

# Costa Verde: Governing the coast



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## Key messages

- Recent urban development along Lima's coast has exacerbated the manifestation of everyday risks.
- Everyday risks are a result of failures in planning and governance behind development projects along the Costa Verde, arising from a 'state of exception'<sup>1</sup> paradigm of governance.
- Risks include coastal erosion, rockslides, loss of public space and poor access to beaches, accidents due to construction waste dumping, and infrastructural failures.
- Overlapping responsibilities, weak prosecution, poor accountability, prevalence of economic interests, unbalanced power relations and lack of public participation are some of the major problems of Costa Verde's development.
- Strengthening existent planning and prosecution institutions and developing effective participatory planning and social control are the key elements of a new strategy to restructure the coastal planning governance.

## Introduction

The coast of Lima, called Costa Verde, is crucial to its citizens. It is one of the main open public spaces and offers a place for all Limeños to enjoy. The coast plays an important role for the city's inhabitants; for leisure, mobility, tourism and livelihoods.

Over the last few decades Costa Verde has been considerably reshaped due to successive interventions based on an economic-centred discourse. A 'state of exception' paradigm of governance has led to an excessive amount of power being granted to the mayor of Lima, resulting in constitutional rights being superseded and laws bypassed. Because of this, planning and governance of development projects along the Costa Verde comprise a number of failures, such as overlapping responsibilities, lack of public consultation, uncontrolled decentralisation and poor compliance with laws and regulations.

Consequently, Costa Verde has become a place where everyday risks are affecting the lives of Limeños and the spaces they inhabit. These risks include the loss of public space, dumping of construction waste, coastal erosion, limited access to beaches, rockslides and infrastructural failures.

To understand in depth the causes of everyday risks along the Costa Verde, a team from UCL's Environmental and Sustainable Development course conducted a series of formal interviews with various stakeholders including the Costa Verde Authority, the Navy, public prosecutors, private companies such as EMAPE, the Institute of Civil Defence, oceanographers and transport engineers. To conceptualise their research, the team focused on two recent infrastructure projects on the coast, namely the third lane of the Circuito de Playas and the Malecón, a promenade built for cyclists and pedestrians. In addition, by carrying out hazard mapping and interviews in the beaches along the coast, the team sought to learn what these everyday risks are and who is affected by them.

Based on their research the team has proposed a transformative strategy that promotes the democratisation of the coast as an open and public space and that addresses the governance and planning failures that have led to everyday risks.

<sup>1</sup>Term used to describe a governance trajectory where constitutional rights are superseded or rejected and laws are bypassed when a government extends its claim to power.

## Context

The interviews conducted revealed that everyday risks in Costa Verde are created or exacerbated by failures in the existing governance and planning processes behind urban development projects along the coast.

Uncontrolled and ineffective decentralisation combined with excessive autonomy concentrated in the mayor of Lima, overlapping responsibilities of public authorities and structural weakness of planning and control institutions permit a low compliance

of laws and regulations, all of which undermine the sustainable planning and development of the Costa Verde.

There is limited public participation in planning, and technical institutions lack political influence and authority to impede the development of projects if need be. In essence, a 'state of exception' exists in Lima, a trajectory of governance in which constitutional rights are superseded or rejected and laws are bypassed when a government extends its claim to power.

**Image 1.** Coastal Erosion in Barranco



### Case study – The tercer carril and the Malecón

The failures in the governance and planning behind development projects along the Costa Verde that have resulted in the manifestation of everyday risks can be conceptualised by considering the case of the tercer carril (third lane) of the Circuito de Playas, and the Malecón.

The tercer carril was first conceived in 2009 with no public consultation and its construction lacked public participation. Furthermore, there is little evidence that both projects are fully integrated or coherent with other infrastructure networks in Lima.

Usually, the Ministry of Transport needs to evaluate and authorise such projects. However, the Municipality of Lima (MML) bypassed the transport authority, conducting only a limited impact assessment, and went ahead with the construction of the third lane.

When its construction began in 2014 protests took place on a regular basis. On December 22nd 2014, Lima's mayor, Susana Villarán, suspended the construction of the third lane and signed an agreement with those protesting, mainly surfers. However this agreement was nullified in 2015 by the next mayor, Luis Castañeda, who restarted the construction despite the Navy's formal calls to halt the project. According to the pressure group Costa Verde de Todos, between January and June 2015, 35 car accidents have been registered due to the third lane, with two fatalities.

