



GUEST COMMENTARY: A vision of California with 2 meters of sea level rise

 [October 18, 2016](#)  [Maven](#)  [Guest blogger](#)

Website project seeks to help people think different about life in a climate changed world

Written by David Zetland:

Most of us worry about current tasks, problems and choices. We lead complicated lives, negotiate tight spaces at work, and barely have enough time to rest as we go from one task to the next.



David Zetland

(Americans don't just get fewer paid vacation days than most; [they don't even use all their days!](#))

Given these facts, it's not exactly easy to think more of the future. Retirement is going to happen. Next year will be different. Why bother to worry about things over which you have no control?

You've probably heard a version of "Forewarned, forearmed; to be prepared is half the victory" (Cervantes), which — if you've experienced such a situation — is good advice. We don't often do well when confronted by challenges where we have no time to think about which reaction will work BEST for us. Sometimes we make the wrong choice and have to live with consequences that were — in hindsight — avoidable.

I started the [Life plus 2 meters Project](#) to help people think different about life in a climate changed world in which sea levels are 2 m higher, unusual storms are the norm, 1-in-100 year floods happen every three years, and so on. (The American version of the name is "six feet under".) I started the Project because there are [good scientific reasons](#) to think that the conventional wisdom on climate change impacts is far too conservative, i.e., that we may get 6-m of sea level rise by 2100, rather than the IPCC consensus of 2 meters.

It's hard to underestimate how dramatic those impacts might be on our lives, but it's also hard to think of all the changes in all the areas we care about. That's why the Project draws on crowdsourced "visions" — short blog posts by authors of all backgrounds, geographies and perspectives. There is no one right way to see our world today, and there is no right way to see a future world. All we know is that we all experience the world in different ways and will also experience its changes in different ways.

What will happen in California with climate change? The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta will grow more salty and inundate settled areas. Northern California might get more rain, but sinking land due to groundwater use in the Central Valley may fracture the California and CVP Aqueducts, leaving most of the water in Northern California. Los Angeles will, by necessity, rely on local sources for 100% of its water as the Los Angeles Aqueduct dries up from lack of snowmelt. Luckily, wastewater recycling and technology to purify local groundwater of military-industrial pollution makes this possible. Inland California will see temperatures over 120 degrees during many summer days, leading some people to air condition their garages to make it easier to travel and live in an air conditioned bubble. Agricultural labor will change radically as outdoor work is banned as a violation of human rights and machines harvest crops in greenhouses designed to protect crops from sudden hail or dust storms...

That's just one string of related possible ideas of how life will change in California, but I [invite you to submit yours](#). This project already has a dozen visions from other authors, but it needs more, since everyone has a useful and interesting idea of how life might be different in a climate changed world.

About David Zetland: *David Zetland was born and raised in California, where he earned his PhD at UC Davis with a dissertation on the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. He has been working on policies to improve water management resilience and adaptation for over 10 years, usually via posts and discussions at [Aguanomics](#). His most recent book is [Living with Water Scarcity](#), which is free*



to download. This non-commercial Project is therefore the latest in a series of efforts to improve our use of water. David now lives in Amsterdam and works as an [assistant professor at Leiden University College](#) in The Hague.