

Highlights

1. FLAG scheme is a path of governance in an initial evolutionary stage
2. LEADER Programme have been a great support to the implementation the FLAG model
3. CLLD-FLAG in Ireland and Galicia follows different pathways, with different effects
4. Changes in FLAGs are constant and requires new governance arrangements
5. Levels of government have determined the role of FLAGs in the governance system

Abstract

The current Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) combines sectoral elements and territorial development features at the local level based on the decentralised and participatory management of part of its funds, the intention of which is to accommodate the proposals articulated by the fisheries communities themselves. This study critically examines the specificities of territorial governance in EU coastal areas, focusing on the case study of the Fishery Local Action Groups (FLAGs) established in Ireland and Spain as new instruments for the application of sustainable development of fisheries areas. The role of FLAGs has been fundamental in the construction and evolution of new fishing areas, and has depended mainly on the territorial system in which they carry out their activities and on the characteristics of the governance model into which they are inserted. Following the approach of the Evolutionary Governance Theory, it is observed how the FLAG framework in each community follows different pathways and generates different effects, even when the political discourse and sectoral planning pursue similar objectives.

The FLAG scheme in the governance of UE coastal areas. The cases of Ireland and Galicia (Spain)

María de los Ángeles Piñeiro-Antelo^a, manxeles.pineiro@usc.es

Jesús Felicidades-García^b, jesusfe@uhu.es

Brendan O'Keeffe^c, ActionResearchEurope@gmail.com

^a Department of Geography, University of Santiago de Compostela, 15782 Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain. Corresponding author.

^b Department of History, Geography and Anthropology, University of Huelva.

^c The Institute for Action Research, Ireland.

1. Introduction

The recent social transitions of many European coastal areas are the result of a shift from an emphasis on food production to a diversity of new activities, such as recreation, tourism and nature conservation. The associated challenges have tested the resilience of fishing communities [1, 2], the viability of their livelihoods and their sustainability, while tending to intensify conflicts among user groups [3-5]. To date, insufficient attention has been paid to the socio-economic effects of the transition to a more diversified local economy [2, 6]. On the other hand, the evolution of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has been determined by the incorporation of the paradigms of sustainability and governance [7, 8]. In fact, the transfer of authority over fisheries policy from national governments to European institutions has meant a change in the geography of fisheries governance [6], which while allowing for coordination in the management and optimisation of maritime resources, has also reflected a failed model of centralised management partly induced by failures in its government [9, 10]. Following the official discourse allows us to see the complex multi-level governance framework of EU fisheries delineated: from models of governance of the marine environment and its resources [11, 12] to institutional design focused on area-based partnerships at the local level. Thus, the so-called 'Community-Led Local Development' (CLLD) of coastal areas should reflect the wide range of local cultural and environmental conditions that have heretofore been neglected or omitted [2, 6, 13, 14], but also include long-term development processes [12] that ensure the inclusive participation of the fisheries sector in local development initiatives [15, 16].

With the transfer of the LEADER rural development method [17-19], for the first time, a territorial approach is incorporated into the fisheries policy with Axis 4 and the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) integrated into a system of governance. Recent literature on the territorial development of coastal areas considers the FLAG scheme to be an innovative and positive solution for the sustainability of local fisheries and their associated communities [15, 16, 20-23]. However, good approaches and practices are still being explored and defined, and entirely new governance pathways are only beginning to be delineated. The implementation of the FLAG scheme has depended to a large extent on the territorial system in which it is integrated. Thus, the flexibility of the model allows for both the acceptance of locally negotiated formulas at all stages of the process as well as other formulas largely controlled by the managing authorities.

It is accepted that governance is one of the main determinants of the balanced and sustainable development of territory [24-26]. But not only this, territory is a complex set of meanings, values and resources (intellectual, social, political and material), all of which are mutually constructive and constructed in governance. According to this assumption, in terms of spatial and temporal interlacing, territory and governance are co-dependent. This article explores, through the theoretical framework provided by the Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT) [27, 28], how FLAGs have begun to shape a variety of possible paths of governance and provided greater territorial differentiation. This process is analysed in two case studies, Ireland and Galicia (Spain), where we question the extent to which the FLAGs are instruments of power relations, and products of existing inequalities in institutional contexts that have different capacities and traditions in terms of the delegation of responsibilities at local and sub-regional levels [15].

