



## Decentralization and participation in integrated coastal management: Policy lessons from Brazil and Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Indonesia and Brazil, two large countries with long coastlines, have seen dramatic political changes over past decades. The New Constitution of 1988 in Brazil and the reform movement of 1998 in Indonesia both marked the beginning of a new political era in the respective countries. An important pillar of this was the decentralization of authority. At the same time, the notion of integrated coastal management found its way into national legislation and policies. Key terms during these new eras in both Brazil and Indonesia are decentralization, participation, democratization and, in the context of coastal management, integration. Despite the enactment of promising new laws and policies, and despite local examples of success, implementation still faces a number of challenges in both countries. Inefficiencies and weaknesses of the institutional and legal frameworks have resulted in local mismanagement and misappropriation, a high degree of non-compliance, conflicts between resource users and tension and mistrust between different levels and sections of government. Moreover, the disempowered situation of poorer local ecosystem users largely continues. We argue here that for coastal management to become socially more just and environmentally more benign, local communities need to be better informed, capacitated and officially supported in their quest to protect the ecosystems which their livelihoods depend on. Local ecosystem users' social energies and capacities may be essential to respond to ecosystem stakeholders which do not share local ecosystem users' sustainability agendas.

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### 1. Introduction

Increasing awareness of anthropogenic impacts on coastal ecosystems and their local users and the emergence of growth-with-equity strategies have triggered changes in environmental governance in many parts of the world. With the growing recognition of threats such as climate change, the notion of sustainable development and the concept of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) have been incorporated into coastal policies and management approaches worldwide. Consequently, many developing and former communist countries engaged in the decentralization of authority in order to increase government accountability and efficiency, and to strengthen the role of local communities in natural resources management (Jose, 2002).

Indonesia and Brazil are two large countries with long coastlines and highly diverse ecosystems. Indonesia is an archipelagic nation with a coastline of 81,000 km (Siry, 2007). Its about 17,500 islands

differ greatly in climate, geography, cultures, and economic activities. Its coastline is fringed with mangrove forests, coral reefs and sea grass beds that are extremely rich in biodiversity and have a high degree of endemism (Sukardjo, 2002). With a total area of 51,020 km<sup>2</sup>, Indonesia is endowed with about one-fifth of all coral reefs worldwide (Dutton et al., 2009). Brazil has a coastline of 7500 km, presenting a variety of tropical and sub-tropical ecosystems and habitats. The Atlantic Forest (Mata Atlantica) is considered the most important coastal ecosystem stretching across large parts of the country. Mangroves occur along most of the Brazilian coastline, covering an area of about 25,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Coral reefs are confined to the tropical zone of the country's coast and offshore islands. Biological diversity in these coastal ecosystems is exceptionally high and includes a number of endemic and endangered species (Diegues, 1999).

In both countries, competition over increasingly scarce resources, deteriorating environmental quality and growing human population are pressing issues. In Indonesia, an estimated 60% of its about 250 million inhabitants live in coastal areas (Siry, 2007). The main coastal pressures arise from population growth, urbanisation, pollution, and exploitation of natural resources (Kusuma-Atmadja and Purwaka, 1996). Overfishing, illegal fishing methods and the

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destruction of coral reefs and mangroves are major threats to the viability of coastal ecosystems (Siry, 2007). In Brazil, around 36.5 million people, a fifth of the population, live in coastal areas (World Bank, 2006). Brazil's coastal ecosystems have suffered from severe degradation since the beginning of intensive industrial production in the 1950s. Particularly areas of high urban and industrial concentration are highly polluted and degraded (Diegues, 1999).

Traditional and other marginalized populations that inhabit coastal areas in Indonesia and Brazil are particularly affected by the degradation of coastal forests or reefs since their livelihoods most critically depend on these ecosystems. These coastal communities associate a range of economic, social and cultural values with the ecosystems that surround them. Ecosystem degradation has often impoverished them and disrupted their culture (Diegues, 2002, 2005). Although coastal areas also receive high rates of immigration and can thus be characterised by 'ecological illiteracy' among migrant populations whose knowledge relates other natural environments (Krause and Glaser, 2003a,b), such non-traditional coastal ecosystem users can possess or develop relevant system knowledge and develop customary governance systems of their coastal resources (Diegues, 1999; Siry, 2006; Glaser et al., 2010a).

