Coastal settlements, then and now

An EU team developed a new understanding of the history and future of coastal regions. The study examined the period between the late Stone Age and early Bronze Age, and developed tools for assessing and managing coastal archaeological sites.

Coastal zones have been population centres since prehistoric times. Understanding coastal landscapes is especially important today, given threats from sea-level rises. Social studies and archaeology may contribute to such understanding.

The EU-funded ESCOPES (Evolving spaces: Coastal landscapes of the Neolithic in the European land ends) project investigated the subject via a two-part programme of research and heritage management. The team planned to offer a new understanding to the construction and dynamics of European coastal landscapes from the Neolithic to early Bronze Age (4500 to 2200 BCE). The second goal was to assess and manage the vulnerability of coastal archaeological heritage, involving development of a set of tools. Study methods involved fieldwork in three of the westernmost regions of Europe, geographical information technologies and photogrammetry.

The first major achievement was contribution to a significant international analysis of prehistoric monument architectures. The stage involved analysis of the project's various case studies.

ESCOPE's key contribution was new methodologies for analysis and monitoring of deteriorating coastal archaeological sites. The methods involved use of close-range photogrammetry called structure from motion. The technique is applicable to both researchers and policymakers as a decision-making tool.

Researchers also built a network of international institutions. Several publications and research ventures emerged as a result.

As a step towards engaging with civil society, the project undertook the Guidoiro Dixital initiative. The plan involved gathering private photographs and videos of the sites, analysing the materials and in return providing public updates about the research.

The ESCOPE project advanced the field of study of prehistoric monumental architectural sites. In the process, the study produced new methods and helped with policy decision making.

Related information
Subjects
Scientific Research

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