



Press Release

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"Between the Devil and the Deep blue Sea"

Coastal "squeeze" traps coastal people between the "Devil and the Deep blue sea", around 45% of the world population now lives in coastal zones that represent only 5% of the land surface. We are suffering from a "global, coastal syndrome" is the conclusion of an international and interdisciplinary group of coastal scientists invited recently to Oslo by the global LOICZ project.

Expansion of coastal cities is accompanied by a decline in the quality of life of the people, which was the reason they moved to the coastal zone instead of bringing growing welfare to the inhabitants. Many Megacities such as Tokyo (pop. 36 000 000), New York (22 000 000) and London (12 000 000) are found in the coastal zone. Coastal protection measures give a sense of false security and require increasingly expensive infrastructure.

The treatment and cure of these coastal syndromes includes renewable energy, recycled water and solid waste, sourcing locally grown foods and attention to social equity issues, especially in education and healthcare. We also need innovation in "soft" engineering for coastal defense, spatial planning and managed realignment and there are successful show cases for this.

Up to now, governments at all scales, from local to international, have largely failed to seriously implement integrated management in coastal zones. This has placed people at risk of disasters such as hurricane Katrina and the Banda Aceh tsunami. The interconnection of coastal processes with upstream management in river catchment has widely been ignored, causing coastal erosion, lack of runoff, nutrient shortage and subsiding deltas.

The pace of change in general is increasing and regionally we are already seeing both economic and climate-change refugees. In parallel, we see climate entrepreneurs eager to exploit Arctic resources. Climate change is exposing the fragile Arctic coasts and ecosystems as well as their vulnerable inhabitants, who subsist on traditional lifestyles, to increasing risks.

Innovation is needed to solve the widespread problems, if we are to turn the tide of losses. We must enable governance at all scales from intergovernmental engagement to the individual, personal choices that may counteract the tyranny of "small and short sighted decisions".

These are the conclusions of 40 international experts from wide ranging disciplines including economics, social sciences and natural sciences who met for an intensive, 5 day workshop near Oslo, Norway. They came from 6 continents to review the development of coastal zones and society worldwide.

The workshop was organized by LOICZ (Land-Ocean Interactions in the Coastal Zone), a core project of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme and the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change.

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