

Sea Areas – Multiple Functions and Perceptions

- Increase in number and intensity of sea uses (cf. Fig. 1);
- Increasing number of actors;
- Actors follow different interests, and
- may have different perceptions of areas.

In other words, **different actors may look through a different lens onto the same area and at the same issues.**

Policy instruments such as Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) are tools to bring these different perspectives together.

In such a context **rational aspects of use and profit achieved from the sea are coupled with emotional perceptions**, the latter also including unpredictability and danger [1].

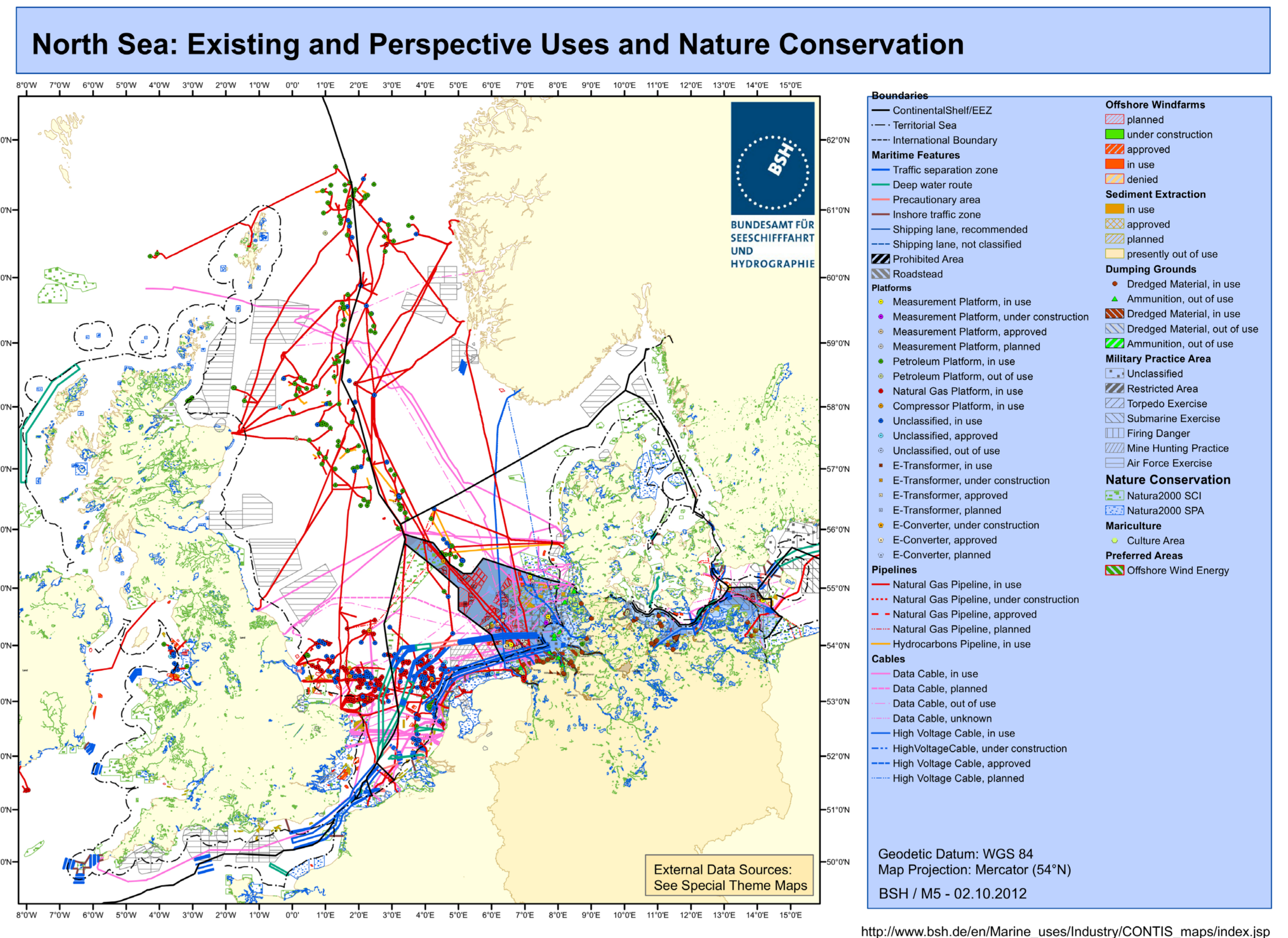


Fig. 1: Existing and perspective uses and nature conservation in the North Sea [2].

