ABSTRACT

Large-scale coastal tourism and development of seaside resorts has taken its toll on the sustainability of our natural coastal landscape. The level of human's impact on the coastal fronts can be seen in the vast variance in their appearances; from landscapes where changes are almost imperceptible to cases where cultural features visually dominates. Land conversion processes in coastal communities is often dominated by strip developments whereby shorefront property owners alter the natural landforms to suit their needs and the users aggravates the extend of its destruction unknowingly through uncontrolled usage that is beyond its carrying capacity.

The value of beachfronts to tourism more often than not over-rides the need for its conservation and restoration. Dynamism in landforms due to natural processes (eg. effects of waves and wind on shorelines, rising sea level) is often perceived as a hazard to coastal developments rather than as a natural regeneration of the coastal conditions. Publicity stunts to market beach resorts as the ideal tourist destination end up reducing the value of coasts to that of mere aesthetics; essence of which lies in the degree of closeness of man-made simulations to meeting of the users' expectations. Though total reversion to dynamic systems is unlikely in situations where its restoration poses threats to human investments or recreational needs, efforts can still be made to achieve a compromise of natural and human values.

Sustainability of coastal fronts should be seen as a long-term goal involving all stakeholders and users alike. There is a pressing need for a re-establishment of a 'coastal culture' where concepts of eco-tourism with concepts of environmental management and hazard reduction can be put across to all. Though restoration works are dependent on the national and state authorities in offering of financial and legislative support, effective transition to sustainability still lies very much at the level of individuals. Environmental education focussing on the ecology of the coast could be integrated into the 'total experience' of the users to help them comprehend the 'true nature' in the landscape; to realise the need for restoration and the roles they can and should play in the process.