



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Policy Issues, Actors’ Public Claims and Informal Interests: Insights from the Sundarbans Mangrove Forests Management

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Abstract

Comprising diverse ecosystems, the Sundarbans in Bangladesh are characterised as a unique mangrove forest, which becomes an area of national as well as international importance in policy and management perspectives. Considering the ecological as well as economic importance of Sundarbans Mangrove Forests, a number of issues have been originated now-a-days which are of policy concern. The aim of this study is to identify the most recent conversant issues with the Sundarbans and analyse the actors’ claims/arguments on identified issues which were publicly stated only as an expression of formal interests or also part of their informal interests therein. Content analysis of Bangladeshi national newspapers, experts’ deliberations and national policy documents were exerted as an empirical method for relevant issues, actors’ arguments and interest’s questions or perspectives while a theory based typology was applied to distinguish the present actors. The issues came out from this analysis are: Rampal Power Plant Project, Protection of Sundarbans Forest Area, Environmental Pollutions, Biodiversity Conservation, Reputation as World Natural Heritage Site, Climate Change Adaptation and Local People’s Livelihoods. The analysis detected the Rampal Power Plant Project as being the most conflictive issue among all actors. Government Bureaucracies are found as the most active actor with all perceived issues and surprisingly Prime Minister, as a single entity of that actor type exercises intrinsic power in terms of displaying some informal interests with formal ones in her public statements. However, results recommend to conduct future empirical study on mapping about high degrees of bureaucratic rivalry for Sundarbans with formal and informal interests between the responsible ministry, Ministry of Environment and Forests’ and other ministries’ in relevant doings.

Keywords: Bangladesh, policy actors and interests, policy Issues, Sundarbans mangrove forest