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REVIEW REPORT (A)

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This article is well written and contributes mainly to two dimensions of the TOMO's Special Issue on beach grabbing: first, "the legitimacy of access to nature as a common good," and second, "debates surrounding environmental justice, sea level rise, and coastal erosion." The article shows us the various dimensions that intersect in a resilience plan to maintain access to nature as a common good. However, how legitimate is the presented plan in the reality of California? (That is, how accepted, disseminated, and promoted is it today among people, public institutions, and private actors?) The article shows the connection between current debates on SLR, coastal erosion, and environmental justice and goes further, bringing both physical and social, cultural, and economic dimensions that intersect. Reading the article is inspiring both in the sense of providing an overview of several issues currently at stake in California and in understanding how they are being structured and systematized.
Below, I list some questions aiming at improvements to be considered by the authors:
Introduction:

1. One suggestion is to bring more data about the CCC. A reader not familiar with the reality of California may not understand the importance of the CCC. Who composes the CCC? How does it maintain its role as a protector of public interests? Does this change according to change in political administrations? On page 06, California State Lands Commission is mentioned. On page 07, California Ocean Protection Council is mentioned. Would it be possible to create a diagram of these councils showing how they relate, at what level they operate to better situate the reader?

2. The article effectively presents the scenario of sea level rise (SLR) and the potential disappearance of 24% to 75% of Southern California beaches. Does this data refer specifically to sandy beaches? The use of percentages is helpful in conveying the alarming scale of the issue. The article argues that the loss of beaches will lead to increased conflict, but it does not include data on coastal population growth or tourism expansion. While it is clear that California is losing physical space, is public and economic interest in that space simultaneously increasing? Including such data would further strengthen the argument that conflicts over coastal access and use are likely to intensify.

3. On page 05, I suggest just clarifying, especially considering the international reader, whether the public trust doctrine is part of the California Coastal Act of 1972 mentioned at the beginning of the article.

4. On page 06, you discuss a future scenario. But if conflicts already exist under current conditions, imagine a situation in which private property overlaps with public land. This raises an important question: Is there any political group advocating for a change in the law to eliminate the notion of tidelands as public? Or is there a broad consensus that the area between the high and low tide lines must always remain public? One additional question: Is the measurement of high and low tide regularly updated?

In sum, I believe the introduction could benefit from a clearer structuring of the argument as

follows: begin by presenting the central conflict—namely, the disappearance of beaches, the threat posed by sea level rise (SLR), and the urgent need for action. Then, include a brief contextual paragraph explaining that, since the enactment of the California Coastal Act in 1972, various measures have been taken, including the creation of governing councils. This would be the place to outline which councils are currently the most active, how they operate, how they gain legitimacy, and how they relate to each other—leading up to the role of the California Coastal Commission (CCC) and the introduction of the Beach Resilience Plan.

Sections presenting the key topics addressed in the Resilience Plan

5. The Beach Resilience Plan places public access as one element among others (ecology, risk mitigation, cultural and tribal, economics, and social equity). I was wondering whether the issue of access should not be the umbrella for everything: access to an ecologically balanced, safe, culturally and socially diverse, and economically sustainable environment. On one hand, there is the option of closing access to protect, as in a reserve. But that is not the case. The point brought by the resilience plan is to guarantee access to all of this (ecologically balanced, safe, culturally and socially diverse, and economically sustainable environment) freely and without hindrance. I am inspired by this text by Ribot et al. which assumes that we understand access in a dynamic and relational way. (Ribot, J. C. & Peluso, N. L. (2003). A theory of access. Rural Sociology, 68(2), 153–181)

6. In the section Beach Access and Recreation, is the concept of meaningful access an original contribution by the authors? The term meaningful is italicized, drawing particular attention to it. When the authors pose the question, “Should all beaches have visitation maximized?”, how does the existing literature in California address the issue of beach carrying capacity? Is there any discussion on tailoring access or management strategies according to the specific characteristics of each beach type (e.g., surf beaches, family beaches, beaches for cultural rituals, etc.)?

