



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



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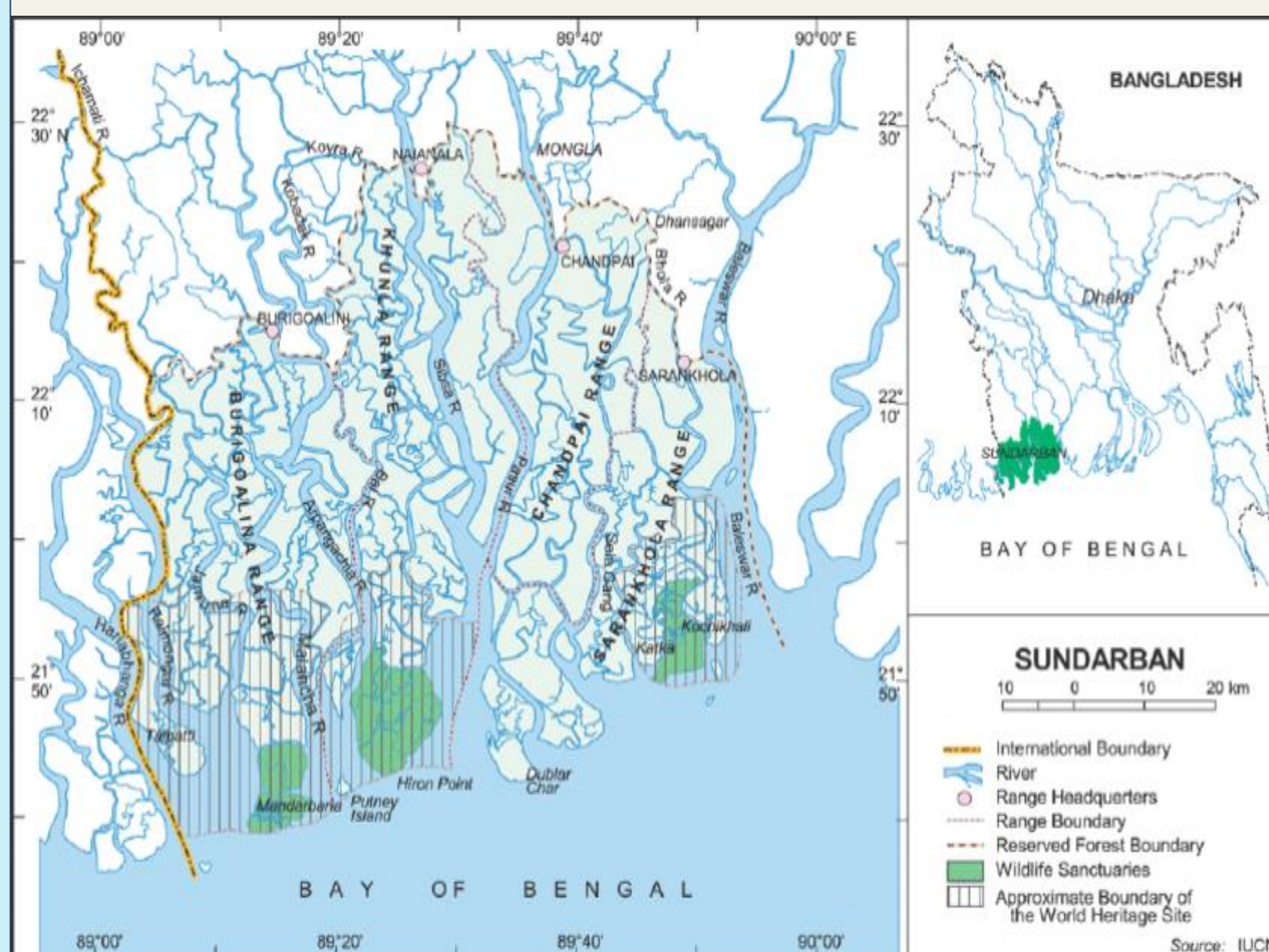
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## Introduction

