## Estuaries Of The World: A New Approach To Estuarine Ecology

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Estuaries are amongst the most endangered ecosystems in the world. Pollution, eutrophication, urbanization, land reclamation; over fishing and exploitation continuously threaten their future. The major challenge that humans face today is managing their use, so that future generations can also enjoy the fantastic visual, cultural and edible products that they provide. Such an approach presupposes that all users of the environment share views and are able to communicate wisely on the basis of robust science. The need for robust science is pressing. Over the last decade there have been numerous advances in both understanding and approach to estuaries and more and more multidisciplinary studies are now available. The available scientific information has come from a multiplicity of case studies and projects local and national levels. Regional and global programs have been developed; some are being implemented and some are in evolution. However, despite the rapidly increasing knowledge about estuarine ecosystems, crucial questions on the causes of variability and the effects of global change are still poorly understood. Although the perception of politicians and managers of coasts is slowly shifting from a mainly short-term economic approach towards a long-term socio-economic / ecological perspective, there is a need to make existing scientific information much more manageable by non-specialists, without compromising the quality of the information. The "Estuaries of the World" special session will be based on a new book series launched by Springer. It will give the opportunity to the scientific community to assemble existing knowledge on essential sites all around the world. It will include selected invited papers and is intended for researchers, practitioners, undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines who are dealing with complex problems and looking for cutting-edge research as well as methodological tools to set up truly transversal science and technology projects, such as the restoration of damaged habitats. This presentation will attempt to summarise the philosophy which supports this new approach to estuarine ecology and, doing so, introducing the special session dedicated to "Estuaries of the World".