

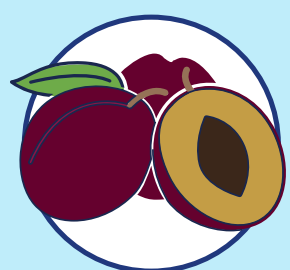
Spotlighting power dynamics: Metacoupling as a lens for understanding equitable resilience in southern African



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CASE STUDY 1



Breede River
Catchment,
South Africa

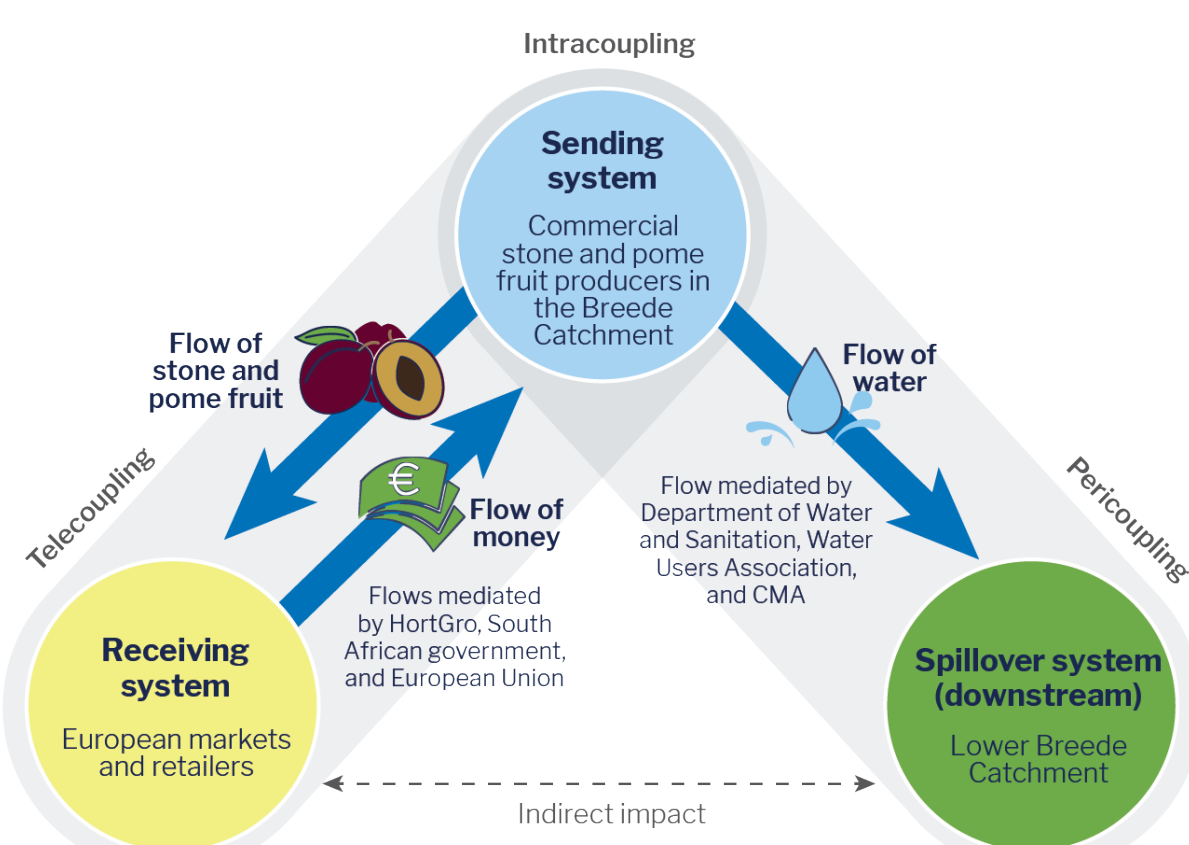
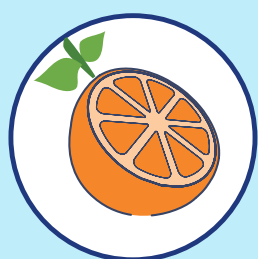


Diagram of the tele-, peri- and intra coupled Breede catchment social-ecological system