2. Material and methods

The two case-studies are Irish and Galician FLAGs. They have been selected due to the strong historical links between Galician fishing communities and Ireland, as well as the importance of fishing in the economies of both areas. We have allowed ourselves to compare

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62 a country (Ireland) with a region (Galicia) because the application of the FLAG scheme was
63 decided in Spain at the regional level. In fact, the Spanish autonomies received full powers,
64 both in terms of fishing and spatial planning. Thus, the management of the fishing funds was
65 entrusted to the *Consellería do Mar* of the Galician Government by the national management
66 authority. Finally, it is interesting to select two case studies where the FLAG scheme has been
67 implemented at different speeds: very early and throughout the region in the case of Galicia,
68 and much later and in pilot areas in Ireland.

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70 In this article, we develop a methodology, in several phases, to analyse the repercussions of
71 the implementation of Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) in the territorial
72 governance process. The first of these focuses on an analysis of the policies, rules and actors
73 that intervene in the territorial governance of fishing zones, which have been crucial in
74 delineating the FLAG areas themselves through mobilisation processes, dialogue,
75 concertation of interests and decision-making [29]. The second phase delves into the planning
76 stage undertaken by the FLAGs in order to shape their partnership and design a local strategy.
77 Since public money is distributed through groups that decide and implement strategic
78 development plans, it is important to examine who the members of that group are [30]. The
79 third strand of our investigation tries to assess the execution phase, analysing who the
80 beneficiaries are, and the capacity of the different actors (citizens, organised civil society,
81 economic actors, and political actors among others) in relation to attracting EFF funding.

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83 In order to delve into the partnership structures and governance dynamics of FLAGs, our
84 investigation explores the different planning and regulatory documents of the fund produced
85 at European, national and regional levels (Council Regulation (EC) No. 1198/2006 of 27 July
86 2006 on the European Fisheries Fund; Irish and Spanish Strategic Plans; Irish and Spanish
87 Operational Programmes; *Consellería de Pesca e Asuntos Marítimos* of Galicia Order of 17
88 July 2008 in which a contest for the selection of coastal action groups is convened; *Consellería*
89 *de Pesca e Asuntos Marítimos* of Galicia Order of 17 April 2009 by which aid for the execution
90 of zonal strategic plans is summoned, and the Start-up guide for Fisheries Local Action Groups
91 in Ireland). The evaluation reports produced by the European Network of Fisheries Areas
92 (FARNET) and by the national agencies for the Irish and Galician cases are also considered
93 [21, 31-34]. The lists of EFF beneficiaries was published in the case of Spain by the *Dirección*
94 *General de Gestión Pesquera* and updated as of 31st December 2015; and in the case of
95 Ireland by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, with figures of payments made
96 until March 2017 used as data sources.

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98 The case studies are enriched through interviews, five of which were conducted in Galicia
99 between April 2015 and April 2016 with members of organisations of the fishing sector that
100 were part of the FLAG Boards. In Ireland, four interviews were conducted between October
101 2017 and February 2018 with technicians from the Irish Sea Fisheries Board (BIM) at the
102 FLAG coordination offices, FLAG Chairs and FLAG Board members, and small business
103 people that benefitted from the FLAG funds. The questions were structured in three blocks:
104 the first on the configuration of the fishing area, the creation of FLAG and the design process
105 of the development strategy; the second focused on the main difficulties and challenges in the
106 implementation of the programme, and in the third, the questions were focused on determining
107 the relative weight of regional and local governments in the configuration of FLAGs.

