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Historical Development Paths, Socio-Economic and Cultural Issues in Risk Approaches in Two Coastal Communities

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Content

- I. Framework of the Research
- II. 'Total Ecology' and risk approaches
- III. Influence of History on Risk Approaches: Contrasting Example from Two Coastal Communities



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Research Framework

2008 the Federal Cabinet adopted the German Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (DAS): step-by-step process undertaken in cooperation with the federal Laender and civil groups....

2011 Action Plan for Adaptation of the German Strategy for Adapting to Climate Change:

“Municipalities are among the central actors of adaptation to climate change. Many consequences of climate change manifest themselves locally, and many adaptation measures need to be developed and implemented together with local communities.”



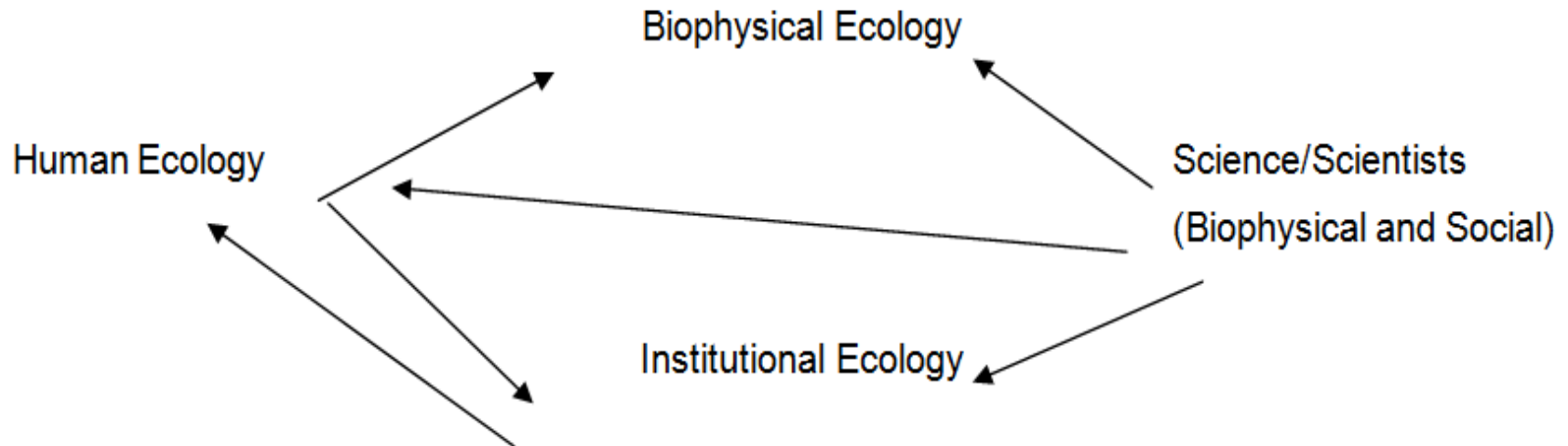
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Risk approaches are about people & places and their history & culture

‘Total Ecology’:



Source: Mike Orbach, Duke University/Nicholas School of the Environment (unpublished)



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Study region: Two communities at the southern Baltic Sea Coast in Germany (distance 300 km)



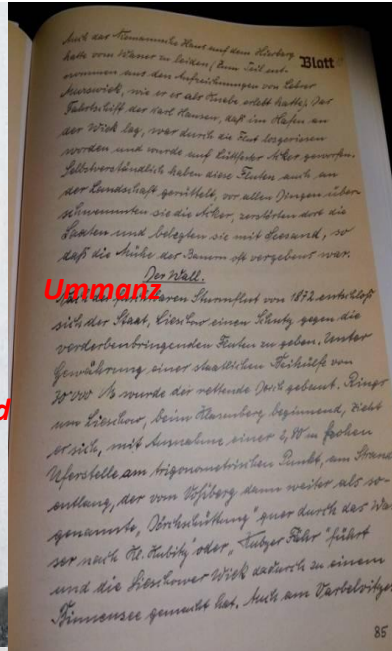


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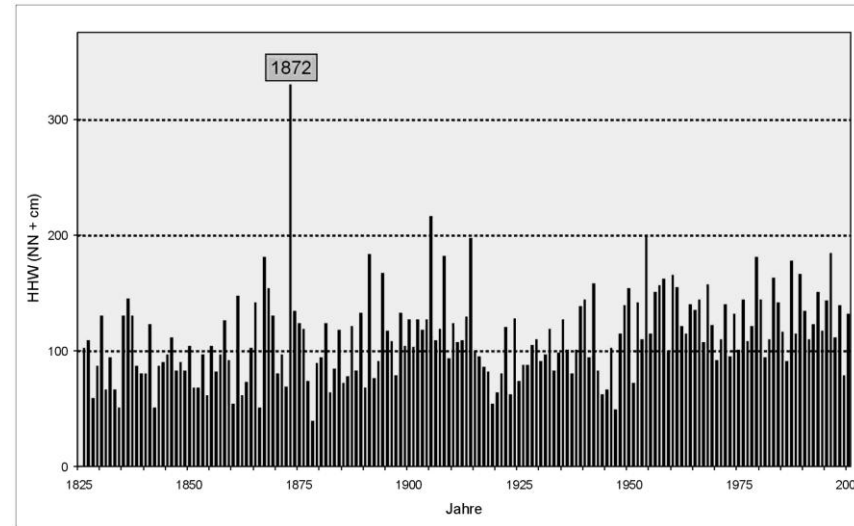
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- Comparable bio-physical conditions/ vulnerability (3m above SL, identical exposure to storm surges/ SLR/ bathtub effect)
- Similar projections
- Identical experiences with historic storm floods (1872): Equivalent reconstruction aid out of the funds of the German empire



Risk of flooding – historic records

- Storm surge levels (SSL) higher than 3,0 m above Mean Water = one event
- SSL higher than 2,0 m above Mean Water = rare
- SSL higher than 1,5 m above Mean Water = infrequent
- Storm surge levels higher than 1,2 m above Mean Water = frequent



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Methods

- 17 Semi-standardised narrative interviews (2012/2013 average duration: 2- 3 hours) with residents (village chronicles, heads of regional and “Heimat” (homeland) associations, local decision-makers, entrepreneurs.
- Complemented by 30 interviews with passers-by (standardised questionnaire) at central locations in both communities.
- Background research: village chronicles, diaries, local novels/ photographs...



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Further separations after WW II





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Key messages

- Historical natural events, socio-economic developments and cultural values drive risk perception, response and preparedness to environmental challenges.
- Historical development paths lead to particular material and immaterial value sets which find expression in differing views of “Heimat” (“Homeland”). These lead to different demands placed e.g. on coastal protection and adaptation strategies.
- Risk management strategies need to be developed on the basis of development traditions. Reference is necessary to local interests, values and attitudes – in this case to the coast and sea.
- More empirical investigations in the history of human and institutional ecology/ understanding the underlying reasons why communities or regions are vulnerable and why they act they way they do are needed.



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Thank you!
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