CASE STUDY 2



Export fruit
production
in the Groot
Letaba
Catchment,
South Africa

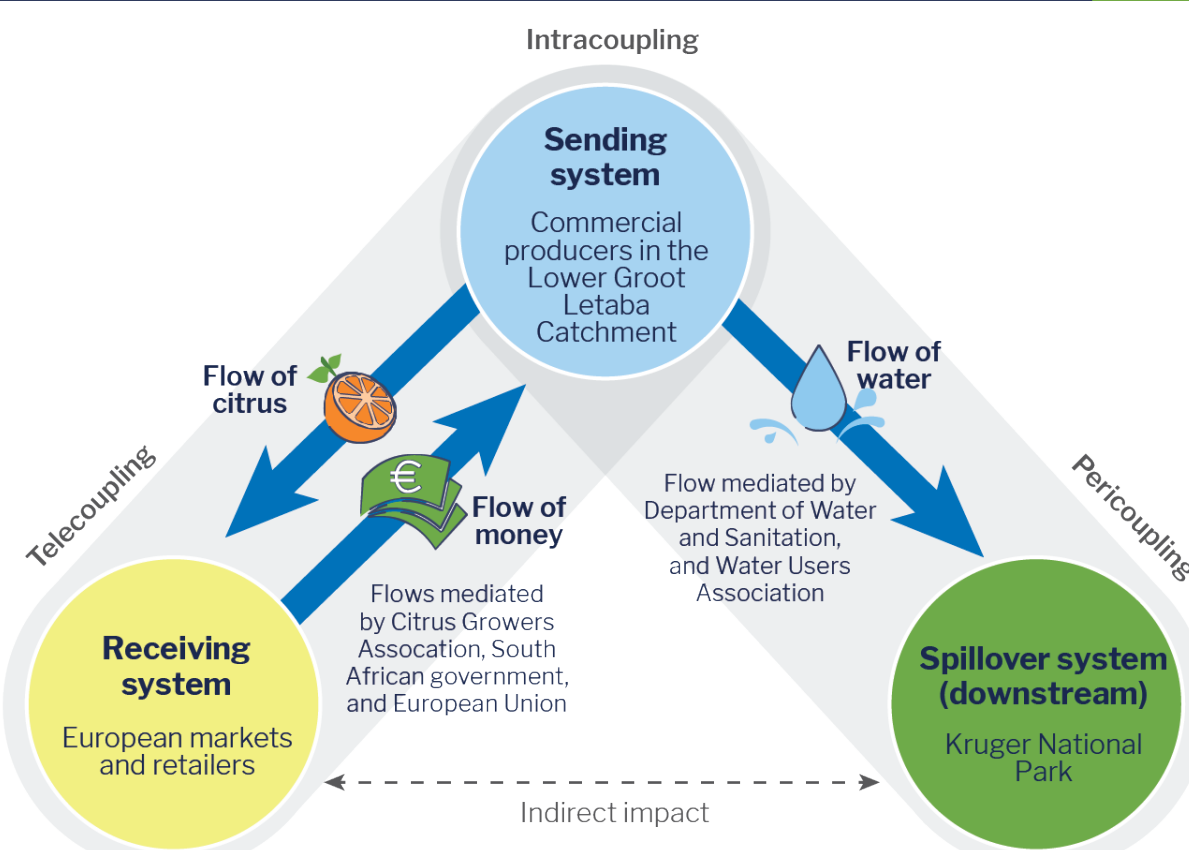
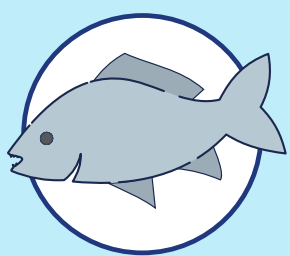


Diagram of the tele-, peri- and intra coupled Groot Letaba social-ecological system