In the case of the Malecón the situation was similar: there was no public consultation or any attention given to technical advice from transport and engineering experts. In January 2016, the Ministry of Transport actually fined the Municipality of Lima for its construction.

*“The land that is reclaimed from the sea is going to be money, because the land is going to be privatised, and this is not in line with sustainable development”*

Capitán Silva, Navy Authority

*“Peru has only two specialised judges in environmental issues and they are not working in Lima”*

Dra. Flor de Maria Vega Zapata  
Public Prosecutor

## Everyday risks along the Costa Verde

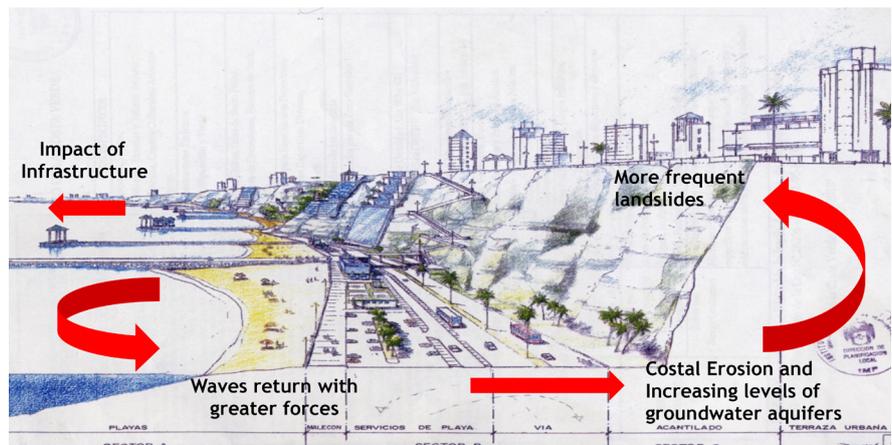
Everyday risk is defined as a continuous situation of exposure, the magnitude of which is dependent on the vulnerabilities, hazards and coping capacities of people and infrastructures within a defined space. They are not only the result of the physical environment but also of urban planning and development policies and practices.

The entire Costa Verde is a tsunami and earthquake risk zone, and constructions on top of the cliffs mean that rockslides have become a common hazard.

Certain risks such as coastal erosion, loss of public space and poor infrastructure maintenance are consistent throughout the Costa Verde. The dumping of construction waste is a more serious issue in the lower-income districts of San Miguel, Magdalena del Mar and Chorrillos, compared to the higher-income districts of Miraflores, San Isidro and Barranco.

Infrastructural projects such as the tercer carril and the Malecón are exacerbating existing risks and creating new ones. The third lane of the Circuito de Playas has taken more space from the beach, resulting in a severe loss of public space. Due to a lack of consideration to technical expertise during the planning process, the design of the lane is flawed and has

Figure 1. Risk Cycle along the coast



resulted in an increase in car accidents. The Circuito de Playas lacks an emergency lane, thus producing a risk for all road users when cars break down.

The new Malecón, which runs parallel to the coast, blocks evacuation routes for beach goers in the event of an emergency or a tsunami, and as it was built so close to the sea it is susceptible to coastal erosion, posing a risk to users in the future.

People's perception of risk varies along the coast. While issues such as waste dumping, poor security and lack of infrastructure maintenance were considered more serious issues in lower-income districts, residents in higher-income districts

seemed more concerned about tsunami and earthquake risks.

Moreover, risk perception is dependent upon the vulnerability of the residents. Fishermen, for instance, consider waste dumping to be the most serious risk along the coast, while taxi drivers believe rockslides as the primary cause for concern.

### Risk-coping mechanisms

There are number of ways in which Limeños are attempting to cope with the everyday risks. Both the loss of public space and the dumping of construction waste along the beach has been an issue of serious contempt for surfers; their protests had some effects, though temporal.

To mitigate the risks of rockslides in the Circuito de Playas the Municipality of Lima has covered the cliffs with netting to capture falling rocks. However, not all portions of the cliffs are covered nor is the netting fully effective in completely reducing the risk.

**Transformative strategy**

Based on interviews with EMAPE architects and their future plans for the coast, the ‘business as usual’ scenario for the Costa Verde appears to be one where development continues to be economic-centred, with plans to gain even more land from the sea, reinforcing a perception of modernisation.

