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Why do social-cultural aspects matter when it comes to safeguarding our shores?

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TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE EUROPE

- **40.8 % of the EU 27 population live in coastal regions which covered 40.0 % of EU-27 territory**
- **39 % percent of U.S. nation's population, live in coastal shoreline countries, representing less than 10 percent of the U.S. land area**
- **Areas of great values and productivity (heritage, infrastructure, tourism...)**
- **And people continue to move to cities at coasts**



14/05/2015

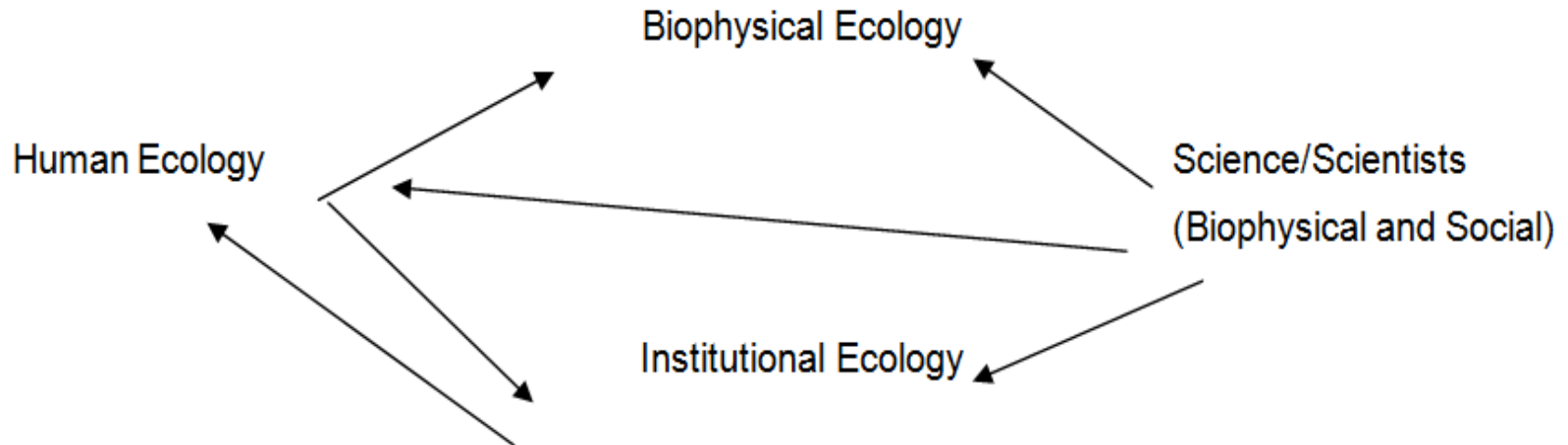


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So, flood protection is basically about people & places, assets & technologies



Source: Mike Orbach, Duke University, Nicholas School of the Environment (unpublished)



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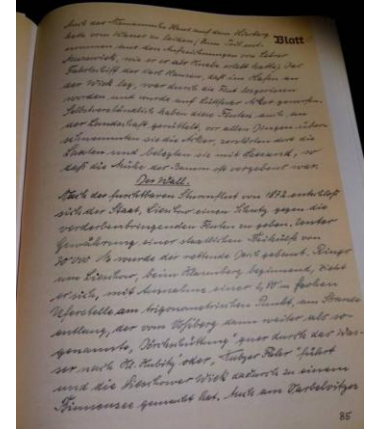
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Flood protection manifests in human/ institutional ecology

- History, values and experiences which shape perceptions and actions of coastal stakeholders

- Time lapses, dynamics and different results

So far no problem but the new challenge is...



Explanation about the erection of a dyke in 1873 („Der Wall“) chronicle of Ummanz (Mecklenburg - Pommerania), Source: Mursewiek: 1947)



1872 Historic flood height in Dahme (Schleswig-Holstein), Source: Eckert: 1992



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Never before in modern human history (with significant built environments) have humans been faced with a period of substantial sea level rise and increase in storm surges.



Source: Margaretha Breil, FEEM, Venice



Source: Duncan Russel, University of Exeter, Leeds



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Culture determines human reactions e.g. to flood protection, early warning and evacuation systems, damage compensation, consideration of retreat etc.

Some manifestations

- Underrating of known vulnerabilities (e.g. Hamburg 1962, New Orleans 2005)/ engineering issues
- Believe or disbelief in authorities/ Questioning of climate change and protection (private property issues)
- Governance / top-down, bottom-up
- Communication problems, insufficiently articulated roles and responsibilities among local, state, and federal authorities
- Ethical issues of emergency management: ethnicity/ poverty



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Key messages

- Most flood-related disasters, although commonly referred to as natural disasters, are not the results of nature-related processes alone. They are directly attributable to various social, economic, historical, political issues.
- Cultural values drive risk perception, response and preparedness not hazardous events.
- Cost-benefit framework usually falls short in addressing aspects, such as ethics and culture.
- More empirical investigations in human and institutional ecology/ understanding the underlying reasons why communities or regions are vulnerable are needed.
- Embedding ethnographers in climate/ risk management science, policy and politics makes sense.



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Session Flow

- Two presentations compare flood protection and compensation in the cultural context of the U.S. and the Netherlands
- Two presentations focus on individual approaches from a bottom up perspective (in the U.S. and U.K.)
- Finally a comparative analysis of adaptation strategies of coastal communities in Europe, North America and Australia