

RESMANMED Resource management in karstic areas of the coastal regions of the Mediterranean, (1997-2000)

FP4 - ERBIC18CT970151

<http://www.environmentalmalta.com/page.asp?pageid=26>

COLASU Sustainability of Mediterranean coastal lagoon ecosystems under semi-arid climate (2002-2005)

FP5 - ICA3-CT-2002-10012

<http://www.colasu.com/>

OPTIMA Optimisation of sustainable water resources in the Mediterranean, FP6 INCO-Med Project (2004-2007)

FP6 - INCO-CT-2004-509091

<http://www.ess.co.at/optima/>

Projects (1) and (3) are 'resource' based, while (2) is 'ecosystem' based.

Need for stakeholder involvement: a learning experience for IRMCo

Generally speaking, it can be considered that (1) enabled IRMCo to gain an in-depth experience in GIS and remote sensing, but it was felt that the project could have had more impact if the stakeholders had been actively involved throughout the project duration (and not only towards the end).

Consequently, in (2) IRMCo elaborated on a set of tasks to engage the stakeholders from the start of the project. Progress on the stakeholder-related initiatives was documented in each of the periodic and annual management reports. In particular, these initiatives included a series of one-to-one meetings with the stakeholders (particularly in case of Tunisia), but the target to organize a workshop with all stakeholders attending proved more difficult to achieve. A joint workshop with the parallel Melmarina (FP5-INCO) project on the topic of lagoons was organized in Tunis and proved most beneficial from a research point of view.

With (3), a socio-economic framework analysis has been transmitted to the Commission – which includes an analysis of the priority ranking to a 'Water Issues Questionnaire' as assigned by stakeholders in seven case studies. The dissemination activities foresee the organization of workshops with the stakeholders in some of the case studies. During the initial phase of this project, IRMCo elaborated on the objectives and expected results of a dissemination strategy to engage and secure the active involvement of stakeholders. (see Annex – Stakeholder Dissemination Strategy).

Communication

(1) non-technical summary of the project results through newspaper articles – including a special Supplement to the Sunday Times of Malta

(1) presentation at International Conference on Karst Water Resources on the application and adaptation of the SAGE methodology. (see Scientific papers listed below). In SAGE, stakeholders perceptions are analysed according to 2 pre-defined matrices (actors-actors and actors-actions)

(2) communication (by letter) to stakeholders at the start of the project. Follow-up through a series of one-to-one meetings with stakeholders, advising on progress and to attract interest in anticipated project results. This was instrumental in guiding the research (Life Cycle Assessment – LCA) on three human activities with the active assistance of the stakeholders (organizations) directly responsible for the management of waste water stations in both Tunisia and Morocco and a fishery concern in Morocco.

(2) presentation at Int'l Workshop on 'Geomatics for Land and Water management: Achievements and Challenges in the Euromed context' of IRMCo's 'learning curve' to secure stakeholder involvement. (see Scientific papers listed below)

(2) Posters on Colasu project entitled 'Utilising GIS to meet the expectations of the local community'. (see Scientific papers listed below).

(3) communication (by letter) to stakeholders identified by partners in seven case studies, introducing the research, and inviting these to respond to a 'Water Issues Questionnaire'. (further dissemination activities, including workshops to construct 'water management scenarios' in active consultation with stakeholders are being planned).

Development or implementation of locally consistent IWRM?

It does not appear likely that such enhancement could be achieved as a result of these (individual) research projects alone. However, research on this aspect (2) suggested that the uptake of IWRM in several of the MEDA countries has been enhanced following their signing of International Conventions and Agreements.

Each of the research projects included a 'comparative review' of the existing legislative framework in the Meda partner countries. While in most countries, legislation remains fragmented, the uptake of IWRM concepts has – at least in some countries – been 'project' driven. By the latter, we mean 'national' projects with a time horizon that is often of not less than five years. Faster progress would appear to have been made in those countries which introduced – and implemented – more rigid water quality control legislation, and most importantly – countries which introduced the requirement of conducting Environmental Impact Assessments. As can be expected, the EIA process offers a concrete means for direct consultation with stakeholders.

In our experience, the skills and tools that were developed through the INCO projects, enabled us to produce 'user-friendly' maps which provide a visual display of the project results that can be understood by a larger audience.

Role of local and traditional knowledge with science

(1) provided the means to document – through maps – the importance of maintaining the island's so-called 'rubble walls', which are today considered as an integral part of the cultural heritage of the Island of Gozo'. Similarly, vegetation maps could be linked to traditional 'cottage' industries which are rapidly disappearing.

(2) does not appear applicable

Take up by managers, policy makers, educators

The research outcomes contributed to the idea of developing a government subsidy scheme for farmers to restore and maintain the island's 'rubble walls'. This was complemented with a government training programme on the traditional ways of constructing these walls

Contribution to capacity building legacy

Unlikely on the basis of these research projects alone. As an example, the training provided to PhD and MSc students in each of the research projects would not appear to offer any guaranteed contribution to a capacity building 'legacy'.

Longer-term institutional cooperation

In our experience, organizations who previously undertook joint research and educational activities are often 'better disposed' to working as a 'team'.

Enduring legacy of the project (political, social, economic, scientific, and connections to traditional knowledge)

We cannot underestimate the scientific legacy of the RESMANMED and COLASU projects which have been completed.

(1) provided very useful insights into the special vulnerability associated with karst terrains, which were the object of our contribution to further research in the framework of Cost Actions 620 and 621.

(2) explored the possible linking of the two management tools which were used, i.e. GIS and the LCA (Life Cycle Assessment – ISO 14040), and was at the basis of the development of a new approach to the LCA, in which it is recognized that the system under investigation is not an industrial process but an ecosystem. The Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie has already awarded a PhD bursary to study the impact of heavy metals and pesticides on El Meleh lagoon. This thesis will employ the LCA, adapted in Colasu to study an ecosystem

rather than an industrial process, and will continue to monitor the pollution transfer within the lagoon until 2007, i.e. up to two years after the end of the Colasu project.

In our experience, the existing political and socio-economic aspects should be carefully considered and taken up as 'constraints' when searching for any 'optimum' solution. We see it as very important to invite the views and perceptions of stakeholders – not by teaching them about the efficiency of the tools that are being developed – but by learning from their experience. The target of any type of stakeholder 'activity' should be to create a 'favourable atmosphere' that is aimed at gaining the understanding and eventual acceptance of the research findings. [Comment of panel - this comment indicates an awareness of the problem of constructive engagement but not a deep engagement with it. 'Constraints' are reciprocal: a constraint is in the eye of the beholder.]

Local, 'grass-root' experience that would be valuable as case material for the WWF4 discussions?

We see our experience as a 'learning curve' – and we consider it important to also communicate this experience to scientific 'peers'.

Recommendations arising from the experience of having (or not) impact on discourse and action outside science to be taken into account for future research (e.g. FP7)

In our view, rather than a 'recommended' approach, it is more urgent that the scientific community accepts the importance of taking on board stakeholders and endusers – either as partners in the consortium – or by planning for concrete dissemination activities beyond the 'science' events.

The report also included a stakeholder dissemination strategy.