In the long run these plans are ecologically destructive as construction encroaches into the sea, causing waves to return at greater forces and therefore exacerbating coastal erosion. Subsequently, the rising level of groundwater aquifers due to saline intrusion leads to a greater risk of more frequent landslides along the cliffs as shown on Figure 1.

As the level of risk increases along the coast the land begins to devalue, which means that the current trajectory of development is also economically unsustainable.

In order to promote the democratisation of the Costa Verde as an open and public space, a transformative strategy is needed that addresses key issues of governance and planning. This transformative strategy should provide an alternative to the ‘business as usual’ scenario, where development along the Costa Verde is socially equitable and sustainable.

**Formation of a regulatory body**

Lack of accountability, dominance of powerful stakeholders and poor compliance with laws and regulations should be addressed through the creation of a multi-stakeholder body that would formulate the national coastal law and ensure that it is complied with. This body should involve actors from the national, metropolitan, district and local levels, thus ensuring cross-governance collaboration and communication between district municipalities and state level authorities.

A mandate for the creation of a regulatory body could come in the form of a public referendum. Currently, development along the Costa Verde lacks any form of public participation, despite the existence of a number of pressure groups and wide public interest. Active pressure groups

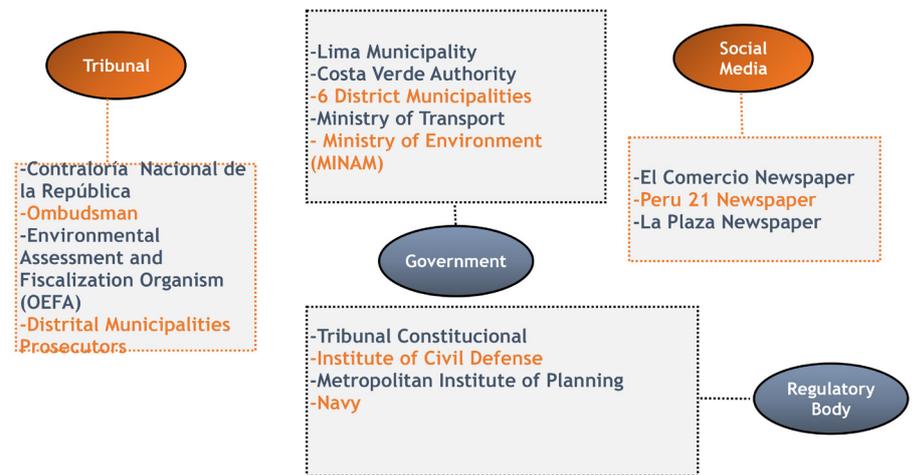
**Image 2.** Construction waste dumping in San Miguel



**Image 3.** Beachgoers struggling to move injured man into the ambulance due to the presence of the Malecon



**Figure 2.** Transformative Strategy-Actors



that can be mobilised for the referendum include Costa Verde de Todos, Qapac, El Faro, Lima es Nuestra, UDEAL and the groups of cyclists and surfers. These pressure groups, with the support of members and allies and with a strategic use of social media can help materialise the referendum.

As stated by the Peruvian Congress each project of law presented by citizens needs the support of least 0.3% of the electoral register. During our research it was estimated that pressure groups have at least 2,000 members on average. We believe these groups could lead a campaign in support of the idea and collect the required signatures.

