

Describing, assessing and envisaging changing coastal hazards

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Coasts are highly variable environments, which are in many cases very intensively used by people for various, sometimes conflicting purposes, and as such are subject to anthropogenic modifications. At the same time, coasts are also places, where hazards – for instance due to storms or tsunamis – represent major risks for livelihood of people. The coasts of Singapore are exposed to such human utilization, and also the coasts of the Baltic Sea represent such a contested region.

In this contribution, we discuss the multiplicity of possible utilities, conflicting perceptions, and the need for politically guided management of coasts, and which role science can play in such a set-up. Science cannot decide which utility should be given priority – this is the privilege of the political system – but it is essential in determining the present state and the present change, in deriving the sensitivity to global and local modifications, and in envisaging possible futures.

Examples from Northern Europe, in particular dealing with the Hamburg and its port, demonstrate the provision of scientific underpinning of decisions, while leaving the political process and its balancing of interests, preferences and perceptions intact. The whole process is intimately related to the concept of *Regional Climate Service*.