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109 In addition, one of the authors participated in the "FLAG Networking and Training Event" held
110 in Galway, Ireland, on March 21-22, 2018, as part of the research action. This enabled him to
111 gain relevant insights into the delivery of the FLAG model in Ireland in the period 2007-2013,
112 and on its progress for the period 2014-2020, as presented by the BIM and articulated by
113 FLAG members. This author participated as an observer in thematic workshops addressing
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121 the specific issues of managing meetings, procedures and administration, governance,
122 innovation, networking and cooperation and collaboration with other entities. The author also
123 held informal conversations with several FLAG stakeholders in which they recounted their
124 experiences and provided insights and analysis in respect of the performance, trajectory and
125 potential of FLAGs.
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127 128 **3. Fisheries Local Area Development Scheme**

129 The current interpretation of the concept of governance implies a consideration of increasingly
130 complex processes, structures and objectives, in accordance with the intrinsic diversity,
131 complexity and dynamism of fisheries and coastal systems [35, 36]. The spatial/territorial
132 factor and the local scale produce even more complexity, as they add new perspectives and
133 elements of analysis to the system. This is especially evident when it is stated that “coastal
134 development intensifies competition for space and scarce resources, producing winners as
135 well as losers” [5, p. 266]. For many authors, the term governance acquires its fullest meaning
136 when it relates to a territory, and the notion that arises from this association considers
137 governance to be one of the main determinants of territorial development [25]. A 'territorialised'
138 definition of governance differs from its 'general' version because its object is the territory and
139 “its aim is to regulate, to govern, to manage territorial dynamics through the pilotage of a
140 multiplicity of actors” [24, p. 50]. In this regard, the capacity of actors to “agree on a common
141 vision for the future of their territory” [24, p. 35] or the “well-functioning systems of territorial
142 governance are situated as prerequisites for efficient policy-making and democratic
143 legitimacy” [37, p. 507]. In short, these notions refer to the governance process in terms of
144 place-based policies, which focus on managing territorial dynamics, monitoring and evaluating
145 territorial impacts and spatially delimiting policies [26]. Territory is a complex set of meanings,
146 values and resources (intellectual, social, political and material), and a place of human
147 activities, all of which are mutually constructive and constructed in governance. Not only this,
148 territories that arise from territorialised actions are functional and coherent areas where people
149 are truly linked by common elements. If the process is well understood, they become project-
150 based areas, and the territory itself becomes an active learning organisation.
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153 The literature on governance offers new conceptual possibilities that recognise, from a
154 systemic [5, 35], organisational and evolutionary perspective, what components and
155 mechanisms are involved, how actors define their roles in decision-making and
156 implementation, and how they interact - and on what scale. It is in this context that we can
157 situate Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT), described by its authors [27, 28] in terms of
158 its trajectory in the fields of spatial planning and environmental management [38-41]. The
159 conceptual framework of EGT brings new perspectives to bear on governance, drawing from
160 a wide range of theoretical frameworks, such as the Theory of Social Systems, Post-
161 structuralism, the Actor-Network Theory, Institutional Economics and Development Studies.
162 Governance, from an EGT perspective, changes continually and acquires unique forms in
163 each community as a result of the co-evolution of its components. Changes in a particular
164 element always depend on its interactions with actors, institutions, knowledge, objects and
165 subjects, and its insertion into structures, which are the result of the same evolutionary
166 process. Governance means a process of adaptation to socio-territorial conditions, and
167 especially to a set of interacting organisations and institutions, in which it manifests itself as a
168 pathway resulting from the interactions of the components of the built governance system. In
169 fact, the evolution of governance in each territory generates different effects, even when the
170 discourse of political action and sectoral planning pursue similar objectives. This idea is linked
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180 to the territory specific to a place and can be understood in the governance process as a
181 dependency, in the sense of 'path dependence' and 'interdependencies' [27].

182 The incorporation of the territorial approach in the fisheries policy has allowed, for the first time
183 with the Axis 4 of the EFF, a decentralised and participatory management of part of its funds.
184 This model is maintained in the current European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) with
185 similar criteria to those for sustainable development and in the guidelines of the CLLD. Axis 4
186 was configured within the EU fisheries governance system as a bottom-up initiative to primarily
187 benefit small-scale fisheries [13, 20, 22]. This required the establishment of governance
188 approaches that reflected the particularities of the local level and accommodated proposals
189 articulated by coastal communities. The management of the initiative is devolved to FLAGs,
190 public-private partnerships responsible for preparing local development strategies and
191 projects initiated by local stakeholders and actors, as is the definition of geographical areas of
192 intervention [15, 22]. Thus, the FLAG scheme is a local scale initiative formed by three
193 interdependent elements in continuous interaction and evolution: a system of actors, a
194 participatory development strategy and a fishing area.