**Monitoring**

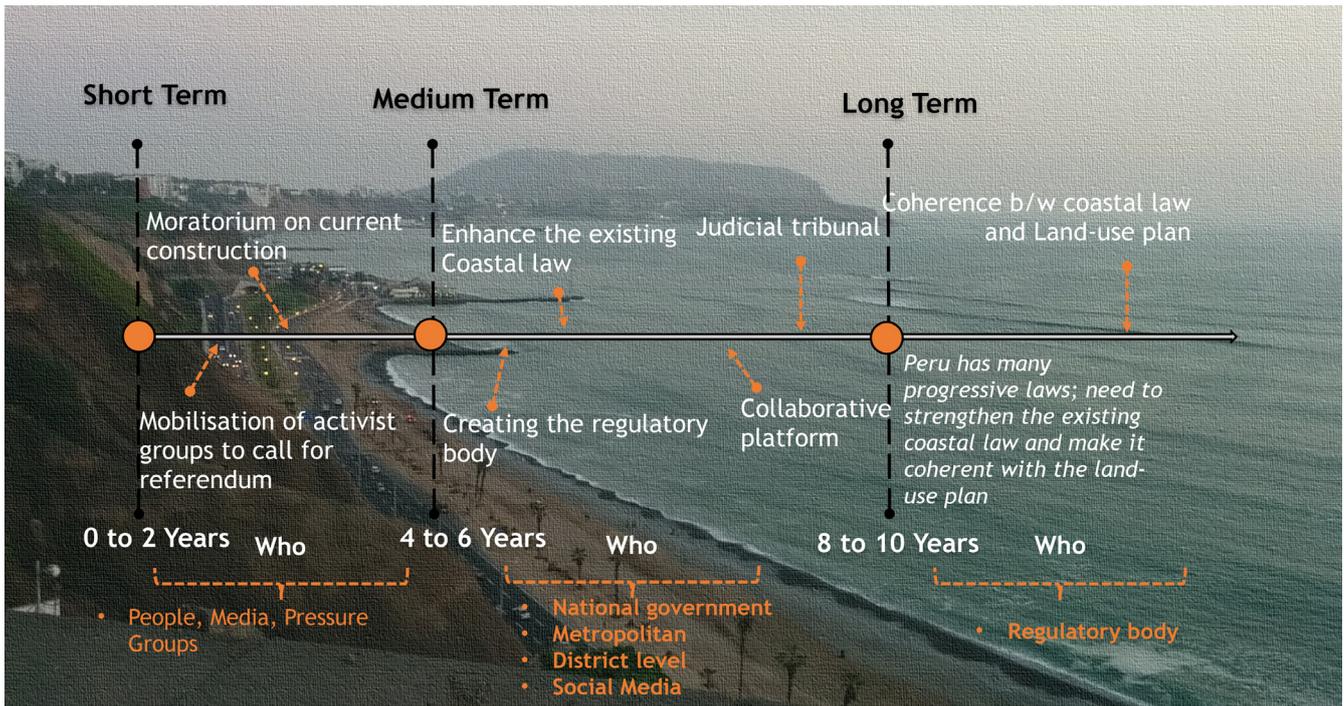
A monitoring mechanism is crucial to ensure the correct implementation of the coastal law and its compliance in the long term. This needs work through both for-

mal and informal routes. The formal route involves the formation of a judicial tribunal, which would prevent political interests from bypassing the law. The second involves giving power back to the people by creating a platform for civic groups and ordinary citizens to act as a pressure mechanism to ensure accountability. Both mechanisms would contribute to strengthening public processes and democratic values, by bringing citizens into the decision-making process, making effective their right to the city.

**Maps**

Hazard mapping and interviews along the coast helped us identify what and where everyday risks are along the Costa Verde, and how people perceive them. Rockslides, car accidents, coastal erosion and loss of public space were consistent all along the coast. In several parts of the coast the impacts of coastal erosion were strongly evident on both beach and built infrastructure. However, some risks weren't

Figure 3. Transformative Strategy Timeline



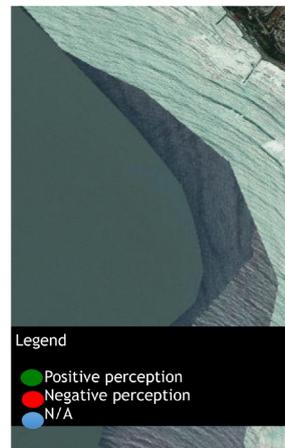
homogeneous along the coast. Construction waste dumping was a more serious issue in specific districts along the coast.

While issues of poor security and lack of infrastructure maintenance were prevalent amongst beach goers in lower-income districts, long term risks such as tsunamis and earthquake were more common in the wealthier sections of Miraflores and Barranco. Risks were also dependent on vulnerability; fishermen considered waste dumping to be the most serious risk whereas taxi drivers were more concerned about rock fall (San Miguel).

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Map 1. Mayor Risks



Map 2 . Public perceptions of the coast



la Vida, Rossana Poblet Alegre (independent consultant), Silvia de los Rios from Centro de Investigación, Documentación y Asesoría Poblacional- CIDAP, Carmen Robles Aranade from Servicios Educativos el Agustino- SEA, Linda Zilbert Soto (independent consultant), the interns that joined each group as well as Julia Wesely as our DPU tutor, for their valuable contributions, knowledge and guidance.

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