7. In the Economics section, municipal revenue is mentioned as arising from taxes. Is there any debate in California about the flow of money generated by tourism? For example, in Brazil, due to social inequality in cities whose main income source is sun-and-sea tourism, there is much discussion about how the incoming funds are distributed. Often, the revenue is not redistributed to the local population, and tourism ends up sustaining existing privilege structures. In Italy, the profits of some stabilimenti balneari are questioned because, from this perspective, excessive profit should not be made on demanio marittimo (state-owned maritime lands). In Australia, on the other hand, any commercial concession on crown land—whether a kiosk or a surf instructor—must return part of the profits to the local community; otherwise, the concession is not considered legitimate. Is there a similar discussion in California about how tourism-generated revenue is distributed and whether it supports local communities, or is this an aspect that deserves more attention?

8. Does the Resilience Plan provide any guidance or perspective on how these discussions might be developed in practice? For example, are there plans to establish working groups or collaborative forums? Which agencies or stakeholder groups in California would be invited to participate in discussions on each specific topic—such as Economics, Cultural/Tribal issues, and others?

9. Is there any international influence guiding or informing the plan, such as alignment or dialogue with UN principles like the Blue Economy or programs like the Blue Flag? For instance, environmental education is a key component of the Blue Flag program. Does the plan address environmental education as a distinct dimension, or is it integrated within the ecological and environmental justice components?

10. On page 15, the paper states: “Beaches are spaces where power, access, ownership, and ecological vulnerability intersect.” Regarding the dimension of power, in addition to the works of Bruno and Salle, I suggest including a relevant text by Australian authors about the role social social networks influencing the development of public policies in coastal management.

*Bruno, I., & Salle, G. (2017). 'État ne touche pas à mon matelas!' Conflits d’usage et luttes d’appropriation sur la plage de Pampelonne. Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, 218, 26–45.

*Bruno, I., & Salle, G. (2018). 'Before long there will be nothing but billionaires!' The power of elites over space on the Saint-Tropez peninsula. Socio-Economic Review, 16(2), 435–458.
*Clarke, Selina Tually & Michael Scott (2016) Social networks and decision-making for coastal land-use planning, development and adaptation response, Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs, 8:2, 101-116.

11. I would also propose introducing the concept of moralities—that is, spaces "where power, access, ownership, and ecological vulnerability intersect and produce a moral dimension of the beach," reflecting the shared social understandings of what a beach is and should be. Since beaches are already contested spaces, and these conflicts are likely to intensify, it follows that the core disputes—centered on collective definitions of the beach's meaning and purpose—are fundamentally moral in nature. Several authors have explored the moral dimensions of beach conflicts. If we recognize this moral dimension, then it becomes clear that resolving and accommodating moral issues is a necessary first step before public policies can be effectively implemented. This process involves accepting that beaches are publicly accessible but that access is inherently stratified. To illustrate, I witnessed a concrete example: guests at a beachfront resort were sunbathing with the expectation of a quiet, peaceful day. It happened to be the day of Iemanjá—a sacred figure in Afro-Brazilian religions. A group of worshippers arrived with a sound system and percussion instruments, remaining from mid-morning until sunset, singing and dancing continuously, thereby blocking the guests' direct view of the sea. The guests left the beach, and one became furious. Conflict ensued: one group demanded silence, while the other asserted their right to noise as part of their cultural tradition. The lack of diversity led to conflict over access itself, while diversity introduced conflict over the forms of access.

12. Regarding adaptation, Setha Low's book includes a chapter on the Post-Political Beach, a concept describing the current European context where various forms of beach grabbing occur alongside a declining civil society interest in defending their rights to access nature—and beaches in particular. In contrast, California's councils serve as institutional actors striving to prevent this outcome by ensuring that such rights are upheld. Is there any research measuring how well Californians actually understand their rights to access natural spaces? What is the general public's perception of beach access rights? Are there any surveys, public hearings, or participatory processes that could inform and support the multiple dimensions of the Resilience Plan?

Two readings to consider regarding Environmental Justice and public beach access:
MONTGOMERY, M. C; CHAKRABORTY, J; GRINESKI, S. E; COLLINS, T. W. An environmental justice assessment of public beach access in Miami, Florida. Applied Geography, v. 62; 2015. pp.147-156
KIM, J; LYU, S.O; SONG, H. Environmental Justice and Public Beach Access. City and Community, v.18, n01, 2019. DOI: 10.1111/cico.12372

These suggestions are offered as possible improvements to the text but do not impede its suitability for publication. Therefore, the manuscript is approved for publication.