Cover letter to Journal ‘Sustainability’

Special Issue: Environmental Policy and Governance: Evolutionary Perspectives

Subject: Minor revisions / point-to-point response to reviewers’ second round of response

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Manuscript title: Transition policy after corona: The importance of a Natural Social Contract and co-evolutionary governance

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| ***No.*** | ***Comment*** | ***Response by authors*** |
| 1 | **Reviewer 1:** “*This paper has much improved, also because its scope is clearer. I am still puzzled about the selection aspect of EGT, notably the specific roles of metaphors, open concepts and master signifiers play here (as objects and agents of selection) - particularly now NCS has been presented as a master signifier. But that may be for a later argument. Language is generally okay. The argument could certainly be presented more succinctly, and there is a need for a light language wash ("with the? coevolution", "health care", "es" etc....)”* | We have taken out the statement that a NCS is a master signifier and rechecked the English. |
| 2 | **Reviewer 2:** “*The authors made a visible effort of revision, introducing new sections and discussing better the debates on which their arguments are based. I don't see a problem in a theoretical article to be normative, however some problems in the paper remain and it still need a revision to be published. Specially it needs better clarity in terms of focus and structure. Here are my recommendations:”* | We have improved the focus and structure in ways described below. |
| 3 | **Reviewer 2: “***1) The text puts in relation 03 new notions that need to be better related by the authors: evolutionary/transformative governance, transformative socioecological innovation and natural social contract. These notions are proposed by the authors and based on their previous work (since they rely on self-citation). Therefore, it seems essential to me to make it clear in each of the sections of the article that deal with these notions from where they start and how they relate to previous debates to support the authors' arguments. It is also essential to make a better connection between these notions, since the relationship between them is not evident per se.”* | Governance approaches mentioned are now related to Transformative Social-Ecological Innovation (TSEI), which are innovations with explicit transformative goals and attention to mutual gains, and originating from political science and negotiation theory in particular. EGT gives attention to actor/institutions dialectics and power/knowledge dialectics, elements that have taken been into account in the TSEI-framework (figure 1) and related text. |
| 4 | **Reviewer 2:** “*2) In this sense, I recommend to start with the broader discussion of the natural contract (beggining of session 3), ending with the question of how to put in practice this social contract, what challenges (what is the main focus of this text). The line 160 present this question as: "The big question for steering is: how to initiate and accelerate system changes whose features are not perfectly clear and often times underdeveloped compared to the existing systems? This would make room to bring session 02 that addresses evolutionary/transformative governance to the TSEI.”* | Our build-up of argumentation has been improved. |
| 5 | **Reviewer 2:** “*2) The section 02 "Transformation pleas and approach to achieve this" can be improved. I recommend reviewing the title referring to the governance debate that is*  *addressed in the section, for example: "Transformative pleas and approaches of*  *governance to achieve this"...It is also important to better relate/*  *differentiate the evolutionary governance proposed by authors and the others*  *discussed in the literature (adaptive, reflexive, deliberative, collaborative,*  *etc.). The authors cite several debates/definitions/approaches, but do not*  *position themselves in relation to them, making clear what their*  *theoretical contribution. I suggest that the authors present the debate*  *and the different definitions and then present the notion of GE,*  *relating it to the TSEI.”* | Changes have been made accordingly. See section with new title: “Transformation pleas and governance approaches for achieving this”. The section now better relates/differentiates evolutionary governance from the other governance approaches mentioned. EGT understands governance as radically evolutionary and is mindful of limitations of any form of governance. |
| 13 | **Reviewer 2:** *3) The examples placed in section 03 could compose a section in itself, which sought to relate theory and practical examples (not cases), illustrating the proposed model. It will be nice to put forward the discussion of the conceptual variables of transformative governance proposed.* | Practical examples in this section are now more explicit on co-evolutionary steering and multiple value creation insights. Social contract theory helps to recognize duties and rights of citizens and consider issues of rebalancing society, and approaches and mechanisms for achieving this. |
| 14 | **Reviewer 2:** *4) It remains not clear the relationship between the propositions presented by the authors in section 4 and the discutions in other sections. I suggest to improve the interface between the propositions presented and what comes before in the text, specialy linking with the contributions and limites of the proposal to face this challenges.* | This comment is not entirely clear to us. The four proposals for transition policy in section 4 are based on co-evolutionary governance and related discussions in previous sections. |
| 15 | **Reviewer 2:** *5) Formal aspects: The text needs a language revision and formatting of the figures to make them more readable. Avoid the excessive use of acronyms and review them throughout the text.*  *I thank the authors and the editor for this opportunity to review and discuss this interesting paper and I hope that my comments help to improve the paper. Best regards.* | Language and figures have been improved. |