195 The fisheries policy integrates the interface between sectoral and territorial development and
196 adopts the objectives of economic diversification, the promotion of innovation and interregional
197 and transnational cooperation, which coincide with those defined by LEADER as a reference
198 framework [23]. To date, the main result of this transfer to fishing communities has been the
199 constitution of local stakeholder systems and the establishment of increasingly strong
200 collective responsibilities [15]. This has only intensified the debate within the growing research
201 on territorial development and the governance of coastal areas [2, 5, 6, 14, 15, 20, 22, 35, 42-
202 46] about whether development strategies should strengthen the local fishery-based
203 economy, or on the contrary, stimulate the advancement of new economic sectors [15, 16,
204 20]. Such studies have also sought to evaluate at least two other matters. First, the ability of
205 public authorities to respond to and moderate local empowerment, based on more controlled
206 governance processes. This is especially the case in area-based partnership structures in
207 LEADER [47-51]. On the other hand, FLAGs incorporate management formulae that promote
208 the participation of civil society, but the emerging new interests and values tend to intensify
209 conflicts among user-groups [4, 46]. This conglomerate, in the first place, allows for the
210 expansion of the spectrum of local actors involved in territorial management and development.
211 However, this opportunity may weaken the effects of financing, giving rise to the 'paradox of
212 participation', argued by Suárez de Vivero *et al.* (2008); the greater the number of actors, the
213 lesser weight each one carries. This may imply a loss of prominence for those actors
214 traditionally linked to fishing activities [3]. The fact that the expectations of certain actors can
215 be ignored has introduced uncertainty into the new system of local governance [52]. Secondly,
216 it allows the expansion of the fishing area and the emergence of the 'territory paradox'; large
217 fishing zones can blur actions, divert priorities and lose the "fishing area effect", disfiguring
218 fishing interests and limiting, by excess of critical mass, the contact between the FLAG and
219 the fishing community.

220 FLAGs are set within national/regional institutional and territorial frameworks that have
221 different capacities and traditions of devolved management. Each community evolves through
222 a process in each territory, which generates different effects, even when political action and
223 sectoral planning are pursuing similar objectives [27, 28]. Because socio-territorial dynamics
224 are unequal, with different weight given to the participation of the fisheries sector and
225 differentiated relations of power, variable schemes have been modelled in terms of
226 participatory size, complexity and co-management, as well as in terms of roles, objectives and
227 the horizontal integration of strategies. This translates into a specific personality for each
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239 FLAG, which is functionally reinforced at the territorial level. The experience of the
240 implementation of the FLAG scheme raises the concept of territory (fishing areas) as a clearly
241 ordered space within defined limits. The key to the process is to identify who defines them and
242 why. In this way, it is common to use different approaches to the selection and delimitation of
243 fisheries areas. Although some EU countries defined the criteria for accessing funds (such as
244 size, population density and the evolution of fishing activity), which allows the number of
245 groups or area boundaries to be negotiated locally, other countries preferred more controlled
246 governance processes and established the number of areas, their limits and the number of
247 groups [32]. On the other hand, the model encourages FLAGs to develop multi-funded
248 strategies (European Structural and Investment Funds) and may even apply formal and
249 informal coordination formulas with other local development associations operating in the
250 same territory, such as the LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs). These interactions between
251 levels of government, planning and intervention have determined the role of FLAGs and have
252 influenced their ability to be flexible enough to respond to changing problems and contexts
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257 **4. Irish and Galician FLAGs**