In large and diverse countries, centralized management is associated with high levels of bureaucratisation and costs, delays in decision-making and communication problems (Siry, 2007). As a result, decentralization became a key component of the move toward democratization in Brazil and Indonesia. With a high degree of parallelity, both the New Brazilian Constitution of 1988 and the Indonesian reform movement of 1998 marked the beginnings of a new political era. The legal changes undertaken were widely associated with a transformation from autocratic rule to more democratic principles and heavily affected coastal zone management policy (see Table 1). Key terms among the official guiding principles for the policy shift in both countries were democratization, decentralization, participation, sustainability and Integrated Coastal Management (ICM).

This paper presents a comparative analysis of recent policy developments in coastal management and particularly of the outcomes and challenges arising around the participation of direct ecosystem users in the management of coastal ecosystems. The question of how the participation of local ecosystem users is affected by the decentralization of coastal management is central in our analysis. We have reviewed legal documents, policy plans, related secondary literature and included the long experience of the authors in both regions which has involved the participation in a series of science-policy workshops in Brazil between 1995 and 2006 and in Indonesia between 2006 and 2010. In this article, we summarize the achievements and implementation challenges of coastal management policies in Brazil and Indonesia, review important political developments in both countries and put these in the context of their stated objectives. Major obstacles that Indonesia and Brazil, along with many other countries, are facing in the implementation of coastal management are then discussed. Our main concern is to analyse the effect of decentralization on ecosystem user participation in marine and coastal management. Our findings are meant to support and inform ICM policy and decision-makers.

## 2. Legal and policy changes in Brazil and Indonesia

### 2.1. Conceptual framework

Democratization was the driving force behind the reform movements in many countries during the 1980s and 90s. With the emergence of growth-with-equity development strategies in the

70s, and the call for greater democratization, accountability and transparency in the 80s and 90s, a great number of developing countries thus decentralized their government apparatus as part of a quest for more democracy, efficiency and equity.

Generally, decentralization efforts were triggered by inefficient and centralized government bureaucracies that were unable to deal effectively with increasingly complex societies causing socially and environmentally undesirable outcomes by classical top-down approaches to decision-making. In contrast, decentralized governance systems were assumed to "encourage local authorities to serve the needs and desires of their constituents" (Satria and Matsuda, 2004) through democratic processes. It was assumed that the lower levels of government are more likely to serve local needs because of the greater social proximity between policy makers and the people (Seddon, 1999). However, decentralization comprises many theoretical facets and takes various forms in practice. For this article, decentralization is understood as present in any act in which a central government formally transfers/cedes powers to actors and organisations at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy (Satria and Matsuda, 2004; Ribot, 2001).

Public participation has become a keyword in the decentralization debate. Decentralization is not only seen as a means for enhancing the role of lower levels of government, but it is also perceived to create opportunities for the empowerment of civil society including local user communities in managing natural resources through the inclusion of local non-government stakeholders. Thus, it is often stated that decentralized coastal management enables communities to be actively involved in planning and management (Larson and Ribot, 2004). Despite this frequent association, it is important to highlight that although decentralization may promote public participation and even though the prevailing political rhetoric in many countries, including Brazil and Indonesia strongly emphasizes this association, decentralization relates to change within government systems, and does not *per se* lead to a higher degree of participation of local non-government stakeholders. Govan et al. (1998) differentiate public participation into three levels of involvement: 1) passive involvement, where community members are merely informed on decisions taken by the authorities, 2) consultative involvement, where stakeholders are given limited opportunities to express their concerns, and 3) active involvement, which enables participants to take decisions and take over management and planning responsibilities.

Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) is an essential part of sustainable development practice and a dominant paradigm in coastal management (Sorensen, 1993). ICM involves management measures that relate to the feedbacks between economic, ecological, social and natural variability over time and space in order to allow for ecosystems and the human societies they support to exist side by side. It embraces a number of principles such as sustainability, participatory planning and management, and holistic and adaptive management (Cicin-Sain and Belfiore, 2005). The consistency of implemented measures with the coastal human–nature complex as a whole is another fundamental element of ICM. Since ecosystems are a matter of concern to various actors in coastal zones and have to support a plurality of resources and uses, coordination between these actors is a crucial part of ICM (FAO, 1998). The common focus on cooperation, participation, local management and institutional embeddedness highlights complementarity between ICM and decentralization.

### 2.2. Objectives of policy changes in the ICM framework

The key objectives and guiding principles behind many laws and policies of the era of reform and political change in Indonesia and

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