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Abstract

News headlines suggest that sea-level rise may wipe out entire islands and threatens millions of people living in low-lying areas. And indeed according to the current scientific literature, sea-levels may rise substantially due to climate change, with a global mean sea-level rises of 2 meter or more being possible (but unlikely) during this century. Other studies suggest that protecting densely populated coastal areas against sea-level rise is technologically feasible and highly cost-efficient, even under substantial sea-level rise. Again other studies suggest that the main barriers in coastal adaptation do not stem from a lack of technological options or a lack of economic efficiency, but rather from institutional barriers related to the public good aspects of coastal adaption and associated conflicting stakeholders' interests. This paper explores technological, economic and institutional dimensions of coastal adaption by drawing upon a couple of ongoing case studies from diverse contexts. Each case study is analyzed in terms of each dimension and conclusions for future research priorities are drawn.

Short bio

Dr. Jochen Hinkel is senior researcher at the Global Climate Forum (GCF) in Berlin, lecturer at the Division of Resource Economics at Humboldt University in Berlin and member of the Berlin Workshop in Institutional Analysis of Social-Ecological Systems (WINS). He has been a Lead Author of the coastal chapter of the Working Group II contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Coordinating Lead Author of the guidance on methodologies for assessing vulnerability and adaptation under the UNEP Programme on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation (PROVIA). Dr. Hinkel obtained his PhD in environmental system analysis from Wageningen University with a thesis on the integration of knowledge from natural and social sciences for assessing vulnerability. At GCF Hinkel heads the research process *Adaptation and Social Learning*, which focuses on risk management and the governance of human-environment interactions in the context of climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, with a particular focus on coastal systems. Dr. Hinkel also leads the development of the DIVA model, an integrated model for assessing coastal impacts and adaptation, which is jointly developed by a number of leading European coastal research institutions. Prior to his academic engagement Dr. Hinkel has worked as a development practitioner, software developer and information technology consultant. For more information see: http://www.globalclimateforum.org/index.php?id=dr-jochen-hinkel