258 The Axis 4 application is characterised by a common method and flexible implementation for
259 different local conditions. Galicia and Ireland have developed two implementation models with
260 notable differences in application and results. In terms of territory, the regulations governing
261 the fishing funds have allowed member states to use different approaches, more or less
262 decentralised, in the selection of fishing areas. In both study areas, a top-down approach has
263 predominated, and local actors have been unable to decide on the number of areas to select,
264 their limits, or the number of groups.
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266 During 2007-2013 period, 300 projects were financed in Galicia with public funds (from the
267 EFF, and the state and regional contributions) amounting to €20,769,488.46. In Ireland, the
268 programme handled much more modest figures, with 186 projects being subsidised with a
269 public expenditure of €1,120,252.55. This large difference in resources is related to the late
270 development of the FLAG scheme in Ireland, and to the different roles played by FLAGs in
271 these areas, which was heavily influenced by the level of control maintained by the
272 government (state or regional) in the application of this model.
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274 The Galician Regional Government established seven intervention areas, and began the
275 selection of FLAGs in July 2008. They established contacts with the public sector, and social
276 and economic entities in the fishing areas in order to apply the programme. The government
277 left it up to the associations concerned to formalise agreements and commitments to becoming
278 FLAGs, and to creating working teams to draft the strategies. The groups and strategies then
279 had to be formalised before their candidacy was presented before the Regional Government.
280 After that, all of the FLAGs were recognised at the same time and began their activities in
281 August 2009.
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283 In Ireland, six areas were delineated at the State level. The national implementation authority
284 (BIM) established two pilot areas for the South East and West in late 2012 and four more
285 FLAGs in 2013. In all cases, their geographical limits coincided with the boundaries of counties
286 or groups of counties but did not take into account any natural features or socio-economic
287 variables. BIM supported the FLAGs in acquiring skills and facilitated the preparation and
288 implementation of their strategies through regional coordinators, BIM technicians, who were
289 in place before the FLAG Programme formally commenced. In August 2012, BIM initiated a
290 process through which it sought and appointed consultants to develop a FLAG Strategy in
291 each territory. The consultants scoped out the issues, undertook a territorial analysis and
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298 consulted with local citizens through open meetings. Therefore, it was not the FLAGs that
299 formulated a diagnosis of the territory nor drafted the local development strategy, unlike in
300 Galicia.

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302 The Galician and Irish FLAGs were not actively involved in the geographical selection of
303 intervention areas in the 2007-2013 period. However, this has changed for the current round
304 (2014-2020). For example, in Ireland, stakeholders in Cork have submitted an application for
305 a separate FLAG area for County Cork. Up until then, they had constituted a singular FLAG
306 area in conjunction with the neighbouring county of Kerry. In Galicia, the cities of Ferrol, A
307 Coruña, Pontevedra and Vigo, all of which have important fishing ports, were excluded from
308 fisheries areas in the first phase of the programme but have been incorporated in the current
309 period into FLAG territories. In the two case studies, the reorganisation of areas in the period
310 2014-2020 involves deep changes in the governance system for the variation of the FLAG
311 partners, with the incorporation of new actors and interests, and the updating of the strategies
312 to include the accumulated experience gained during the initial phase. The FLAG scheme
313 evolved from the interactions between its three fundamental elements - area, group and
314 strategy - through an adaptive process.

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317 **Fig. 1. Irish and Galician FLAGs. Source: The authors.**

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319 The methodology for the creation of the FLAG framework, as envisaged at the EU level, gives
320 prominence to local actors. Sometimes, the inclusion of a wider spectrum of locally-based
321 actors brought with it a dilution of the voices of traditional fishing actors. This, coupled with the
322 FLAGs' orientation towards interests beyond fishing sector, produced the general distrust in
323 the programme and the perception of it as a controlling approach on the part of statutory
324 authorities in respect of the emergent structures. There is abundant literature relating to
325 attempts by national or regional governments to exert control over LEADER groups, in order
326 to promote or maintain clientelist networks and maintain control of resources and decision-
327 making in relation to these resources [50, 51, 54]. Due to its still recent implementation, there
328 are few specific studies on this issue in the FLAG model [30], but the situation described for
329 the LEADER programme seems to have been inherited in the areas analysed here as case
330 studies. Once FLAGs have been established, national and local governments tend to ensure
331 their presence in the main decision-making body/board in order to control the processes of
332 the selection of projects and the distribution of funds (Table 1).

