to play a major role in Europe, in the realization of improving security of domestic energy supply and expanding renewable energy production. The authors link the offshore (super-) grid developments to marine regionalization and its related processes of integration and cooperation. Because of limited spatial claims and environmental impacts, marine electricity systems seem well-aligned with the rationale of EBM, which is at the heart of European marine governance. Based on their study they argue that in general the environmental and social impacts are low, and along these dimensions thus favourable to cooperation and integration for EBM. Still, they argue that scaling-up grids to the level of regional seas is problematic because of technical, economic, regulatory and planning-related challenges, among others. In particular, the theme of cooperation is lacking because the energy industry and European and national policy-makers dominate the agenda setting.

[Prellezo and Curtin \(2015, this issue\)](#) identify different forms and faces of regionalization as foreseen in the CFP reform. These include the integration of ecological, economic and social aspects of sustainability in EBM for fisheries management, regionalization through Advisory Councils (ACs) and multiannual plans, and more indirect forms of regionalization through maximum sustainable yield, landing obligations, and transferable fishing concessions. Their aim is to find compatibilities or contradictions with the objective of EBM for fisheries management. They conclude that the measures considered in the CFP reform are positive or ambiguous in their effect and hence in their ability to impulse the implementation of EBM within European fisheries. The CFP is moving towards EBM but the CFP reform does not state clearly at which level it wants to incorporate ecosystem concerns into fisheries management. While the ecological and economic aspects of the CFP are discussed extensively among policy makers and scientists, the social aspects are not. The authors recommend a more specific definition of appropriate objectives and adequate thresholds that will allow indication of the social dimensions of fisheries. In the end the success of implementing EBM is determined by the scientific knowledge on the ecosystem functioning and the enabling and constraining conditions of the institutional and political settings.

[Bavinck et al. \(2015, this issue\)](#) analyse the potential contribution of fisher organizations to improve the governability of coastal and marine regions, in Europe and the World. They analyse four cases of pre-modern organizations in Poland (*maszoperias*), Spain (*cofradías*), Norway (fisher co-management Lofoten Islands) and India (*uur panchayat* system) with the aim to discuss what lessons

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