- The Sundarbans is of high importance both in ecological and economic aspects.
- Mangroves are an important source of livelihood through multiple uses, e.g. fishing, honey and wax collection, ecotourism, wood and wood products.
- A number of controversial 'policy issues' emerged on the multiple uses of the mangrove forest, on which actors state claims and arguments.
- **The Study aims:**
  - to reveal the current and contentious **issues** relating to the Sundarbans policy and management;
  - to identify actors' publicly stated **claims and arguments** on these issues; and
  - To analyze if the actors' statement are based only on **formal interest** or part of their **informal interests** also, which were disclosed in public.

## Materials and Methodology

### Study Area



– The Sundarbans is the largest contiguous single tract of mangrove ecosystem in the world (Hussain and Karim, 1994; Siddiqi, 2001), containing e.g. the Royal Bengal tiger.

### Empirical Methods

- ✓ Content analysis of the documents found from the two major sources are:
  - print media as an important source of different actors' public deliberations.
    - Two national newspapers. (The Daily Prothom Alo, The Daily Star)
    - One local newspaper (The Daily Purbanchal)
  - Expert deliberations
    - Periodical Journals
    - Policy Documents
    - Position papers
    - Professional experiences of the First and Second Author
- ✓ years 2013 to 2017
- ✓ Theory-based typology (Krott, 2005) to distinguish active actors in the Sundarbans.

## RESULTS

Table: Present Actors (classified following Krott, 2005), their positions on identified Policy Issues relevant for the Sundarbans Mangrove Forest in Bangladesh

Actor Type →	Government and Administration			Associations and Political Parties				Mangrove Forest Users
	Head of the Government	Domestic Bureaucracies/ Administrations	Development Partners	Non-ruling Political Parties	National/ International NGOs and Organizations	Academics and Researchers	Civil Society/ Associations	Honey Collectors/ Fishermen/ Timber Collectors
Establishing Rampal Power Plant	Claim A: (+)	(0)	(0)	Claim A: (-) Claim B: (-)	Claim A: (-)	(0)	Claim A: (-)	(0)
Protection of Sundarbans Forest Area	Claim A: (+)	Claim A: (+)	(0)	(0)	Claim A: (+) Claim B: (+)	(0)	Claim A: (+)	(0)
Environmental Pollution	Claim A: (+)	(0)	(0)	(0)	Claim A: (-) Claim B: (-)	Claim A: (-) Claim B: (-)	Claim A: (-) Claim B: (-)	(0)
Biodiversity Conservation	Claim A: (+)	Claim A: (+) Claim B: (+) Claim C: (+)	(0)	(0)	Claim A: (-)	Claim A: (-) Claim B: (-)	Claim A: (-)	(0)
Reputation as Natural World Heritage Site	Claim A: (+)	(0)	(0)	(0)	Claim A: (-)	Claim A: (-)	Claim A: (-)	(0)
Relevance for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation	Claim A: (+) Claim B: (+)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	Claim A: (-)	(0)
Local People's Livelihoods	Claim A: (+)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	Claim A: (-) Claim B: (-)	(0)

Symbol Note: (+): positions detected in support of the issue; (-) positions detected in opposition to the issue; (0) no Positions detected.

### Highlights

- Rampal Power Plant Project identified as salient, contentious policy issue.
- Government administrations found to be the most active actor type in all issues.
- Actors' claims and arguments prove varying context of formal and informal interests.
- Informal interests significantly influence on retaining power for ruling government.

### Conclusion

The unique characteristics of mangroves, bring number of policy issues on discussion. The actors' statements prove the complexities to the management of the resource, and thus compete among themselves with overlapping interests.

### References

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### Future Research Interest

- to map out policy interests of different administrations in relation to the Sundarbans mangrove forests
- to analyze the bureaucratic rivalry and competition among the bureaucracies in relation to existing and envisaged policy interventions for the Sundarbans.

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