



ISISA

Newsletter

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ISISA: 14th 'Islands of the World' Conference 2016

CALL FOR PAPERS

Niss(i)ology and Utopia: Back to the Roots of Island Studies

23-27 May 2016

Mytilini, Lesvos Island, Greece

ISISA announces the 14th 'Islands of the World' international conference, titled "*Niss(i)ology and Utopia: Back to the Roots of Island Studies*" organized by the University of the Aegean on Lesvos Island, Greece, 23-27 May 2016 (isisa2016.aegean.gr).

We wish to attract different types of interests on topics concerning islands, but also to focus specifically on some of the issues involved in living and producing on islands. We hope to exchange experiences and reflections, especially related to the real and symbolic geography of islands, develop conceptual frameworks that can be used to build common approaches for our 'world of islands', face global climate and economic challenges on a local scale, and discuss options for development without destroying fragile island societies, cultures and habitats.

The conference will be structured around three major topics:

- **Integrated Management of Islands:** islands are by definition ideal laboratories for conceptualizing, planning and implementing integrated approaches. Here, environmental,

EDITORIAL



This issue first and foremost gives us more details about the ISISA 14th Islands of the World Conference which will be taking place in Lesvos in May 2016.

One can have some fun with a mini quiz to test your knowledge about Islands.

It is great to see new authors contributing to the ISISA Newsletter. Remember that this Newsletter is only what you make it. We encourage anyone who has something to say about Islands, Island Studies or Book Reviews about Islands to send them over to me for the next issue.

Reminder: If you have any contributions for the December 2015 Newsletter please pass them on to me by not later than November 15, 2015.

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Our Islands of the Seas? Climate Change Rhetoric and Reality

By Ilan Kelman

The media, and even some scientific publications, continue to be stuffed full of rhetoric that islands will sink, drown, or disappear due the seas rising under climate change. One inevitable consequence, we are told, will be hordes of climate refugees fleeing their abandoned homes to descend on those of us in affluent locations.

The science suggests otherwise. I provide here a step-by-step summary of research on the responses of low-lying islands and islanders to projected climate change impacts.

1. Islands, even low-lying islands, fall into many categories. They are not homogeneous, so their responses to environmental changes will be neither homogeneous nor linear.
2. The increasing empirical evidence suggests that islands will not inevitably disappear under sea-level rise.
3. Potential scenarios certainly include low-lying islands disappearing under sea-level rise, but other islands could grow, could change with approximately constant area or volume, or could experience limited change. There are many other factors involved in the geomorphological response of islands to sea-level rise and other projected climate change impacts, including erosion and accretion due to wave and current action.
4. Even if some islands accrete due to sea-level rise in combination with other processes, they might still be uninhabitable due to the geomorphological processes causing such extensive changes.
5. Irrespective of sea-level rise, many island communities are threatened due to many other projected climate change impacts. Freshwater availability is the most immediate concern. Ocean acidification impacts (on coral reefs, shingle, and ecosystems) represent the largest uncertainties.
6. Irrespective of climate change, many island communities are threatened due to many other human decisions and actions--which also bring opportunities including opportunities to deal with projected climate change impacts. Climate change must always be viewed within wider contexts. We also need to look at the impacts of our responses to climate change in addition to climate change's direct impacts.
7. All these uncertainties, especially with changes occurring over different time scales and within different contexts, means that migration decisions are complex. They involve a combination of voluntary and forced reasons, a combination of climate change and non-climate change reasons, and a combination of choices to move and not to move. Yet some islanders who do not wish to move are being, and will be, forced to move due to climate change only.

These points lead to three corollaries which are deliberately simplistic truisms applicable beyond islands:

1. Migration and non-migration have always occurred, and will continue to occur, for a multiplicity of reasons. Climate change is one influence amongst many and will vary in its degree of importance.
2. Many uncertainties exist (in life), but effective decision-making regarding island futures by islanders is nonetheless feasible if those with the power and resources are willing to support the islanders in determining their own futures.
3. The fault is not in the climate, but in ourselves. Part is indeed the human contributions to climate change and other environmental changes, but that does not give the full story. Instead, it is also about our responses to climate change.

This short article is based on:

Kelman, I. 2014. “No change from climate change: vulnerability and small island developing states”. *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 180, no. 2, pp. 120-129.

Kelman, I. 2015. “Difficult decisions: Migration from Small Island Developing States under climate change”. *Earth’s Future*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 133-142. [Freely available](#).

Kelman, I., JC Gaillard, and J. Mercer. 2015. “Climate Change’s role in disaster risk reduction’s future: beyond vulnerability and resilience”. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 21-27. [Freely available](#).



Islander migration? By Ilan Kelman