

MARUM / GLOMAR Expert Course:

Caught Between State and Communities: Management Dilemmas in South Indian Estuaries

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Introduction to the course

Estuaries are complex commons traditionally used by economically and socially marginalized communities in south India. These ecosystems offer a variety of economic opportunities and indirect ecological services and public goods to humanity. Unfortunately, the economic significance of these complex coastal commons, especially while drawing natural and environmental resources to modern development projects, has not been adequately recognized in policy making circles. Lack of well-defined property rights, economic backwardness of primary producers, irrational/forced channelling of resources to modern industries, impact of these modern activities on local communities livelihoods and ecological services have all complicated the sustainable uses of estuaries significantly.

Under these circumstances, this course aims introduce major social, economic and institutional issues in the uses of estuarine ecosystems and biodiversity by various resource users. Individual lectures based on information collected during a detailed research studies during 2000-2006 would enhance student's ability to understand these issues and motivate them to undertake fresh research. Topics covered include human well-being and livelihoods, estuarine biodiversity conservation, modernization and development interventions, multiple use rights and conflict management, community based to co management, balancing trade-off between development, conservation and livelihoods, political clientelism and governance.

Topics

(1) Collaborative Estuarine Management: A study on Cochin Estuary

Basic objective of this part of the course is to demonstrate why state has to work with local communities to manage complex estuarine social ecological system using case studies from Cochin estuary. Case studies indicate that management systems practiced in coastal villages exhibit different combinations of pure community based and state-centric hierarchical forms. The importance of decentralization is emphasized.

(2) Development policies, state interventions and struggles for livelihood rights in coastal communities in Kerala, India: A case study of the Cochin clam fishery

This part highlights the failure of the state to evolve consensus on allocating property rights to local communities and modern enterprises in a manner that sustains livelihoods and ecosystems. While traditional coastal communities enforce customary rights for fishing and mineral mining, the state sometimes reallocates traditional fishing territories to commercial mining to facilitate rapid industrialization. Communities oppose such transfers because of the negative impacts of commercial dredging on traditional fishing and ecosystems. Case study describes how rural island communities along Cochin estuary expressed their opposition to the transfer of clam-mining rights to industries by democratic social mobilization. We suggest that the state must recognize traditional livelihood rights of communities if it is to resolve conflicts and ensure the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources.

(3) From community-based to co-management: Improvement or deterioration in fisheries governance in the Cherai Poyil fishery in the Cochin Estuary, Kerala, India?

This part presents another case study from the northern zone of Cochin estuary where several different forms of fisheries governance have been tried and failed during the last 50 years. Based on documentary material and data from interviews carried out during fieldwork in 2004, we argue that provided the co-management system incorporates community principles within it, it will be an effective form of fisheries governance.

Location

MARUM, University of Bremen, Leobener Strasse, 28359 Bremen, Germany, Room 2070

Time

09.00 – 17.00

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