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336 **Table 1. Distribution of FLAGs' funds (2007-2013) and public actors on FLAGs (2014-2020).**

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338 The data highlight the relatively excessive control that the Irish government exerts over the
339 funds and over the FLAGs, when compared with the regional government in the case of
340 Galicia. In Ireland, FLAG Board members were recruited by invitation from the BIM, who also
341 exercise the function of the FLAG Coordinator [56]. Based on the interviews with FLAG
342 members (Galway meeting, February 2018), it can be deduced that there are varying views
343 among them on the governance and decision-making arrangements. Some members are
344 content to let responsibilities reside with the BIM. Others, however, would prefer to see the
345 groups be given greater autonomy. They claim that they would like to operate multi-annual
346 budgets, have their own websites and undertake animation activities locally, as has happened
347 with the FLAGs in Galicia. This perception of excessive control by the BIM had already been
348 reflected in the results of the evaluation carried out in 2016 [55], which highlighted the desire
349 for FLAGs to have their own identity that was separate to the BIM (Table 2).

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358 **Table 2: Flag members' evaluation of the FLAGs National Network in Ireland**
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360 In both Ireland and Galicia, funds are administered and dispersed to third parties on the basis
361 of periodic 'calls for proposals,' rather than on the basis of open multi-annual cycles as has
362 been the case with LEADER. In Galicia, municipal governments have secured a sizeable
363 proportion of FLAG funds for their own projects. The fact that this feature is common to the
364 seven groups seems to indicate the existence of agreements or understandings - formal or
365 informal - to ensure a distribution of FLAGs' funds to municipalities. Thus, the two groups that
366 had a larger budget in the 2007-2013 period, *Seo Fisterra/Ría Muros-Noia* FLAG and *Costa*
367 *da Morte* FLAG, distributed 49% and 48% of their respective funds - after discounting the
368 operating expenses of the FLAG - between the municipalities in the area of intervention. In
369 Ireland, the collection of funds by counties and county councils has been quite uneven, with
370 the only significant fund being collected in the North FLAG by Donegal County Council. The
371 reduced budget of each FLAG and the need to allocate part of the funds to its operation may
372 justify the lack of interest among county councils in this funding source (Table 1). We must
373 bear in mind that about 50% of projects are valued at under € 5,000 in Ireland, while in Galicia
374 such small projects only account for 10% of the total.

375 An analysis of the case studies, and the application of the same framework to different
376 territorial contexts, reveals an attempt at control on the part of institutions over the decision-
377 making mechanisms of the groups and the territorial distribution of the funds. FLAGs seem to
378 be very conditioned by the institutional dependence, both formal and informal, of some
379 members of their partnerships. Local authorities, especially in the Galician case, constitute
380 pressure groups that act as a brake on the decentralized and participative approach of the
381 groups and to the balanced implementation of their strategies.

386 **5. Discussion and conclusions**

387 The FLAG scheme, which went through an initial evolutionary stage in the 2007-2013 period,
388 has been implemented, in respect of formulae, methodologies and mechanisms, based on
389 previous experiences of the relatively mature system of LEADER LAGs [18, 19]. The two
390 models overlap in terms of discourses, institutions, territories and actors, which has allowed
391 us to take advantage of LEADER assessments to recognise the dependencies of the new
392 system, especially formal and informal institutional interdependencies [29, 30, 47-51, 57].
393 From the analysis of the case studies, we have been able to identify practices and behaviours
394 in these early phases of FLAGs that are very similar to those described in the literature about
395 the LEADER programme. These relate especially to the restructuring of local power as a result
396 of new social power, which has emerged from the application of rural development projects
397 and programmes [56].

398 All of the experience and knowledge accumulated in the application of LEADER has been a
399 great support to the implementation of the FLAG model as the actors involved have recognised
400 the discursive dynamics of the development model in its adaptation/evolution and impact on
401 objectives, rules and strategies. Moreover, the protagonists have identified co-actors,
402 especially those with experience in local development; thus, we see direct LEADER
403 involvement in, and in some cases providing a reference point for, the FLAGs. However, there
404 is little integration of FLAGs and LAGs, and formal mechanisms to generate information
405 exchanges and participatory planning are still weak, although programming works are
406 currently being established to correct these dysfunctions. Both Ireland and Galicia failed to
407 sufficiently utilise the machinery and experiences of the LEADER LAGs, and, instead of using

414 these pre-existing structures as the delivery mechanism for the FLAG scheme, established
415 parallel bodies, thus dissipating the capacity for integration and stronger local governance.