CASE STUDY 3



Transboundary
fish trade,
Namibia

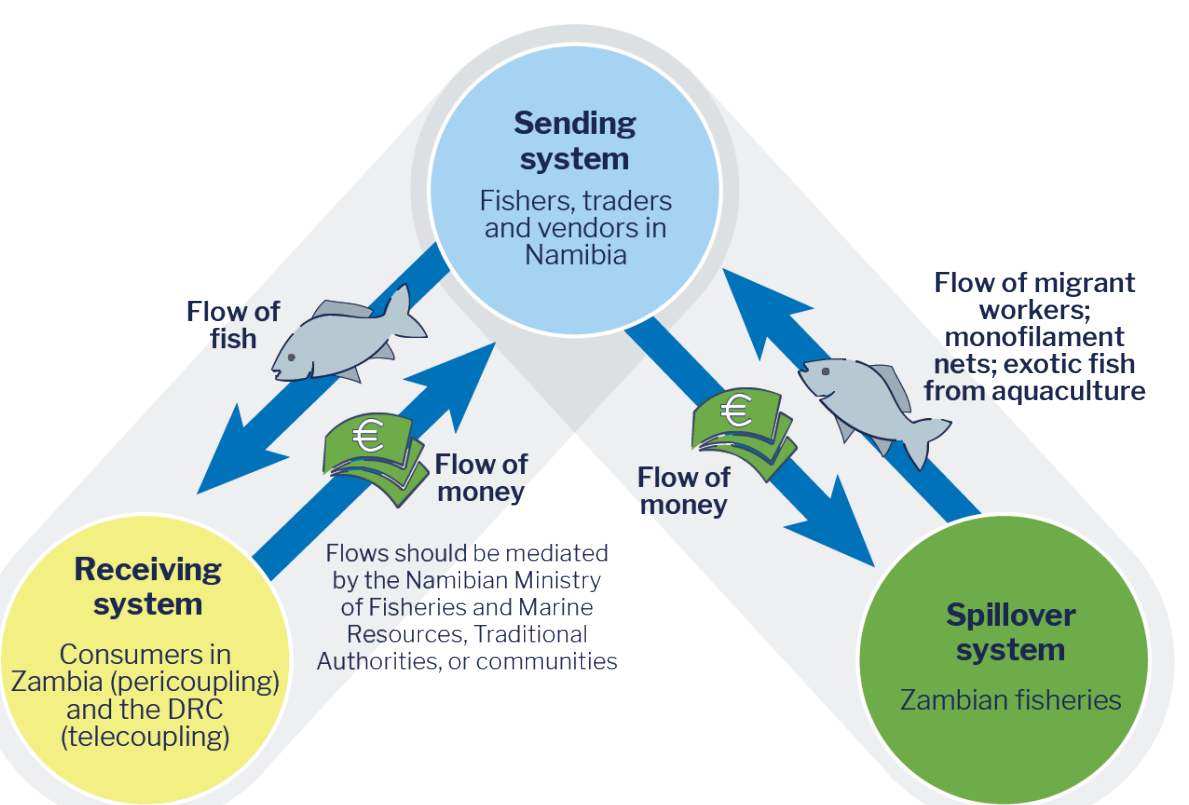


Diagram of the tele-, peri- and intra coupled Namibian fisheries social-ecological system

Key insights

The research findings enrich the reflections of Liu (2023) and address one of the key concerns of telecoupling and metacoupling research which is how to “empower small agents in a large world”.

- The case studies illustrate the indirect impacts of these value chains on smallholder farmers and local communities, primarily through **changes in access to natural resources** (such as water and land).
- **Increased connectedness in coupled systems alters social structures, access to natural resources, and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.** Equity dimensions are often concealed in conventional value chain analyses, which typically focus on the power of macro actors in these chains.
- **A metacoupling lens allowed equity considerations to be surfaced** in our case studies through the integration of human-nature interactions within a geographical area, its adjacent areas, and distant ones.
- **A value chain's upstream and downstream interactions revealed inequalities in resource availability and access** (e.g. water access for smallscale farmers in the Groot Letaba case study), commercial possibilities (for emerging farmers in the Breede), and opportunities for people to be involved in decision-making processes linked to the resource (water user associations in both South African case studies, and conservation entities and community members in the fisheries case study).
- **A metacoupling lens offers a more contextual and nuanced understanding of how equity issues are impacted by transboundary interactions** (Namibia fisheries case) and by identifying nodes of influence and paths of resource distribution that can unlock more opportunities for those not previously benefiting.
- Using a metacoupling lens can **surface key leverage points in a system where interventions can unlock opportunities** to build more equitable and resilient SES where people and nature can thrive.



To read and learn more on Enhancing equity and resilience in an interconnected world: