

Environment and Development in coastal regions and small islands. CSI Program UNESCO

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Good morning It's very good to be back in Montevideo, I was here in 1998 at a previous meeting, and I must congratulate the team of Walter Couto and all the participating institutions, as well as IDRC, with the enormous progress made the last three years.

UNESCO has been associated with ECOPLATA since 1996, especially through our colleagues in the UNESCO Montevideo Office. Some of you will probably have picked up the brochure "Tierra, mar y sociedades - hacia un equilibrio sostenible"; you will find English and Spanish versions outside the meeting room. There was a reference yesterday to the Río de Janeiro World Summit in 1992, and let me start with that. After that Conference, and after the 1994 Barbados Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the UNESCO Member States thought it wise to establish what we now refer to as the platform for Coastal Regions and Small Islands (CSI). At the core of the endeavour are the field projects, which involve a number of specialists and counterparts, especially communication specialists, cultural heritage experts, decision makers, education specialists, local communities, managers, scientists, both natural and social scientists. Of course, there are other partners involved as well.

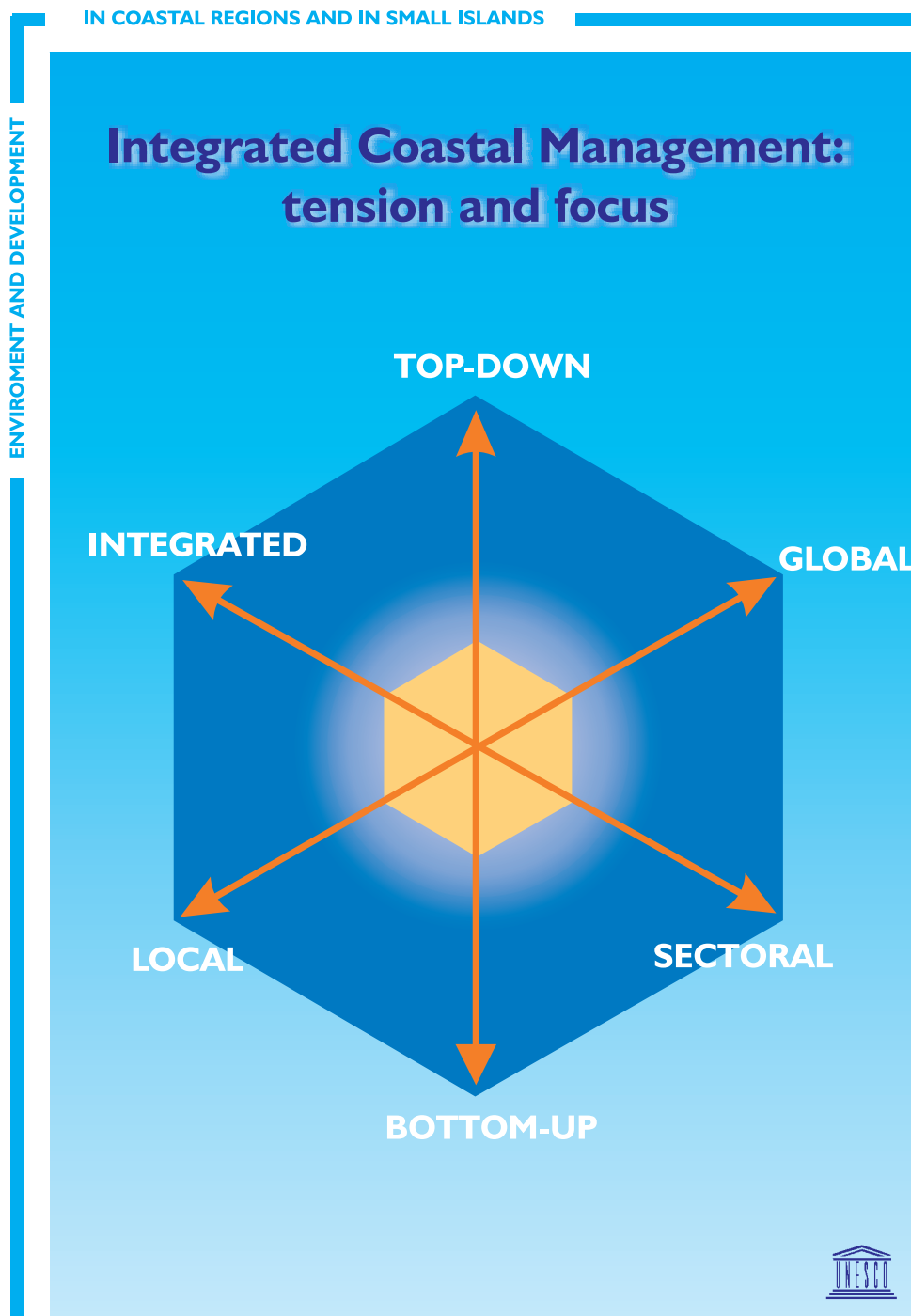
We aim to distil wise coastal development practices and lessons learned from the field. Often, academia is associated, either by groups in faculties, or by dedicated UNESCO Chairs in Sustainable Coastal Development. Wise practices are discussed and redefined by face-to-face meetings as well as through electronic discussion. The present conference can be considered as one of those face-to-face meetings, while all around the world the electronic discussion is ongoing. I come back to that later on.

When considering the overall approach towards a culture of wise practices, the CSI platform promotes cooperative intersectoral actions towards development that is environmentally sound, socially equitable, culturally appropriate and economically viable. This involves colleagues in all five Programme Sectors of UNESCO : culture, natural sciences, social & human sciences, education, communication & information. The field projects are linked to UNESCO Chairs or university faculties and to a virtual forum in order to share lessons learned and elaborate wise practices for sustainable human development.

To explain why we refer to wise rather than best or good practices, let me quote a paragraph from a 1998 workshop report : «As for the specific term 'wise' versus the more common term 'best', as in best practice, best as a superlative, implies the existence of a SINGLE course of action that is superior to all others. Given the social, cultural and ecological diversity of local contexts, to which these recommendations should apply, such a monolithic and inflexible terminology is judged to be inappropriate. » You can easily imagine that we had long arguments and discussions before choosing 'wise' rather than 'best'. The five UNESCO Programme Sectors are potentially very closely interdependent. There are the basic and natural sciences, with new ideas and knowledge, on the one hand, and culture, with traditional ideas and knowledge, on the other hand ; this often creates tensions, which is the domain of social and human sciences. The findings from this interaction between natural science, culture, social and human sciences, can be played out by education and communication.

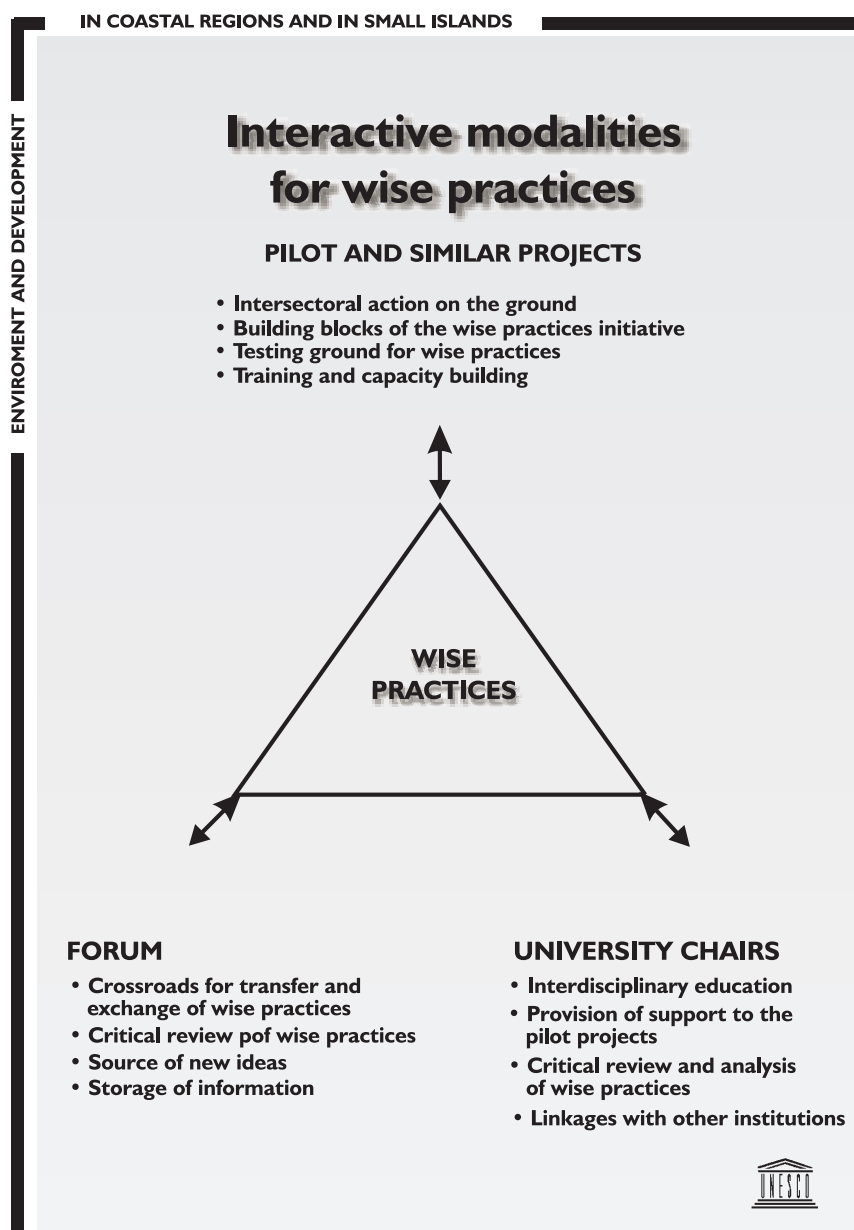
Most of the CSI's 23 field projects were initiated from scratch, some were inherited and others are co-sponsored. In the main, with the ECOPLATA project, we have been morally associated, but we hope to increase UNESCO's

involvement in a more substantial way in the next project phase. CSI field projects are in all regions of the world, all the way from the Pacific to Southeast Asia, India, Europe, Africa, the Caribbean (with Portland Bight in Jamaica, the Gulf of Gonave in Haiti, the Havana Province's south coast, where I was last week); and the Río de la Plata project - we are very pleased with being associated with ECOPLATA. Tensions are experienced in many of the field projects, as is usually the case with initiatives aimed at integrated coastal management. Figure 1 illustrates this tension between top down and bottom up approaches, between global and local, between sectoral and integrated. The focus for all three should be somewhere around the middle, in the yellow core. One cannot have only bottom-up activities, there must be bottom-down support, or political will, in integrated coastal management. One cannot do everything in an integrated fashion, one has to have as well the sectoral activities, such as the management of fisheries, tourism, etc. As for the tension between local and global, one probably has to concentrate also in the middle or at the regional or sub-regional level, and we have heard about that for the Central American countries, and just now from Derek McGlashan for the European countries.



The internet-based discussion forum on ‘wise coastal practices for sustainable human development’ started two years ago. Topics include coastal tourism, fisheries, coastal development, social change, coastal erosion, pollution, community based approaches, human rights and many others. The forum contributions are being used to develop a comprehensive list of wise practices, based on field experiences, which will then be developed into ethical codes of practice, to help resolve conflicts over coastal resources and values, as well as promote sustainable living in coastal regions and small islands. The forum can be accessed at <http://www.csiwisepractices.org> with username *csi* and password *wise*. It is now completely moderated and a posting is made every two weeks with a copy sent by e-mail to the about 6000 people connected. Contributions to the forum can be made by sending a short text either in Spanish, French or English to the <moderator@csiwisepractices.org>. Coincidentally, when I arrived in the Balmoral Hotel, I received an e-mail from a certain Ignacio Lacomba of PROBIDES, who asked how he could make a contribution to the forum. I was able to respond to him that I happened to be in Montevideo, and that we could discuss the matter face-to-face, if he was going to attend this particular meeting. Yesterday, during the cocktail, we had that discussion, which will continue after this presentation.

We have learned that there are major shortcomings with respect to internet access and the use of e-mail; many people in the world, e.g. in Africa, Asia, cannot easily receive attachments, because the local telephone connections are too fragile. For this reason, we keep a copy of all the forum contributions, at the moment close to 200, in paper format, and I will put a copy thereof outside for glancing through. In case you would like to have your own copy, please do not hesitate to ask me.



Wise practices are thus the common denominator of all the activities on the CSI platform. There are several non-CSI projects, which can be considered part of the platform as well. Indeed, the platform is not UNESCO's, it is yours, it is ours, in order to exchange lessons learned, and what we think are wise practices. Of course, one often learns more of unwise practices, and you will find several of them in the forum. A famous case is the so-called «self-destruct theory of tourism», which was communicated with reference to Cancun, by an 80 year-old exploratory geologist, living in the United States of America. Figure 2 illustrates the pivotal role the 'wise practices' play between the pilot and similar projects, the University Chairs, and the forum as a cross-road for transfer and exchange, critical review, source of new ideas, and storage of information. With respect to the latter, the case of a forum contributor from Chumbe, Tanzania, is interesting. She was asked to make an ad-hoc presentation to a meeting in Germany, but did not have reference material with her. She went to a computer, accessed the forum, downloaded her earlier contributions to the forum, and used those for preparing a well-received presentation.

It is all fine and good to talk about wise practices, but what are they? In a 1998 workshop, we came up with 16 characteristics (Fig 3), the last two of which are critically important: documentation (the activity and the lessons learned have been well documented) and evaluation (the activity has been tested to determine the extent to which 'integrated coastal management' has been achieved, and/or wise practices characteristics utilised). The same characteristics are turned into questions to assess projects on the ground - not to evaluate them, saying something is bad or good - but just to focus or refocus follow-up activities. To our surprise, this has proven rather workable. We did not expect this, but on a trial basis, this has proven useful, notwithstanding the fact that none of these characteristics has anything particularly to do with the coast or coastal issues. As well, following the same 1998 workshop, we asked the pilot project leaders to write example wise practices, using the mentioned characteristics. Many found it very useful to review their own projects with their colleagues using the characteristics. The remitting 50 or so example wise practices laid the basis for the virtual forum.

IN COASTAL REGIONS AND IN SMALL ISLANDS

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Wise practices should:

- Ensure long-term benefit;
- provide capacity building and institutional strengthening;
- be sustainable;
- be transferable;
- be interdisciplinary and intersectoral;
- incorporate participatory processes;
- provide for consensus building;
- include an effective and efficient communication process;
- be culturally respectful;
- take account of gender and/or other sensitive issues;
- strengthen local identities;
- shape national legal policy
- encompass the regional dimension;
- provide for human rights;
- be documented;
- be evaluated.



UNESCO's next medium-term strategy concerns the 2002 –2007 period, which includes the theme 'towards sustainable living in coastal regions and small islands'. It should be taken into account that UNESCO is not a funding agency, but can provide seed funds in the order of 10 to 20 thousand US Dollars on a yearly basis for a particular project. I recently read something in The Economist that relates to this, and which I am using often : « ideas are our capital, the rest is just money ». Money is important, but ideas are more important. For the coming years, there are several strategic objectives. Firstly, to provide a focus and model for effective sustainable and replicable, intersectoral, and interdisciplinary action in UNESCO Member States. It is very important to refer to intersectorality, because in many institutions around the world (including UNESCO), things are often compartmentalised, and do not easily allow the integrated approach required by coastal problems. Secondly, for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to further and support the so-called Barbados Plan of Action. We are not on a small island here, but the relation between coasts and small islands is obvious. Small islands are coastal regions in their entirety. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the U.N., in his introductory speech to the 'Barbados + 5' Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly in September 1999, said the following: « The world's small island developing states are frontline zones where, in concentrated form, many of the main problems of environment and development are enfolding ». I was in Cuba yesterday, and while that is a big SIDS, erosion, sea-level rise and hurricane impact are forcing a coastal community to move 5 km. inland. In the Pacific, certain people, living on low-lying islands, are buying up islands in higher places, in order to move there with their families when the sea-level rise causes inundation of their low-lying islands.