416 The FLAGs are planned organisations of stakeholders that operate to a formula of
417 participatory democracy with the capacity for self-management and self-government. FLAGs
418 reinforce their identity through their narrow and inseparable connection with the territory,
419 insofar as in their discourse, they incorporate the meanings, values and resources of the
420 fishing areas. These newly-created structures have been integrated in a multilevel governance
421 framework of EU fisheries areas. The incorporation of actors, territories and interests has
422 required reconfigurations of governance arrangements, which in turn affect the
423 (re)construction of territory and spatial planning. We have observed how the respective
424 authorities, local/regional in Galicia and national in Ireland, have implemented the same
425 framework, characterized by its flexibility to adapt to different contexts. In Galicia, the model
426 was developed earlier, with greater financial resources, and unlike what happened in Ireland,
427 it was implemented throughout the coastal territory at the same time, with the FLAGs having,
428 from the moment of their creation, the autonomy to design local development strategies and
429 their own budget.

430 Despite the different development of the FLAG framework in Ireland and Galicia, it still has a
431 fundamental role in the construction and evolution of new territories. Firstly, because of the
432 relevance and ability of FLAGs to bring about the evolution of a governance system that gives
433 greater prominence to local actors; secondly, for their role in the allocation of public funds for
434 the sustainable development of fisheries areas; and finally, as enhancers of synergies
435 between different economic sectors, helping to maintain the economy and social networks
436 linked to fishing activity.

437 The interactions between the different levels of government have determined the role of
438 FLAGs and their standing in the governance system. In this way, their recognition and
439 acceptance has depended heavily on the territorial framework in which they carry out their
440 activities and on the characteristics of the local governance system in which they operate.
441 Thus, the features and results of this process have been markedly different in Ireland and
442 Galicia: firstly, by the level of decentralisation applied, which is much higher in Spanish
443 regions, and secondly, because of the different weights attributed to local authorities and the
444 development of mechanisms that moderate local empowerment. Thirdly, they have been
445 affected by the late development of the FLAG scheme in Ireland, due to budgetary restrictions
446 on the Irish State.

447 The FLAG scheme is still in the early stages of its development. Therefore, it needs time to
448 improve its formulae, mechanisms and levels of participation, especially in Ireland, where
449 FLAGs have a lower profile and lack an independent identity, as they are generally perceived
450 as offshoots of the BIM rather than locally-embedded structures. The constraints identified,
451 many of them common with the LEADER programme, should be corrected in order to increase
452 the potential benefit of FLAGs in the process of the sustainable and participatory development
453 of fishing-dependent areas and coastal communities.

