



Environmental Science Graduate Program Student Seminar Series

The impact of decentralization on Integrated Watershed Management (IWM): A case study in the Wanggu Watershed, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract

The complex system of watersheds involves interconnections of the water cycle, human behaviors, and the surrounding environment. The high demand for water resources due to the growing population throughout the world leads to the need for better management of the watershed. Shifting management of the watershed as part of the decentralization system remains a challenge, particularly in developing countries. Decentralized watershed governance is usually facing problems, including the transfer of authority from federal to regional and local government, capacity and resources of local stakeholders, institutional management of the watershed, and policy and regulation.

By utilizing the qualitative method, this study presents a case study of collaborative watershed management in Indonesia. It studies how the presence of five supporting conditions of successful collaborative watershed projects have influenced outcomes on two integrated watershed management projects that operate at different scales: the Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Forum (SESPWF) and collaborations in the Wanggu Watershed in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. These conditions include knowledge and awareness, adequacy of representation, financial support and resources, policy coordination, and organizational sustainability. This study also explores how broader movements toward the decentralization of governance in Indonesia have impacted dynamics in these collaborative watershed projects.

This research found the five key drivers were present at both the provincial and local levels. However, the SESPWF and WW projects' main accomplishments appear to be focused on establishing processes and early implementation of activities. Evidence of significant improvements in watershed environmental conditions is much more difficult to find at this stage. Additionally, decentralization has impacted the dynamic management in both the SESPWF and the WW. Broadly, the system had positively accelerated collaboration among actors. Interestingly, international projects had contributed to it. On the other hand, to some extent, decentralization may affect the level of participation of lower-level stakeholders. Further research that engages multiple watersheds, particularly by contrasting situations with or without international project involvement as well as exploring how transaction costs affect the degree of participation and interaction between the higher and lower level decision-makers, will be valuable to advance this field of research.