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A new model for the solution of resource use conflicts in coral reef areas.

From integrated coastal management to integrated coastal governance in Palawan, Philippines.

The concept of integrated coastal management (ICM) has received considerable impetus in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the preparatory process for UNCED and then by the Agenda 21 and its ocean and coasts' chapter 17. ICM is a multi-space, multi-sector and multi-level approach. It acknowledges the interrelationship among the terrestrial and marine side of the coast, among single resource uses and its conflicts as well as among the jurisdiction of different levels of government. In order to be sustainable, integrated management must also be an multi-actor approach and consider the integration of all those who are concerned. This requires a conceptual shift to integrated coastal governance (ICG). ICG is a partnership arrangement in which government, the community of resource users and external agents (NGOs, academe etc.), and other stakeholders share the responsibility and authority for the management of coastal resources. The paper analyses the role of political institutions for local ICG in promoting or hindering conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources in rural coastal areas in Palawan, Philippines. The Philippines has gained a store of experiences from several decades practising modern state management of the marine environment. National and international discourses about integrated, community-based and collaborative management approaches have influenced the legal and policy framework for the local governance of coral reef resources. In spite of considerable success, the implementation of these institutions did not prevent the ecological and social degradation in Palawan. There is a major reason for the failure: Due to an imbalance of power among the stakeholders, civil society and especially resource users are not adequately represented in the established local governance bodies and procedures. As long as they do not provide an effective arena for communicating and resolving resource use conflicts, the ecological and social degradation will continue. Action is urgently needed: Coral reefs are one of the most productive and diverse ecosystems of the world, with vital ecological and social functions. Southeast Asia and especially the Philippines are an epicenter of coral species and global marine biodiversity and the growing coastal population is highly dependent on reefs as a source for food and income.