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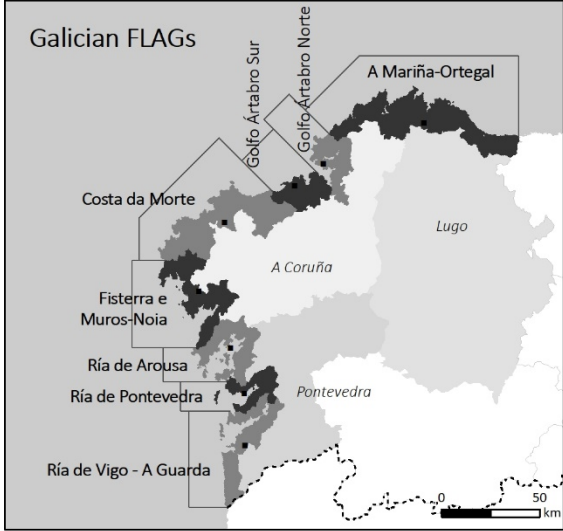
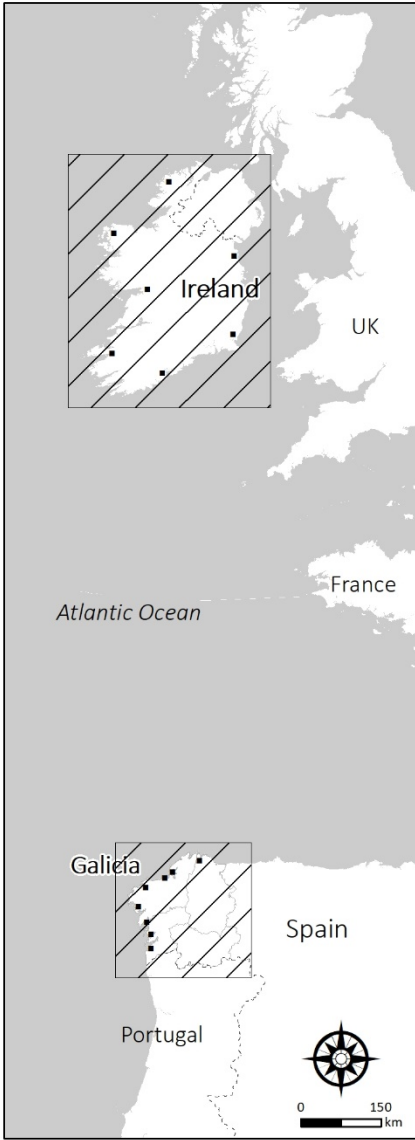
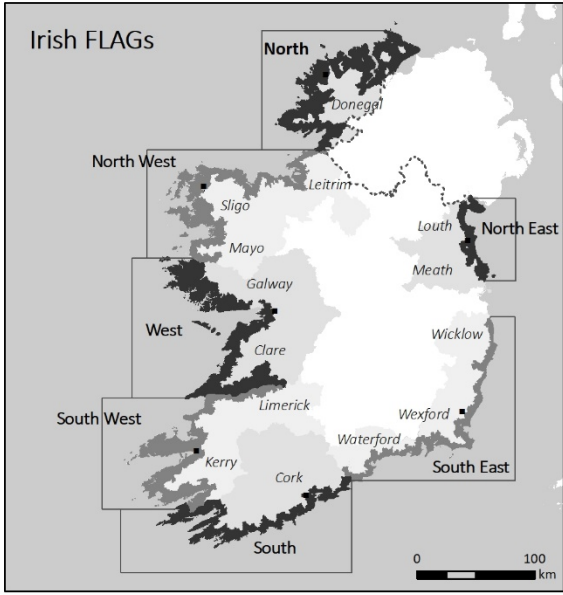


Fig. 1. Irish and Galician FLAGS.

Source: The authors.

Table 1. Distribution of FLAGs funds (2007-2013) and public actors on FLAGs (2014-2020)

	<i>Projects</i>	<i>Public contribution (National + EFF) €</i>	<i>FLAGs funds absorbed by local governments (%)</i>	<i>FLAGs funds allocated to the operation of the group (%)</i>	<i>Public actors on main decision-making body/board (%)</i>	<i>Public actors on in partnership /general assembly (%)</i>
GALICIA						
Mariña-Ortegal	54	2,166,331	13.2	32.6	19	19
Golfo Artabro	33	1,640,883	23.1	38.6	23	34
Costa da Morte	42	4,175,639	32.6	31.5	19	18
Seo Fisterra Ría Muros-Noia	43	5,914,249	35.8	28.4	3	22
Arousa	47	2,765,541	17.2	26.1	17	17
Pontevedra	30	2,089,191	27.6	34.1	30	25
Vigo-A Guarda	51	2,008,562	21.0	32.4	27	27
IRELAND						
North	34	190,712	31.0	13.2	22	35
North West	15	159,572	0	17.2	30	30
West	56	301,079	0.4	13.8	29	29
South West	29	208,858	9.6	13.3	36	29
South East	46	206,434	14.0	24.5	25	25
North East	8	52,197	0	37.2	30	30
<p>Source: Beneficiaries list of the EFF (updated in Ireland on 03/20/2017, and Spain on 12/31/2015). Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Ireland) and Ministerio de Agricultura y Pesca, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente (Spain) and FARNET https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/ (accessed 15 March 2018). Elaborated by the authors.</p>						

Table 2: Flag members' evaluation of the FLAGs National Network in Ireland

	<i>Number of answers</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Provide technical support to FLAGs	35	>Positive
Increase visibility of CLLD and its results	34	>Negative
Strengthen communication/trust between actors	31	> Very positive
Facilitate exchange and Learning	33	>Negative
Source: FLAG members' answers in FLAGs meeting in Galway, February 2018. The authors.		