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Global Change and Baltic Coastal Zones

Chapter 11: Applying Climate Change Adaptation in Spatial Planning Processes

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Abstract

Natural hazards play an increasingly important role in societal contexts due to rising casualties and costs observed in the last decades, which is often attributed to Climate Change impacts. Climate Change adaptation and natural hazards have entered European regional policy relatively recently but are quickly growing in importance. In addition to several national and regional Climate Change adaptation strategies the Territorial Agenda of the European Union and the EU White Paper on Climate Change Adaptation mention Climate Change and hazard related risk management as key role in European regional development. But in this argument it is often overlooked that human societies have developed settlements in hazard prone areas, sometimes despite better knowledge.

Spatial planning could be a very useful tool to protect settlements from hazard impacts but its full range of potential is seldom applied or overruled by other priorities. It is of interest to observe how human beings have dealt with various natural hazards since the beginning of societies, first of all to understand motivations, and secondly to use this knowledge for new adaptation concepts, including potential impacts of Climate Change. The decision making processes that lead to hazard adaptation concepts are one of the key foci, as well as the possibilities and feasibilities to integrate Climate Change adaptation concepts. Concrete examples of human increases in vulnerabilities and the development of adaptation concepts are given from a case study in the Baltic Sea Region. The active integration of climate change adaptation into planning practices is currently developed under the BaltCICA project, where scientists and spatial planners work together to take the step forward from developing adaptation strategies towards climate change adaptation measures.