How Change Happens in Complex Landscapes and Seascapes: The case of Seram in the Mollucas

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Case study: Seram, Maluku, Indonesia

• Began in 2015 as collaboration with Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to support conservation in Key Biodiversity Areas in Wallacea

• Our objective: Support local partners in a landscape approach to sustainability in Seram

• Key partners/stakeholders: Pattimura University, local government agencies, communities, and NGOs

• Relevant themes:
  • Cross-sectoral coordination
  • Boundary setting
Matching expectations with on-the-ground realities

- Seram is rich with biocultural diversity – difficult to fit into logframes and management plans
- Diagnosing challenges takes time – trust, communication, partnerships, muddling through
- How to re-position ourselves with donor expectations to meet local aspirations?
Re-thinking our approach

- Transdisciplinary research – co-creating questions, stakeholder workshops
- In villages: historical timelines, landscape scenarios, SWOT, transect walks, network analysis
- **Peripheral agent**, rather than convener/leader
Persistent challenges

- Top-down approach to land management -> low cross-sectoral coordination
- Limited pathways for development without harmful impacts
- Fuzzy boundaries inhibit spatial planning - i.e. Manusela National Park
  - But locals prefer to avoid conflict
- Balancing trade-offs between pressures on marine and land resources
Lessons learned & pathways forward

• Support locally driven initiatives for cross-sectoral collaboration – Ekosistem Essential

• Peripheral agent - benefits of working across scales, with partners, students, drawing from local and international capacity

• Long-term interest but difficulties with COVID19 and funding – how to maintain momentum?

• Will rich diversity in livelihoods and landscapes enable resilience in the face of change?
Role of external support

- Very difficult – avoid “project frameworks”
- Don’t take over the process and duplicate or compete with national institutions
- Draw on World Bank experience of “Building state capability”. – Nudging not driving
- Flexible long-term engagement – peripheral agents
- Principles of “Inductive research” – listening, learning and sharing
Thank you

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