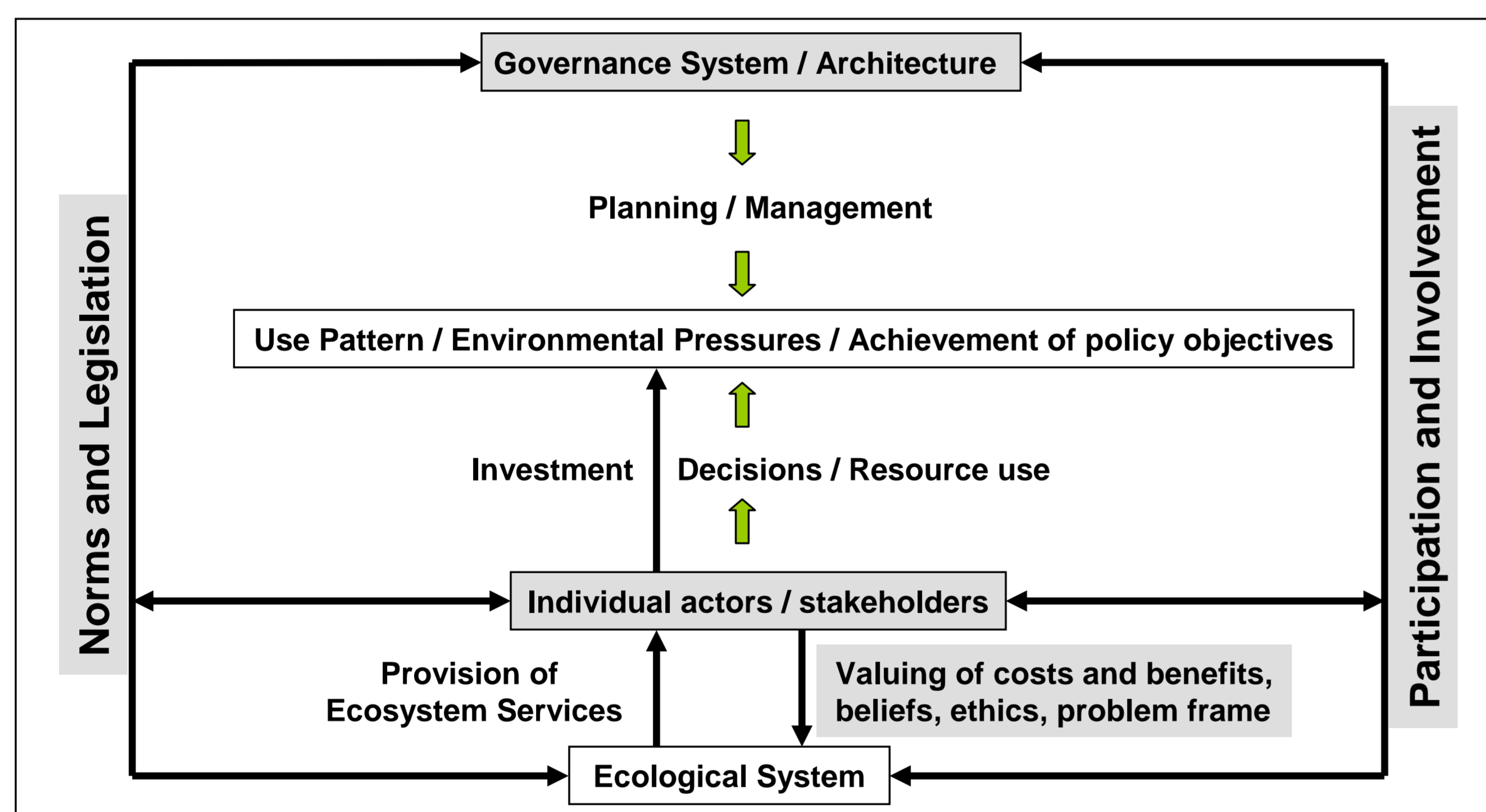


Fig. 2: Conceptual model describing relevant interactions for the governance of social-ecological systems [3].

Conceptual Model of decision-making processes

Figure 2 describes sea use development as a system of social-ecological interactions from a governance perspective.

- Ecological systems provide ecosystem services;
- Individual actors or specific groups use ecosystem services based on their specific trade-offs;
- Trade-offs include costs and benefits, but also beliefs, personal values, ethical considerations and individual perceptions of issue and area;
- In the frame of existing regulations and jurisdictions, the decisions of actors affect the existing use pattern, the resulting pressures on the ecosystem and the environmental status;

- Actors and stakeholders are participating in and/or influencing the governance system in discourses, by lobbying or involvement in networks and can influence the rules applied for decision making;
- In this context power relationships between actors and power resources of individual actors are of significant relevance [4, 5];
- Different forces can dominate the rules and the tools applied, including statutory planning regulations, market forces and civil societal demands.

Recommendations

- Take into account **interactions at different scales**, affecting the institutional and social, as well as the ecological domains;
- MSP needs either to develop into a **broad and inclusive communication** process or to become embedded into such processes;
- Differences in society about the meaning of the sea and different perceptions of pressing issues could probably get better recognised when MSP is **guided by consensus-oriented long-term visions**.

References

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- [3] Kannen, A. (2012): Challenges for marine spatial planning in the context of multiple sea uses, policy arenas and actors based on experiences from the German North Sea. Regional Environmental Change. Available at: <http://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs10113-012-0349-7>, accessed 13th November 2012.
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