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FRANCE 2030 RESEARCH PROGRAM
FISHERIES AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN

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Observing the Environment and Society: How to Build Social-Ecological Systems Observatories?



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Lessons learned from environmental observatories

Definition

An observatory is an organised, long-term system that gathers, analyses and disseminates information on a territory, an environment or an activity, in order to understand its state, monitor its changes and inform decision-making.

Core mission

- Observe (collect data, ensure access)
- Analyse and interpret (data management, etc.)
- Optimise monitoring, produce knowledge
- Communicate (popularise, make accessible)

Stance and philosophy

- Objectivity and scientific rigour
- Continuity over time to detect trends
- Pooling of resources and networking

An observatory is not meant to define or implement public policy. It informs choices.

Lessons learned from environmental observatories

Birth of an observatory

- In a crisis situation: Bretagne Environnement and OEIL
- To implement a strategy: Nord Pas-de-Calais, Coastal Fisheries Observatory in Wallis and Futuna (OPC)
- To meet long-term scientific knowledge needs

Typology of observatories

- Scientific (e.g. CRIOBE)
- Institutional (e.g. Nord Pas-de-Calais, Water Resource Observatory in Nord Pas-de-Calais, OPC)
- Collegial (OEIL, BE)

Governance: sponsorship, support, decision-making

- Who is it made up of? Who funds it? Who runs it? Who protects it?

What is an observatory for?

- Before starting, consider the conditions for its long-term viability
- It is better not to invest in an observatory than to shut it down after 3 years!

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