

# Fishing from the Shore

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Exploring coastal transformations and changing life opportunities in an urban fishing community of India

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## Abstract

This thesis explores changing life opportunities in an urban fishing community in the Global South, based on a case study of a village situated on the periphery of Mangalore, a swiftly growing, middle-sized city in Karnataka state, India. During eight months of ethnographic fieldwork, I observed varying interpretations and active contestation around emerging urbanization, shifting interactions between land and water, and changing livelihood activities.

*Fishing from the Shore* views urban fisheries as a component of socio-material entanglements on the coast. This perspective is based on the fact that urban fisheries depend not only on the possibility of accessing and controlling marine resources, but also on the ability to negotiate and mediate claims over (unstable) coastal land, and to adjust to wider political economic changes due to urbanisation. The thesis subsequently asks the research question ‘Which social and material processes co-constitute urban coastal transformations?’ to highlight the importance of both social and material processes in the ongoing coastal transformations.

The thesis contributes to the field of small-scale fisheries research in the Global South by shifting the analytical focus from marine-based resources to coastal spaces, and from a merely human focus to the broader entanglement of humans and nature in coastal transformations. It does so, based on four theoretical themes derived from Urban Political Ecology: socionature, power, contested urban landscapes, and situatedness. Applying the four theoretical themes, the thesis brings into light a city that becomes merged with the contested landscape. The thesis also brings into view urban fishers as active agents who can contest, negotiate, and respond to livelihood changes and urban land pressures in myriad ways. This approach defuses the view that inequality is an absolute term during coastal transformations. Rather, uneven outcomes during transformations depend on the ability of individuals and groups to access and control resources across various networks and scales.

Keywords: coastal transformations, India, small-scale fisheries, urban political ecology, socionature, power, inequality, intermediary, unstable coastal land

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