The third objective, which we hope to achieve together with counterparts around the world, is the establishment of a set of tested wise practices, guidelines and principles that address the main concerns facing societies in coastal regions and small islands. Some of the main coastal concerns include the six priority issues for the Small Island Developing States: coastal urbanisation and industrialisation, biodiversity loss, tourism impacts, demise of traditional knowledge and practice - a very important aspect in many of these small islands in the Pacific and Caribbean - coastal erosion, fresh water security, and the decline of coastal marine living resources and fisheries.

I am confident that this focus on 'wise coastal practices for sustainable human development' will allow us to go from oceans of data, seas of information, rivers of knowledge, to drops of wisdom. Thank you very much.

Medio ambiente y desarrollo en regiones costeras y pequeñas islas

Resumen

UNESCO ha estado asociada a ECOPLATA desde 1996, pero espera involucrarse de forma considerable en la próxima fase del proyecto. Una de las funciones de UNESCO es intentar transmitir los aprendizajes y las experiencias sobre prácticas sensatas de desarrollo costero en áreas piloto. Estas experiencias se pueden discutir mediante talleres como este, o foros de discusión por correo electrónico.

Muchos proyectos piloto experimentan tensiones. Como es usual, en iniciativas enfocadas al manejo integrado de zonas costeras, existen tensiones entre un enfoque top-down y bottom-up, global y local, y sectorial e integrado. En la realidad no todo se puede hacer con un enfoque bottom-up, también se requiere de apoyo político y no todo puede ser integrado, además deben existir actividades sectoriales como un manejo de pesquerías o turismo.

Probablemente el punto medio debería estar entre estos tres extremos. Las estrategias de UNESCO para los próximos años incluyen: 1) Proveer un enfoque o modelo efectivo para llevar a cabo acciones sostenibles, reproducibles, intersectoriales e interdisciplinarias; 2) Apoyar el Plan de Acción de Barbados; y 3) Establecer, con el apoyo de todos, una serie de normas y prácticas sensatas aprobadas, para tratar los temas costeros.

Preguntas

I.

Hermann Leis: Permítame felicitarlo por la exposición. Pero quisiera que por favor nos ilustrara acerca del conocimiento que usted tenga, no de prácticas inteligentes, sino de prácticas estúpidas. Gracias.

Dirk Troost: Can I call them unwise practices? It is a good question. What is clear is that the tourist domain appears, also from the forum, as an area where enormous mistakes have been made. We have heard that coastal management is an investment, and not necessarily a drain on the purse. Nevertheless, many unsustainable developments have been and are imitated. The Cancun case in Mexico came out very strongly on the forum. There will be a counter argument posted to the forum by some people in Cancun who argue that it is not so bad after all ; the ensuing discussion will be very interesting and will determine whether it is unwise, less unwise or wise. Coastal erosion is another dimension. Beach or dune sand mining come out as serious issues in many discussions. Sand mining is everywhere, either as an industrial operation, or carried out by poor families. In Dakar, Senegal, families were trucking away sand from the beach in small carriages. Of course, marking on the beach "do not take sand", does not work. It does not work in Senegal, nor in other similar parts of the world, because you have to give an alternative income to the people. If the family is hungry, and the only source of income is sand, you just cannot say "do not take the sand", because that is unfair. So, you are getting into the relation with poverty, and I think poverty is a driving force of the disintegration of many environmental situations, especially in coastal areas. I may come up with a few other foolish facts, or unwise practices, if I think about it, and then we can discuss them maybe later on.