

BUILT UPON SAND AND SEA: THE IMPACT OF SHIFTS IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ON FRAGILE COASTLINES

Posted on 24 Ottobre 2013 by Storia e Futuro



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di **John Cumber, Ts'ui-jung Liu, Federico Paolini**

Coasts have for centuries been centers of fascination for their fragile beauty and places of varied economic activity. Although economic activity along the coast had taken an environmental toll in the distant past, the negative consequence of expanded economic activity along fragile coastal regions in more recent times has raised significant concerns. More extensive use of coastal areas for industrial production and/or tourism has generated economic growth, but it has also engendered increased environmental costs on the ecology. These increased costs threaten fragile coastal regions and put at risk the very economic activity which helped create the initial economic and population growth.

These articles (presented at 6th ESEH Conference in Turku, 28 June-2 July 2011) investigate expanded utilization of fragile coastal areas of Tuscany (Italy), Taiwan's West Coast, and Cape Cod (Massachusetts, Usa).

In the case of Tuscany, twentieth century development of industrial activity, especially the chemical industry and the attraction of the coast as a tourist destination increasingly subject the region to pollution, congestion and saltwater infusion. Nowadays, local authorities must deal with high expenditure to manage natural resources (especially fresh waters).

The west coast of Taiwan is a varied ecology of mostly sandy composition. The development of aquaculture and industrial parks across the region engendered economic growth but at significant environmental costs.

Cape Cod's extractive productive economy of fishing, boatbuilding, salt-works, and farming by the middle of the nineteenth century had pushed past its environmental limits and the region went into a period of economic decline. That decline was halted by the expansion of tourism in the twentieth century. But that new economy created its own environmental costs particularly to its water systems.

All three of these articles focus on how human economic activity, within a fragile coastal environment create economic growth but at significant environmental costs. They also investigate how these environmental costs put at risk that very economic activity.

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