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Der gesellschaftliche Umgang mit zunehmender Verwundbarkeit
Eine Analyse der sozialen Bedingungen für vulnerabilitätsorientierte räumliche Planung in den Küstenzonen von Bangladesch

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Summary

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Summary

The coastal areas of the world and the humid tropical regions in particular are mostly densely populated and serve as important economic centers, but are also particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. The increasing trend of natural hazardous events, so-called natural disasters, in these regions leads to additional risks. This demonstrates the need for an adaptable and customized development planning in coastal areas and raises the question of how the coastal societies in the countries concerned – mostly developing countries[#] – can respond to natural hazards, particularly in the fields of disaster prevention and management. Compared to the technical and social standards of high-tech countries, the developing countries of the South often lack knowledge, awareness, relevant governmental responsibilities, social conditions and partly the appropriate material resources to do so. Some of these resources even seem to be unattainable. However, despite huge financial expenditures for disaster risk reduction (DRR), also highly industrialized countries such as the United States react on hurricanes sometimes with amazing helplessness. Beyond this background, which measures should be taken in developing countries, where almost all the conditions of disaster risk reduction are unplanned or not implemented? In a first step, it is crucial to find out how the coastal communities in these developing countries respond to disasters and adapt to the aftermath consequences of disasters. Secondly, it is important to detect which of these identified adaptation measures are accepted by the society and thirdly, what are the shortcomings of existing spatial planning processes designed for disaster mitigation and how they can be resolved. The present study concentrates on the first two questions and approaches them with the help of an empirical survey in the southwestern coastal area of Bangladesh, which is one of the world's regions most strongly affected by hazardous events.

The empirical survey focused on the rationality of action of the respondents while dealing with the aftermath situation of cyclones Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009, which severely impacted the study area.

[#] The work uses the term “developing countries” being aware of the considerable conceptual difficulties linked to the “development” idea, because it is widely introduced and alternative terminologies are not established enough so far. Furthermore, a country-based classification, given for instance the existing high technology standards in countries like India or Nigeria, is increasingly problematic.

A systematic random sampling was used to select a sample of 1 555 respondents. Group discussions, expert interviews and case studies were conducted to determine the experiences of various actors in the events. The respondents' residence or the coordinates of their houses were determined by GPS to gather information on spatial differentiation. Thus, combining social and spatial data sets, the empirical analysis has yielded the following results:

- (i) Almost all people in the cyclone-affected communities have waited for relief foods and reconstruction materials. Therefore, they have remained passive and have taken no measures to rebuild their homes by their own initiative. As a result, both the dependency on external aid and the vulnerability to future disasters have steadily risen due to decreasing personal initiative.
- (ii) Selling of private property, changing the sources of income, borrowing and eventually moving to cities were the strategies most frequently mentioned by respondents as individual reaction to adapt to the post-cyclone situation. However, these initiatives also raised the social risks in the whole community.
- (iii) Also, it was shown that the locally influential and wealthy persons control the local disaster management and contingency planning, often using resources for their own ends, and
- (iv) as a consequence, socially vulnerable people become more vulnerable to future hazardous events, also because of their geographical situation.

The study's findings outline the problems of current disaster management processes. They stress the need for disaster preparedness and for preventive planning measures that are inextricably linked to the social conditions and are accepted by society, especially prior to their implementation. The prevailing exploitation of disasters by individual groups within the society result in protests, a lack of technical facilities and insufficient material resources. Nevertheless, despite this social disequilibrium, technical measures must be implemented to ensure that public infrastructures as well as individual households are able to withstand against hurricanes up to Category 4. The

present work provides the basis to analyse current processes suited to improve external prevention and intervention measures after hazardous events. It also strengthens the bargaining power of local planners and politicians with development cooperation and thus supports sustainable development in the coastal regions of Bangladesh.