

# **Sustainable Beaches along the Spanish Mediterranean? The Risks and Opportunities of Regeneration**

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## **Abstract**

Our paper is related to the results of research carried out along the coast of Catalunya in Spain. This research was based on an opinion poll carried out among the actual users of 8, regenerated beaches. By 'regenerated' we mean beaches that have undergone changes in their morphology and traditional landscape.

We have been able to discover peoples' level of perception of the impact on landscape and environment, as well as their evaluation of the comfort and satisfaction experienced of the services offered, through our research. The final aim is to find out the basic parameters that lead to the proposal of criteria that cover the expectations of the users, authorities and financial agents that are involved in the coastal space.

The situation of the sedimentary beaches in Spain is one of scarcity and loss of sand that advises future action to be taken that will maintain or even increase this resource. The stretches of coastline that have been studied have been the object of several actions of this type over the duration of the study. In fact, the intensive nature of human occupation of the coast is growing: urban expansion, channelling of riverbeds, construction of reservoirs. These and other causes have a final effect on the dynamic sedimentary balance of the coastline. "In situ" it is also interfered with by the construction of ports and other coastal defence works. What all this activity does is to diminish the provision and transport of sediment. This has a negative effect on the coastline causing the erosion of a large number of beaches. With this situation, any action directed toward maintaining and restoring beach spaces are, and will be, more and more normal.

At this time it has been proved that the impact of technical actions taken on beaches have provoked a negative opinion on the part of users and there are many strata that, in accordance with local circumstance, make their criticism felt, and even provoke a certain amount of social alarm because of the social and financial influence of the beaches on a local level. The users; bathers, fishermen, ecologists, life-savers, financial agents, and even the municipal authorities, complain that the new situation lowers quality, safety, comfort, landscape, in fact in general the attractiveness of beaches that were vivid before. With the research presented at the international meeting MEDCOAST 99, a proposal will be presented for the organisation and planning of the coastal space that intends to launch a bridge between technical intervention and the consensus of social expectations referring to the use of beaches.