

Participatory Risk Assessment of Tourism Development in Coastal Areas: Challenges and Implications for Management on the KwaZulu-Natal Coast

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ABSTRACT Geographic concentration of coastal tourism and its associated development impacts are strongly associated with proximity to the littoral zone. Concurrently, this is an area where normative collaboration, policy and science rarely coincide. Poor understandings of interlinks between coastal ecosystems by both public and private entities has led to short-sighted tourist investment which fails to consider beach capacity or resource constraints. The results are the loss of ecosystem services which critically impair the resilience of coastlines, making them susceptible to natural and climate-related risks. Concerns and contestations over natural resources are entrenched in ecological, economic and social dynamics. However tourism tends to favour the economic, which is inadequate. The potential for high-income, mass and ecotourism is huge along the KwaZulu-Natal coastline which is relatively undeveloped. The objective of this study emphasizes a participatory risk assessment of the tourism sector by interrogating land use-ecology interactions as necessary for optimal relationships between coastal uses and protection of coastal ecosystems. Key findings reveal that there are stressors acting cumulatively on individual ecosystems, thus the need to adopt a strategic view to management. Furthermore, the tourism footprint emerged as being larger than the industry itself, implying the potential benefits of integration across different sectors, stakeholders and legislation along the coast, with regard to tourism and its associated development.