

Key-note Theme 2

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The challenge of establishing sustainable utilisation of our coastal resources

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Abstract

How can we manage a resource when we do not fully understand the ecological consequences of all our management options? How do we prioritise human activities and their impacts, when we do not have an integrated tool for assessing the ecological, economical and social consequence of prioritising an activity? The impact of human activities acts on different temporal and spatial scales and may be difficult to document especially in cases where the activity has been taking place for a long period of time, has become an integrated part of the local culture and no documentation exists of the original conditions. A human activity may have variable impacts depending on the level, extent or nature of the activity, and whether or not it recurs within or beyond the adaptive rates of that particular ecosystem. Several activities may have compound effects and in certain cases conflicts may arise when two activities depend on the same resource but where one or the other may impact the resource in a way as to radically alter or even destroy that resource. In some cases, ecosystem impacts arise from activities that take place beyond the management boundaries for that ecosystem. Examples of resource degradation or habitat degradation are plentiful and there is a well-recognised need for a science-based approach and integrated management of our ecosystems. This paper reviews some of the problems and challenges facing scientists and managers in their endeavours to establish sustainable uses of local coastal resources.